



# Women in the Vortex of Local Power: The Politics of Kinship and Leadership of the Head of Sungai Pinang Village, Rambutan District, Banyuasin Regency

Rodiansa<sup>1\*</sup>, Amaliatulwalidain<sup>2</sup>, Isabella<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Government Science, Indo Global Mandiri University Palembang

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to find out and understand how female village heads are in the vortex of kinship politics in Sungai Pinang Village, Rambutan District, Banyuasin Regency in 2024. This study uses a qualitative methodology with interview, observation, and documentation techniques to collect data. This research uses the theory of familieities (Jalalzai & Rincker 2018) and the theory of Women and Politics (Joni Lovenduski 2025). The results of this study show that kinship relationships have a significant influence on the process of electing female village heads with family support, social capital, and community solidarity that are still strong in traditional structures in the village. Kinship politics is not only a power strategy but also a means for women to gain legitimacy in leadership in villages that are still patriarchal. This research confirms that kinship politics has a positive and negative impact on village democracy, on the one hand facilitating women's access to be involved in village politics, but can also strengthen the practice of political dynasties that close the space for community participation at large. In conclusion, the head of the female village in Sungai Pinang Village is influenced by the practice of kinship politics (familyties) which has been firmly rooted in the local social and political structure. The suggestion that the researcher can give is an effort to improve the quality of village democracy so that women's representation is not only symbolic but also substantive.

### \*Corresponding Author:

Rodiansa

Government Science, Indo Global Mandiri University Palembang

Email: [yansanal552@gmail.com](mailto:yansanal552@gmail.com)

## INTRODUCTION

Democracy in Indonesia seems to be in decline, especially towards the end of President Jokowi's first term in 2019, at that time Indonesian democracy is said to be at its lowest point since the end of the new order era. This can be seen from the increasingly dominant influence of the central government, through the Job Creation Law which removes regional authority in terms of business licensing and environmental impact analysis. In addition, there are rules that give the central government full power to appoint, dismiss, and relocate bureaucrats at various levels of state administration. Media ownership in Indonesia has also been controlled by business-political elites who have close ties to the government. The rule of law is weakened by the weakening of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and the politicization of criminal cases, on the other hand, repressive practices to limit public criticism are also increasingly prevalent (Usman Hamid, 2021).

Familyties or family attachments in Indonesia, this practice has existed since the time of the kingdom and has been passed down from generation to generation, continuing when the Soekarno government collapsed and the new order government began, until entering the reform period. Family ties significantly influence political decisions in elections at the village level. In addition, political dynasties, characterized by family members holding power across generations, complicate the electoral landscape, as we see in various villages in Indonesia where candidates are often linked (Noak, 2024). However, some argue that the

emergence of a family candidate may not only reflect dynastic politics but could also stem from pragmatic choices made by voters, who consider incumbents more qualified (Widyastuti et al., 2022). These familieities depict dynastic politics rooted in bonds and marriages within the family. In the context of real society, it is important for women's political contributions to be organized in such a way that collective activities are based on freedom, voluntariness, awareness, and active participation. In this situation, individuals in society play a role in managing various social affairs, both directly and indirectly, and help shape the life of their community (NL Ketut Sukartini, 2019).

As seen in several studies researched by Wijoko Lestariono (2022), for example, in Mekar Jaya Village, Paranggean District, East Kotawaringin Regency, there are several factors that encourage the occurrence of dynastic politics in the leadership of the village, namely: First, Capital Power (Economy) can be interpreted as a person's wealth that has a significant influence on society, becoming the basic capital to achieve goals or achieve victory. So economic capital is very important to become a leader. Second, Network Power (Family) is a core social institution consisting of several families that are established through blood relations or marriage ties. The nuclear family usually includes father, mother, and child. Third, Unhealthy Democracy is a common situation that occurs both in the election of regional heads including the use of money or other goods. The giving or promise to bribe someone to exercise certain rights during elections is known as money politics.

In rural areas, the phenomenon of familyties is an important factor that allows women to become leaders, especially in societies that have patriarchal structures, often women enter the political arena because of their family relationships with male political figures, such as fathers, husbands, or brothers, rather than their own personal independence. Women gain legitimacy and trust in communities that tend to be more conservative towards women's leadership through this family support. Women can also often enter the world of politics through family relationships, for example: First, inheriting leadership positions from husbands, fathers, or brothers who previously served as Village Heads or community leaders. Second, the family network as social capital to build political support. This makes women in village politics often considered as the successors of small political dynasties at the local level (Fajar Apriani, 2019).

