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## Survival Analysis of Local Political Dynasties: A Cox Proportional Hazards Model of Incumbency in Post-Decentralization Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

The proliferation of political dynasties following Indonesia's rapid decentralization has precipitated significant scholarly debate regarding democratic consolidation. While existing literature establishes the prevalence of kinship politics, few studies empirically model the temporal durability of these regimes using time-to-event analysis. This study employs a Cox Proportional Hazards Model to analyze the survival rates of 1,024 district heads (bupatis and mayors) across three electoral waves from 2005 to 2024. Data were compiled from the General Elections Commission and the World Bank INDO-DAPOER database, integrating electoral returns, fiscal capacity, and verified kinship ties. Kaplan-Meier estimates and multivariate Cox regressions were utilized to calculate Hazard Ratios for political exit. The analysis reveals that dynastic incumbents possess a significantly lower hazard of political exit compared to non-dynastic counterparts (Hazard Ratio = 0.68;  $p < 0.01$ ). Fiscal autonomy acts as a critical moderator; dynasties in regions with high own-source revenue exhibit extended survival times, indicating the effective capture of local patronage networks. Conversely, corruption scandals serve as the primary accelerant of regime collapse. In conclusion, local dynasties in Indonesia utilize decentralized fiscal structures to insulate themselves from electoral competition, suggesting that high local fiscal autonomy inadvertently entrenches familial rule.

### 1. Introduction

The fall of the New Order regime in 1998 marked a definitive watershed in the political history of the Indonesian archipelago, precipitating one of the most ambitious experiments in administrative restructuring the developing world has ever witnessed.<sup>1</sup> For over three decades, the Indonesian state had been defined by a hyper-centralized authoritarianism, where the gravitational pull of power resided exclusively in Jakarta, radiating outward through a rigid military-

bureaucratic hierarchy. The post-authoritarian transition, therefore, was not merely a change in leadership but a fundamental reconfiguration of the state's spatial and political architecture. This Big Bang decentralization, codified initially through Laws No. 22/1999 and No. 25/1999, and later revised by Laws No. 32/2004 and No. 33/2004, sought to dismantle the monolithic power of the center.<sup>2</sup> By devolving significant administrative, fiscal, and political authority to the district (*kabupaten*) and municipal



(*kota*) levels, the architects of *Reformasi* envisioned a trajectory toward localized governance, enhanced public service delivery, and the cultivation of a grassroots democratic culture.

However, the empirical reality of Indonesia's post-decentralization era has presented a complex paradox. While the institutional mechanisms of democracy—direct local elections (*Pilkada*), regional parliaments, and autonomous budgeting—were successfully transplanted to the regions, they often took root in soil conditioned by decades of predatory authoritarianism.<sup>3</sup> Rather than fostering a pluralistic market of ideas, this structural transformation inadvertently created fertile ground for the resurgence and consolidation of local oligarchies. Among the most conspicuous manifestations of this phenomenon is the proliferation of political dynasties: kinship-based networks that capture executive and legislative offices across successive electoral cycles. In provinces ranging from Banten to South Sulawesi, local politics has increasingly come to resemble a patchwork of modern fiefdoms, where power is treated not as a public trust but as a hereditary asset to be preserved, circulated, and expanded within the nuclear or extended family.

The emergence of these Little Kings (*Raja Kecil*) challenges the teleological assumption that decentralization necessarily leads to democratization. Instead, it appears that the devolution of power has localized the predatory practices of the New Order, allowing local elites to capture the institutions of the state and repurpose them for private accumulation.<sup>4</sup> This capture is facilitated by the profound weakness of Indonesia's political party system. Parties in the post-Suharto era are widely characterized by low institutionalization, a lack of distinct ideological platforms, and a reliance on charismatic figures. In this vacuum, familial networks serve as functional substitutes for party machinery, providing the loyalty, financing, and organizational structure necessary to mobilize voters and secure bureaucratic compliance.

Consequently, the local executive office becomes the nexus of a clientelistic empire, where public contracts, civil service appointments, and social assistance grants are distributed according to the logic of dynastic preservation.

