

Nakhoda: Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan Vol. 23 No. 1 (2024): 63-72 p-ISSN: 1829-5827 e-ISSN: 2656-5277 Regional Elections and Opportunities for the Political Phenomenon of Dynasty in Expansion Areas: A Case Study of Pesisir Barat District

# Pilkada dan Peluang Fenomena Politik Dinasti di Wilayah Pemekaran: Studi Kasus Kabupaten Pesisir Barat

Suci Indah Lestari 回

Universitas Lampung, Kota Bandar Lampung, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: suciindahl22@gmail.com

### Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the factors that contribute to the formation of dynasty politics in Pesisir Barat Regency through an in-depth analysis of the Pilkada process since 2013. A historical approach to political dynamics in this new region is relevant, especially regarding the potential for dynasty politics. Political network analysis techniques are applied to identify the relationships between the main political actors in the region, including potential candidates and other local political figures. The results of the study found that the incumbent AI has significant potential as an actor in the political dynasty movement in the 2024 Pilkada in Pesisir Barat Regency. The factors supporting the existence of the political dynasty are: (1) Regional Expansion; (2) Clientelism and Patronage; (3) Party Recruitment System; (4) Local Support; (5) Domino Coalition Effect; and (6) Limited Political Alternatives and Low Participation. The insights from this study have implications, especially in making the public and government aware that it is important to be more critical in choosing leaders by considering the track record and vision and mission of the candidates objectively. Active participation in elections and encouraging transparency in the party recruitment process are steps that can help prevent the dominance of dynastic politics and strengthen democracy at the local level.

#### Keywords

Dynastic Politics; Regional Elections; Regional Expansion; Pesisir Barat District.

#### Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor peluang terbentuknya politik dinasti di Kabupaten Pesisir Barat melalui analisis mendalam proses Pilkada sejak 2013. Pendekatan historis terhadap dinamika politik di wilayah baru ini relevan digunakan, terutama terkait potensi keberadaan politik dinasti. Teknik analisis jaringan politik diterapkan untuk mengidentifikasi relasi antara aktor politik utama di wilayah tersebut, termasuk calon potensial dan tokoh politik lokal lainnya. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa petahana AI berpotensi signifikan sebagai aktor pemrakarsa politik dinasti pada Pilkada 2024 di Kabupaten Pesisir Barat. Faktor-faktor pendukung eksistensi dinasti politik tersebut adalah: (1) Pemekaran Wilayah; (2) Klientelisme dan Patronase; (3) Sistem Rekrutmen Partai; (4) Dukungan Lokal; (5) Efek Domino Koalisi; dan (6) Keterbatasan Alternatif Politik dan Rendahnya Partisipasi. Wawasan dari penelitian ini berimplikasi khususnya dalam menyadarkan masyarakat dan pemerintah bahwa penting untuk lebih kritis dalam memilih pemimpin dengan mempertimbangkan rekam jejak dan visi-misi kandidat secara objektif. Partisipasi aktif dalam pemilu dan mendorong transparansi dalam proses rekrutmen partai adalah langkah-langkah yang dapat membantu mencegah dominasi politik dinasti serta memperkuat demokrasi di tingkat lokal.

## Kata Kunci

Politik Dinasti; Pilkada; Pemekaran Wilayah; Kabupaten Pesisir Barat.

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## 1. Introduction

The emergence of new expansion areas in Indonesia has become a source of hope for the community, especially in terms of equitable development and increasing welfare. Regional expansion refers to the process of forming new autonomous regions from existing areas as regulated in Law No. 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government (Awang Besar, 2020). With regional expansion, it is hoped that resources, infrastructure development, health services, education and other public facilities will increase in line with creating new opportunities for local economic growth and improving the standard of living of the population. This can also reduce inequality between regions and help overcome the problem of poverty that still plagues several regions in Indonesia.

Just as regional expansion is one of the strategies for realizing the widest possible regional autonomy (Yusuf A. R., 2010), this is a form of commitment to government attention that is more evenly distributed to various regions, which previously may have been marginalized, such as the Pesisir Barat Regency as an expansion area of West Lampung Regency. Next, Kab. Pesisir Barat will be abbreviated as Pesibar in this article. The approval for the expansion of this region with H. Kherlani as Acting Regent of Pesibar first occurred in 2013. To be expanded, the new region must meet certain requirements such as area size, population and financial capacity (Safitri et al., 2020).