The relationship between women and the election of village heads can be seen from their active participation as candidates and voters in the political system at the village level, women running for village heads often face social and cultural support, such as patriarchal culture that considers leadership more suitable for men. However, various studies show that women are able to compete and win village head elections with effective strategies, such as utilizing social capital, building direct relationships with the community, and highlighting a good image and inclusive leadership. For example, in a village located in Banjar Agung, Jati Agung District, South Lampung Regency, the first female village head, Mrs. Lela Wati, who won the contest for the election of the village head by using political marketing strategies that were adjusted to the needs of the local community, such as building a popular and responsible image (AD Ria, 2022).

The election of the Village Head, as stipulated in the Law, is an instrument that excites the spirit of democracy and expands regional autonomy throughout Indonesia.

Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs Number 112 of 2014 concerning the Election of Village Heads was established to strengthen the implementation of the Village Law. Articles 2 and 3 of the regulation stipulate that the implementation of the Village Head Election (Pilkades) can be carried out simultaneously once or gradually.

It's just that at the village level this is something interesting to research because this phenomenon turns out to thrive in our society, because at the village level it still holds traditional values, such as respect for the extended family and seniority so that this can create strong kinship loyalty. At the village level, the practices of political dynasties are stronger at the village level than at the local or central levels. Because in the village, the genealogy of the community is stronger than at the local level. This research is very interesting to research because this phenomenon is rarely studied at the level of political elections at the lowest level, namely the village, in the context of familieities in the political network this kinship is actually more prevalent at the village level where the life of the people in the village is still very thick. At the village level, the social structure is often centered on large families that have influence from the village head, village officials, and other community leaders, they often come from a certain circle of kinship.

## RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, the researcher uses a qualitative research method, which comes from a theoretical framework, the ideas of experts, or the researcher's understanding based on subsequent experiences to be processed into a problem and a solution to the problem in order to obtain the truth in the form of informant data. This research aims to understand, investigate, describe, and explain the quality or privileges of the phenomenon of Familieities in the election of Female Village Heads in Sungai Pinang Village.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of research that has been conducted on Female Village Heads in the Political Vortex of Kinship in Sungai Pinang Village, Rambutan District, Banyuasin Regency in 2024, it can be concluded that the election of female Village Heads in the region is greatly influenced by the practice of kinship politics (familyties) that have been firmly rooted in local social and political structures. The female village head, Mrs. Suryanti, comes from a large family that has held power at the village level for generations, which shows the strong political dominance of the dynasty in the context of village government. However, the involvement of women in leadership also shows a transformation of leadership patterns from previously dominated by men to a more inclusive direction for women. The factor of political capital, whether in the form of family support, social networks, and economic resources, is an important element in the political success of women. This reflects that although the practice of kinship politics still dominates, the recognition of the capacity and positive image of female village heads also strengthens the legitimacy of their leadership in the eyes of the community.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research that has been conducted on Female Village Heads in the Political Vortex of Kinship in Sungai Pinang Village, Rambutan District, Banyuasin Regency in 2024, it can be concluded that the election of female Village Heads in the region is greatly influenced by the practice of kinship politics (familyties) that have been firmly rooted in local social and political structures. The female village head, Mrs. Suryanti, comes from a large family that has held power at the village level for generations, which shows the strong political dominance of the dynasty in the context of village government. However, the involvement of women in leadership also shows a transformation of leadership patterns from previously dominated by men to a more inclusive direction for women. The factor of political capital, whether in the form of family support, social networks, and economic resources, is an important element in the political success of women. This reflects that although the practice of kinship politics still dominates, the recognition of the capacity and positive image of female village heads also strengthens the legitimacy of their leadership in the eyes of the community.

## SUGGESTIONS

For village governments and local governments, it is hoped that they can encourage women's participation in the village democratic process through training programs, leadership coaching, and political awareness. This effort is important for women to contribute actively.

For women in villages who have leadership potential, it is hoped that they can build credibility independently through increasing their self-capacity, strengthening their social role in the community, and having the courage to appear as agents of change, which has a positive impact on the village.

For the village community, it is hoped that they can be part of strengthening women's leadership in the village through active participation in development programs, moral support, and providing constructive input. With it, good collaboration between leaders and residents, the village will grow into a more inclusive, fair, and responsive environment to change.

It is recommended for future researchers to develop similar studies in other villages to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the political dynamics of kinship and women's representation in village-level government.

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