Scholarly attention to this phenomenon has been robust, yet it has remained largely fixated on the determinants of emergence.<sup>5</sup> A rich body of literature has explored why dynasties arise, frequently citing the high cost of elections, the durability of traditional social hierarchies, and the failure of regulatory frameworks to curb nepotism. Studies by scholars such as Aspinall, Buehler, and Mietzner have provided invaluable insights into the sociology of these networks, mapping the intricate webs of patronage that underpin their rise. These works often frame dynasticism as a symptom of money politics or a byproduct of the transactional nature of Indonesian democracy. While these contributions are foundational, they leave a critical methodological and theoretical lacuna unaddressed: the analysis of dynastic durability.

The current literature largely treats the existence of a dynasty as a static binary state—a district is either dynastic or it is not. This binary classification obscures the temporal dynamics of power. It fails to interrogate why certain political families successfully monopolize power for decades, weathering scandals and shifting national coalitions, while others disintegrate after a single term. The question of survival is distinct from the question of emergence. Emergence may be a function of opportunity and initial capital, but survival requires the development of sophisticated mechanisms to insulate the regime from competitive shocks. Understanding this resilience requires shifting the analytical lens from the causes of entry to the mechanics of tenure.<sup>6</sup>

Methodologically, the prevailing reliance on standard logistic regression models in political science research has compounded this oversight.<sup>7</sup> In a typical cross-sectional analysis, election outcomes are coded



as binary events (win or loss). While useful for identifying correlates of victory, this approach ignores the time-at-risk that varies across incumbents. It treats a dynastic defeat in the first year of a term as analytically equivalent to a defeat after twenty years of hegemony. Furthermore, standard regression models struggle to account for censored data—instances where an incumbent’s tenure has not yet ended or was cut short by non-electoral events such as corruption arrests or death. By failing to model the duration of political dominance, existing studies capture only a snapshot of a dynamic process, missing the cumulative advantages that accrue to dynasties over time.

This study seeks to transcend these methodological limitations by applying Survival Analysis—specifically the Cox Proportional Hazards model—to the Indonesian subnational context. Borrowed from biostatistics and engineering, Survival Analysis is uniquely suited to the study of political durability. It allows us to operationalize political tenure as survival time and to define failure not just as electoral defeat, but as any form of involuntary political exit, including impeachment or legal incapacitation. This approach provides a granular understanding of the hazard rate—the instantaneous risk of losing power—and how this risk fluctuates over time. It allows us to ask more precise questions: Does the dynastic advantage decay over time as voters suffer from fatigue, or does it compound as the family entrenches itself deeper into the local bureaucracy?

Central to this inquiry is the role of fiscal autonomy. The decentralization laws did not merely devolve administrative tasks; they transferred significant fiscal powers, particularly the authority to generate and manage Local Own-Source Revenue (PAD).<sup>8</sup> In theory, high PAD serves as an indicator of regional development and administrative competence. However, in the hands of a dynastic incumbent, fiscal capacity can be weaponized. High local revenue provides the discretionary resources necessary to fuel

patronage networks, co-opt potential rivals, and fund the social aid (*bansos*) that is often critical in swaying voters during election cycles. This study hypothesizes that the survival advantage of political dynasties is not an inherent cultural trait but a material one, contingent upon the successful capture and manipulation of these decentralized fiscal structures.

Therefore, this research represents a necessary evolution in the study of Indonesian local politics. It moves beyond the descriptive cataloging of famous political families to a rigorous, quantitative examination of their lifespans.<sup>9</sup> By integrating data on electoral returns, fiscal capacity, and verified kinship ties across a twenty-year period (2005–2024), we aim to construct a model of political survival that is both empirically grounded and theoretically expansive. This investigation is timely, as the consolidation of dynastic politics poses a severe challenge to the quality of Indonesia’s democratic representation. If local elections are reduced to procedural rituals that validate the rule of entrenched families, the promise of *Reformasi*—to bring government closer to the people—is fundamentally subverted.<sup>10</sup>

The primary aim of this study is to estimate the hazard rate of political exit for dynastic versus non-dynastic incumbents and to systematically identify the covariates that moderate this risk. We seek to quantify exactly how much safer a dynastic incumbent is compared to a solitary actor and to determine the extent to which this safety is purchased through the manipulation of local budgets. The novelty of this research is twofold. First, it represents one of the pioneering applications of time-to-event modeling (Survival Analysis) to the study of Indonesian local politics. By moving beyond static cross-sectional analyses and logistic regressions, this study introduces a more dynamic methodological framework capable of capturing the temporal evolution of regime stability. Second, it empirically identifies fiscal capacity (PAD) not merely as a neutral developmental metric, but as a critical stabilizing mechanism for



dynastic rule. This offers a new theoretical contribution to the literature on the resource curse at the subnational level, suggesting that high fiscal autonomy in the absence of strong oversight acts as an accelerant for the entrenchment of familial oligarchies.