So, the opportunity for the development of dynastic politics in Pesibar is an interesting topic of discussion because this region as a new expansion area will offer local political dynamics that are unique from other regions, and side by side with new desires for development and governance. This is supported by the history and context of the expansion of Pesibar which influenced the transition of power and community political participation. Another challenge for new autonomous regions is the need to strengthen regional capacity so that they can manage autonomy well, in particular avoiding the potential for dynastic politics to flourish in Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) (Suganda & Amin, 2016).

In new territories such as Pesibar, ruling families could take advantage of this opportunity to expand their influence through newly formed government structures. They often have stronger resources and networks to dominate local politics. Meanwhile, in old areas, dynastic politics originates from families that have been in power for a long time and have advantages in terms of experience and established political relationships (Febrian, 2016). In other words, dynastic politics requires a lot of effort and a long time to prepare and realize it. This is because it involves the formation of networks, the accumulation of resources, and the cultivation of deep influence at various levels of society (Candra Hidayat et al., 2020). However, even though the West Coast is only 11 years old—a very young age for an expansion region—concerns about the risk of the emergence of dynastic politics remain significant.

This newly pioneering region has great potential that can be exploited by political actors to quickly build dynastic power. The magnitude of natural resources, development opportunities, and people's expectations for change can become fertile ground for dynastic politics if there are no real efforts to encourage a more inclusive and transparent democracy (Ulfa et al., 2019). The community's high hopes for change and improvement after expansion often faced the challenges of dynastic politics.

Concerns about the emergence of the phenomenon of dynastic politics in expansion areas often occur in several cases in Indonesia. The process of regional expansion can be an entry point for local political elites who have strong power and influence to expand their political dominance. This can result in nepotism and corruption practices that are more difficult to control, because political power is more concentrated in one particular kinship group. This concern is exacerbated by the low level of political awareness and community participation at the local level, which can strengthen the political hegemony of certain groups. So, the discussion of this research also tries to answer the problem formulation. Are there factors that caused the emergence of political dynasties in Pesibar? Who are the initiators and supporters of the realization of political dynasties? What is the impact of political dynasties on local democratization in Pesibar?

Dynastic politics refers to political practices in which family members dominate positions of government power (Mahkamah Konstitusi Republik Indonesia, 2015). This practice is common in countries with monarchical systems, but it can also occur in democracies when elite political families use their influence and resources to appoint their family members to important positions. The practice of dynastic politics is also accused of weakening the function of checks and balances, which ultimately has an impact on increasing acts of nepotism, corruption, and development stagnation, and even weakening democracy because important positions are filled by people based on kinship relationships, not based on competence and capability (Susanti, 2017).

Several previous studies have stated that the holding of regional elections has become the stage for the phenomenon of dynastic politics since the development of post-New Order decentralization policies (Fajar, 2021; Mashari & Sukmariningsih, 2023). The high prevalence of dynastic politics is an indication that the reality of regional head elections is constitutional and political education in the country has not run optimally (Dedi, 2022; Khairi, 2022; Tanjung & Faizal, 2021). Even though the regional election system continues to be updated to suit local political dynamics in Indonesia, old faces, which are none other than the continuation of political dynasties, color the event (Agustino, 2020). So, this research will examine things that are different from previous studies, namely deepening understanding of the development of dynastic politics, especially in the district expansion area. Pesibar. The aim of this research is to examine the factors that enable the formation of dynastic politics in Pesisir Barat Regency through an in-depth analysis of the regional election process since 2013, as well as its implications for democracy.