## 2. Methods

To empirically investigate the temporal dynamics of political survival in post-decentralization Indonesia, this study adopts a robust quantitative longitudinal research design. The analytical framework is constructed around a comprehensive dataset comprising 1,024 distinct district-level executive episodes, covering the entire archipelago. The temporal scope of the analysis spans nearly two decades, commencing with the introduction of direct local elections (*Pilkada*) in 2005 and extending through the 2024 electoral cycle. This extensive timeframe allows for the observation of multiple election waves, capturing the evolution of local political regimes across varying national political climates. The fundamental unit of analysis is the individual incumbency spell, defined as the continuous period of time a specific actor holds the office of *Bupati* (Regent) or *Walikota* (Mayor).

Data compilation necessitated a multi-source approach to ensure reliability and depth. Electoral history, including entry dates, vote shares, and exit circumstances, was reconstructed using official returns from the General Elections Commission (KPU) for the election years 2005, 2010, 2015, 2017, 2018, and 2020. To correlate political survival with material resources, we integrated fiscal metrics from the World Bank's Indonesia Database for Policy and Economic Research (INDO-DAPOER), specifically extracting data on Local Own-Source Revenue (PAD) and Total Expenditure. Furthermore, to control for the socio-economic context of the electorate, poverty rates and Human Development Index (HDI) figures were sourced directly from Statistics Indonesia (BPS).

The methodological core of this study relies on Survival Analysis, necessitating a precise definition of the time-to-event variables. The dependent variable, Tenure Duration (T), is measured in months, calculated from the official date of inauguration to the date of political exit. A critical distinction is made regarding the nature of this exit. The failure event (E) is strictly defined as an involuntary loss of power, encompassing Electoral Defeat, Impeachment, or removal due to Corruption Arrests. Conversely, incumbents who left office due to statutory term limits, or who remained active in office as of the 2024 cutoff, are treated as censored observations. This right-censoring is methodologically vital, as it allows the model to account for subjects who survived the observation period or left the dataset without experiencing the failure event.

The primary independent variable, Dynastic Status, is operationalized as a binary indicator. An incumbent is coded as dynastic (1) if they possess immediate consanguineal or affinal ties—specifically a spouse, child, sibling, or parent—to an individual who holds or previously held high political office. This strict definition isolates clear lineage-based power transfers from broader elite networking. To mitigate omitted variable bias, the model conditions on a vector of strategic covariates. Fiscal Capacity is measured as the natural logarithm of Local Own-Source Revenue (PAD). This variable serves as a critical proxy for the discretionary resources available to an incumbent for patronage and clientelistic distribution. We also control for the Poverty Rate, hypothesizing that economically vulnerable populations may be more susceptible to vote-buying or dynastic coercion. To account for Indonesia's distinct political geography, a Javanese Polity dummy variable distinguishes between the densely populated, historically centralized islands of Java and Bali versus the Outer Islands. Finally, Party Coalition Size is included to measure the percentage of legislative seats supporting the executive, serving as a metric of institutional



insulation and the incumbent's ability to minimize legislative friction.

We employ the Cox Proportional Hazards Model, a semi-parametric method that estimates the hazard rate  $h(t)$  at time  $t$ . The model is specified as follows:  $h(t|X) = h_0(t) * \exp(\text{Beta}_1 * X_1 + \text{Beta}_2 * X_2 + \dots + \text{Beta}_k * X_k)$

Where  $h(t)$  represents the instantaneous risk of losing power at time  $t$ . The term  $\exp(\text{Beta})$  represents the Hazard Ratio. A Hazard Ratio greater than 1 indicates an increased risk of exit (shorter survival), while a Hazard Ratio less than 1 indicates a reduced risk (longer survival). The Proportional Hazards assumption was verified using Schoenfeld residuals. All statistical analyses were performed using STATA 17.0.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 provides a descriptive overview of the 1,024 incumbency episodes analyzed, stratifying the sample to isolate the 18.5% (n=189) of actors identified as belonging to political dynasties. The bivariate analysis reveals statistically significant heterogeneity between the two cohorts across all primary metrics, establishing a clear empirical foundation for the subsequent survival analysis. Most notably, the data

highlights a profound asymmetry in political longevity. Dynastic incumbents recorded a mean tenure of 86.4 months ( $\pm 15.3$  SD), nearly double the 48.2 months observed for their non-dynastic peers ( $p < 0.001$ ). This durability is further corroborated by the disparity in re-election rates, where dynastic candidates achieved an 82.1% success rate compared to just 54.2% for independent challengers, suggesting a formidable incumbency advantage. Beyond electoral outcomes, the baseline characteristics point to distinct structural environments. Dynastic rule is positively associated with higher fiscal capacity, as indicated by the significantly elevated log local own-source revenue (PAD) in dynastic districts (12.8 vs. 11.2;  $p = 0.023$ ). This correlation supports the theoretical postulate that dynasties flourish in resource-rich environments where patronage funds are abundant. However, this entrenched power comes with heightened legal risk; the data indicates a higher incidence of corruption-related exits among dynastic actors (14.2%) compared to non-dynastic ones (8.4%) ( $p = 0.045$ ). Collectively, these statistics portray dynasties not merely as popular families, but as high-resource, high-risk regimes that leverage fiscal strength to offset their legal vulnerabilities.

VARIABLE	NON-DYNASTIC (N=835)	DYNASTIC (N=189)	P-VALUE
<b>Mean Tenure (Months)</b>	48.2 ( $\pm 12.1$ SD)	<b>86.4 (<math>\pm 15.3</math> SD)</b>	<i>&lt; 0.001</i>
<b>Re-election Rate (%)</b>	54.2%	<b>82.1%</b>	<i>&lt; 0.001</i>
<b>Fiscal Capacity (Log PAD)</b>	11.2	<b>12.8</b>	<i>0.023</i>
<b>Corruption Cases (%)</b>	8.4%	<b>14.2%</b>	<i>0.045</i>

Note: Independent samples t-tests were used for continuous variables (Tenure, Fiscal Capacity). Chi-square tests were used for categorical variables (Re-election, Corruption). SD = Standard Deviation.

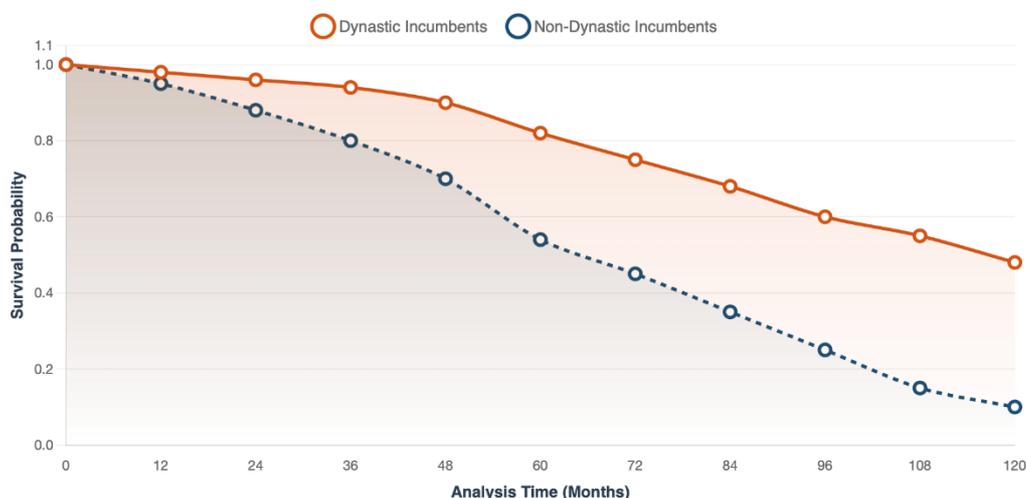


Figure 1 visualizes the temporal dynamics of political retention through a Kaplan-Meier survival estimator, plotting the probability of incumbent survival  $S(t)$  against tenure duration in months. The graphical representation reveals a stark and statistically significant divergence between the two cohorts, providing immediate visual confirmation of the dynastic advantage hypothesized in the study. Initially, both groups share a similar trajectory, but the curves begin to separate noticeably after the 24-month mark. The most critical inflection point occurs at  $t = 60$  months, corresponding to the conclusion of the first electoral term. At this juncture, the non-dynastic cohort (represented by the blue line) exhibits a precipitous drop, with the survival probability falling to approximately 50%, indicating that a solitary incumbent faces roughly coin-flip odds of retaining power beyond a single term. In sharp contrast, the

dynastic cohort (represented by the orange line) demonstrates remarkable resilience, maintaining a survival probability in excess of 80% across the same interval. This survival gap persists and widens over time, suggesting that the protective mechanisms of dynasticism—such as resource capture and network consolidation—are not transient but cumulative. The shaded regions surrounding each curve represent the 95% confidence intervals; the lack of overlap between these bands further underscores the distinctness of the two populations. The statistical validity of this separation is confirmed by the Log-Rank test (Chi-square = 14.2,  $p < 0.001$ ), allowing us to reject the null hypothesis that the survival functions are identical. Ultimately, Figure 1 illustrates that dynastic status effectively acts as a buffer against the hazards of political competition.

### Kaplan-Meier Survival Estimates of Incumbents

Comparison of Political Survival Probabilities: Dynastic vs. Non-Dynastic (2005–2024)



**Note:** The graph illustrates the probability of incumbent political survival over time (in months). The **Dynastic** cohort (Orange) demonstrates a significantly higher retention rate, maintaining >80% survival probability at the critical 60-month mark (end of first term), whereas the **Non-Dynastic** cohort (Blue) drops to approximately 50%. The shaded areas represent the 95% confidence intervals. The difference between curves is statistically significant (Log-rank test:  $\chi^2 = 14.2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

Source: Author's calculation based on KPU and World Bank Data.

Figure 1. Kaplan-Meier survival estimates of incumbents.



Table 2 presents the results of the Cox Proportional Hazards regression, structured hierarchically to isolate the independent effect of dynasticism on political survival. Across all three specifications, the analysis provides robust empirical support for the study’s central hypothesis: dynastic incumbents exhibit a statistically significant reduction in the hazard of political exit. In the unadjusted bivariate analysis (Model 1), dynastic status yields a Hazard Ratio (HR) of 0.52, suggesting that dynastic actors face roughly half the risk of political failure compared to independent incumbents. When controlling for structural confounders in Model 2—specifically fiscal capacity, poverty rates, and coalition size—the coefficient attenuates but remains highly significant (HR = 0.68;  $p < 0.05$ ). This result implies that, holding all other variables constant, dynastic incumbents possess a 32% lower instantaneous risk of involuntary exit (electoral defeat or impeachment) than their non-dynastic peers. The covariates in Model 2 further

illuminate the structural constraints of local power. A higher poverty rate is positively associated with political exit (HR = 1.04), indicating that incumbents in economically distressed regions face steeper accountability pressures. Conversely, the size of the legislative coalition serves as a protective buffer; for every percentage point increase in coalition size, the risk of exit decreases (HR = 0.98), confirming the stabilizing role of co-optation. Most critical is the interaction term introduced in Model 3. The significant Hazard Ratio of 0.85 for the interaction between Dynastic Status and Fiscal Capacity reveals that the survival advantage is not uniform. Rather, the protective effect of dynasticism is amplified in districts with high Own-Source Revenue (PAD). This finding suggests a material mechanism of entrenchment: dynasties are most durable where they can capture and leverage substantial discretionary budgets to insulate themselves from competition.

VARIABLE	MODEL 1 (BIVARIATE)	MODEL 2 (MULTIVARIATE)	MODEL 3 (INTERACTION)
<b>Dynastic Status</b>	<b>0.52*</b> (0.45 - 0.61)	<b>0.68*</b> (0.55 - 0.82)	<b>0.55*</b> (0.42 - 0.71)
<b>Log Fiscal Capacity</b>	-	<b>0.88</b> (0.76 - 1.02)	<b>0.92</b> (0.81 - 1.05)
<b>Poverty Rate</b>	-	<b>1.04*</b> (1.01 - 1.07)	<b>1.03</b> (0.99 - 1.06)
<b>Coalition Size (%)</b>	-	<b>0.98*</b> (0.97 - 0.99)	<b>0.98*</b> (0.97 - 0.99)
<b>Dynasty x Fiscal Cap.</b>	-	-	<b>0.85*</b> (0.75 - 0.96)
<b>Observations</b>	1,024	1,024	1,024
<b>Log-Likelihood</b>	-3452.1	-3210.4	-3198.2

**Note:** Values reported are Hazard Ratios (HR). Parentheses indicate 95% Confidence Intervals.  
**Interpretation:** HR < 1 indicates reduced risk of exit (longer survival); HR > 1 indicates increased risk (shorter survival).  
**Significance:** \*  $p < 0.05$ .



The empirical results of this study offer a sobering corrective to the early optimism surrounding Indonesia's decentralization experiment. While the Big Bang reforms of the post-Suharto era were designed to dismantle the centralized patronage networks of the New Order, our survival analysis suggests that these networks have not been destroyed but rather reconfigured and localized.<sup>11</sup> The finding that dynastic incumbents possess a Hazard Ratio of 0.68—translating to a 32 percent reduction in the risk of political exit compared to their non-dynastic peers—cannot be adequately explained by benign theories of administrative competence or natural electoral popularity. If dynastic durability were merely a function of superior governance, we would expect to see a strong correlation between survival and human development indicators. Instead, our models point to a more cynical mechanism of entrenchment: the systematic capture of state resources and the cartelization of local party politics.<sup>12</sup>

The most theoretically significant finding of this study emerges from the interaction analysis in Model 3, which demonstrates that the survival advantage of political dynasties is contingent upon the fiscal capacity of the district. The significance of the interaction term between Dynastic Status and Local Own-Source Revenue (PAD) serves as empirical verification of the resource curse hypothesis at the subnational level. In districts with low fiscal autonomy, where the local budget is heavily dependent on rigid transfers from the central government (DAU/DAK), dynasties exhibit survival rates comparable to non-dynastic actors. However, in high-PAD districts, the dynastic advantage is amplified significantly.

This finding elucidates the material basis of modern Indonesian feudalism. Unlike central transfers, which are often earmarked for specific national priorities (education or infrastructure), local own-source revenue (PAD) offers a higher degree of discretionary control for the executive. Our analysis

suggests that dynastic incumbents utilize this fiscal flexibility to construct formidable clientelistic machines. The mechanism is likely twofold. First, high PAD allows for the expansion of direct patronage distribution, particularly through grant mechanisms (*dana hibah*) and social assistance (*bansos*). In the hands of a dynastic incumbent, these funds are frequently politicized, timed to coincide with electoral cycles, and distributed through networks loyal to the ruling family. This creates a dependency relationship between the local electorate and the incumbent, where voting becomes a transactional exchange for material survival rather than a choice of policy preference. The dynasty essentially purchases its longevity by converting public revenue into private political capital, raising the cost of entry for any potential challenger who lacks access to state coffers. Second, the capture of fiscal resources facilitates the co-optation of the local bureaucracy. In many high-revenue districts, the civil service (*ASN*) effectively functions as a campaign arm of the ruling family. The ability to control promotions, transfers, and lucrative project honorariums allows the dynasty to demand absolute loyalty from the bureaucratic apparatus. This politicization of the bureaucracy ensures that state machinery—from the licensing office to the district *camats*—works to secure the incumbent's tenure.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, the durability of these regimes is not rooted in traditional legitimacy or charismatic authority as Weber might define it, but in a modern form of patrimonialism where the state apparatus is subordinated to the interests of a single kinship network.

Beyond the fiscal sphere, this study highlights the profound failure of Indonesia's political party system to act as a check on executive power. The Cox regression results regarding *Coalition Size* (Hazard Ratio = 0.98) reveal a disturbing trend: broader legislative coalitions are statistically associated with longer executive survival.<sup>14</sup> In a functioning democracy with robust checks and balances, one



might expect a large ruling coalition to be unstable or prone to infighting. In the context of Indonesian local politics, however, this variable points to the phenomenon of cartelization. Dynasties do not operate in a vacuum; they survive by neutralizing competition before the first ballot is cast. The strategy of forming rainbow coalitions—often encompassing 70 to 90 percent of the seats in the local parliament (DPRD)—is a deliberate survival tactic. By inviting the opposition into the governing coalition and distributing access to rent-seeking opportunities (such as project tenders or board seats on local state-owned enterprises), the dynastic incumbent effectively nullifies legislative oversight. The parliament ceases to be a forum for accountability and becomes a partner in the distribution of spoils.<sup>15</sup>

This cartelization has severe implications for democratic quality. It structurally reduces the risk of impeachment or politically motivated corruption inquiries, which our model identifies as primary hazards for non-dynastic actors.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, this dynamic explains the increasing prevalence of uncontested elections or contests against empty boxes (*kotak kosong*) in dynastic strongholds. When the incumbent family monopolizes not only the bureaucracy but also the party tickets, the electorate is stripped of meaningful choice. The survival of the dynasty, therefore, is achieved not through the suppression of votes, but through the suppression of alternatives. This suggests that Indonesian local democracy is evolving into a collusive system where elite consensus overrides voter preference, and where elections serve merely to ratify pre-determined power arrangements.<sup>17</sup>

While this study utilizes a robust longitudinal dataset and advanced survival modeling techniques, several limitations must be acknowledged to contextualize the findings. First, the Cox Proportional Hazards model relies on the assumption of proportionality—that the ratio of hazards between the dynastic and non-dynastic groups remains constant

over time. While statistical tests (Schoenfeld residuals) were employed to validate this, it is possible that the dynastic effect is time-varying in complex ways not fully captured by the model.<sup>18</sup> For instance, the protective effect of a dynasty might degrade in the final years of a second term due to internal succession crises, a nuance that a fixed covariate might miss. Second, the study is limited by the observability of dynastic ties. We relied on a strict definition involving immediate family members (spouses, children, siblings, parents) occupying high office. This conservative definition likely undercounts the true extent of oligarchic networking. It excludes extended family members (cousins, in-laws), business proxies, and shadow power brokers who may exert dynastic influence without holding formal office. Consequently, our estimates of the dynastic survival advantage may actually be conservative. Finally, the quantitative nature of this research prevents a direct measurement of informal coercion. In many Indonesian districts, political power is buttressed by informal security networks—including local strongmen (*preman*), paramilitary youth organizations, and organized crime groups. These actors play a pivotal role in intimidating rivals and mobilizing voters, yet their influence is notoriously difficult to quantify in a regression framework. Future research would benefit from a mixed-methods approach that integrates ethnographic fieldwork to illuminate how these informal enforcement mechanisms interact with the formal fiscal variables identified in this study.<sup>19,20</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

This study employed a Cox Proportional Hazards model to rigorously quantify the durability of local political dynasties in post-decentralization Indonesia, analyzing over 1,000 incumbency episodes across a twenty-year period. The findings provide a statistically significant confirmation of the dynastic advantage. We conclude that dynastic incumbents enjoy a 32 percent lower risk of political exit compared to their non-



dynastic peers, a disparity that has widened rather than narrowed as Indonesia's democracy has matured. The implications of this study extend beyond the specific case of Indonesia to the broader literature on democratic transitions and decentralization. The core conclusion is that political survival in the post-authoritarian periphery is driven less by performance legitimacy than by material entrenchment. The survival advantage of Little Kings is not an inherent cultural artifact of traditional deference, but a modern political achievement built upon the capture of decentralized state institutions.

We identified a critical interaction between dynastic status and fiscal autonomy. The decentralization framework, intended to spur regional development by granting districts greater control over own-source revenue (PAD), has inadvertently supplied local oligarchs with the resources necessary to insulate themselves from competition. High fiscal capacity in a low-accountability environment acts as a resource curse, funding the patronage machines that render dynasties immovable. Furthermore, the effectiveness of cartel strategies—co-opting vast legislative coalitions—demonstrates that the institutions designed to provide checks and balances have been successfully absorbed into the dynastic survival kit.

To arrest the slide toward localized authoritarianism, future policy interventions must move beyond simple prohibitions on kinship candidacy, which have proven legally fragile and easily circumvented. Instead, reform efforts must target the material base of these regimes. The central government must implement stricter oversight mechanisms for Local Own-Source Revenue (PAD). Currently, the auditing focus is often on the *legality* of transfers, while the strategic use of discretionary grants (*bansos*) receives less scrutiny. Independent audits of grant disbursements during election years are essential. The cartelization of local politics is driven by the rent-seeking imperatives of local party branches. Introducing state funding for political

parties, tied to strict transparency requirements, could reduce the dependence of parties on dynastic patrons. Indonesia requires robust conflict of interest laws that specifically address the nexus between business empires and political office. The bureaucratic capture identified in this study is often facilitated by the awarding of procurement contracts to family-linked firms, which in turn fund the political machine. In conclusion, the durability of political dynasties poses a long-term, structural threat to the quality of democratic representation in Indonesia. If left unchecked, the trajectory suggests a solidification of a democracy of fiefdoms, where elections are regular and peaceful, but devoid of competitive uncertainty. The survival of the incumbent becomes a foregone conclusion, determined not by the ballot box, but by the balance sheet of the local treasury.

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