Dynastic politics tends to be observed in regions that are politically established and have a long history of establishing power. In the 2020 regional elections, the practice of dynastic politics occurred in 29 provinces with the number of candidate pairs related to dynastic politics amounting to 16.8% of the total, of which 42.96% were elected in the election and the rest were not elected (Khairi, 2022). However, when this phenomenon is applied to a new area, such as Pesibar Regency, the results may be different due to a variety of certain factors such as unique social, political and cultural dynamics. Political dynasties occur through two mechanisms: those that are planned (by design) and those that occur accidentally (by accident) (Gunanto, 2020). The planned political dynasty has existed for so long that strong family ties in government have been established. Dynasty politics have been arranged in such a way to achieve their political goals (Pratitaswari & Wardani, 2020). Meanwhile, political dynasties that occur accidentally arise in situations of sudden government succession nominating family members to maintain unofficial influence, if they win in political contestations. This type of phenomenon is very likely to occur, especially ahead of the 2024 regional elections in Pesibar, after allegations of clientelism and patronage involving traditional leaders and community organizations in the 2020 regional elections (Yanto, 2022). This election was won by Agus Istiqlal (AI) in his second term with his new partner, Zulqoini Syarif (ZS).

# 2. Methods

This study of dynastic political opportunities in regional elections is qualitative descriptive research as an approach to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon through detailed descriptions (Aminah & Roikan, 2019). So relevant historical methods are used to trace the political history of the district, especially regarding the alleged existence of dynastic politics in the past and opportunities for the growth of dynastic politics. Researchers collected informants from various credible and relevant sources through archival studies, research documents, local media content, and official District government publications since 2014. Pesibar. Meanwhile, the appropriate analysis technique is political network analysis which includes several stages (Putra et al., 2023).

First, defining the problem through specific issues related to dynastic politics. Second, collecting relevant data to build political networks. Third, identify actors and relationships in political networks. Fourth, political network modeling. Finally, there is an evaluation of the risk of the impact of dynastic politics that might arise. By conducting political network analysis, researchers can identify relationships between the main political actors in the district, including members of political dynasties, potential candidates, and other local political figures. This approach helps in understanding how power and influence are distributed within Pesibar as well as the potential support that may be given to candidates from political dynasties.

# 3. Results and Discussion

# 3.1. Pesisir Barat Regency

Previously Kab. Pesisir Barat (Pesibar) is still part of the administrative area of West Lampung Regency whose government center is in Liwa. It is located along the South Bukit Barisan Mountains. This condition, accompanied by significant geographical separation from the center of government administration, results in obstacles in optimizing the utilization of natural resource potential in the region. However, this district area has potential that can be optimized to support more optimal government administration effectiveness. Significant examples such as Krui City, which is rooted in history as an old town of former *kawedanaan* that has been known since the Dutch colonial period, shows substantial tourism potential, especially in the realm of surfing sports, showing uniqueness that promises to be expanded and developed further (Portal Resmi Kabupaten Pesisir Barat, 2024). To overcome this situation, it is essential to reduce disparities in regions and administrative centers by establishing additional autonomous regions, which are expected to increase the efficiency of public services and accelerate the achievement of community welfare (Akbar, 2016).

Establishment of District. Pesibar has gone through a long process since it was drafted by the preparatory committee for the formation of West Pesisir Regency (P3KPB) in 2005, which was then approved at the West Lampung Regency DPRD session (Portal Resmi Kabupaten Pesisir Barat, 2019). This regional expansion was officially recognized in 2012 through Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 22 of 2012 concerning the Establishment of the West Coast Regency in Lampung Province. The inauguration of Pesisir Barat Regency took place on April 22, 2013, led by the Minister of Home Affairs on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, while appointing Kherlani as acting Regent of Pesisir Barat. Currently, Pesibar has become a district with the official name Pesisir Barat Regency. The new expansion area which is now known as Bumi Para Sai Batin and Ulama consists of eleven sub-districts with the district capital in the city of Krui.

With the emergence of Pesibar as an autonomous entity, the task borne by the Lampung Provincial Government is to provide the assistance and facilitation needed in the process of establishing DPRD institutions and optimal local government structures, which are adapted to demands and available capacity. In implementing regional autonomy, Pesisir Barat Regency needs to take strategic steps in its own region to improve the economy, improve government infrastructure, empower the community, optimize human potential and organize natural resource management in accordance with applicable legal norms to become a focus for advancing socio-economic conditions. sustainable economy.

Based on the general description of Kab. Pesibar, in the discussion section of this research, analysis will be carried out using three main theories: power elite theory, regional head election theory, and regional expansion theory. Power elite theory will be used to reveal how power and wealth are concentrated within certain political families, creating and maintaining strong elite structures in the context of dynastic politics. Meanwhile, regional head election theory will analyze the campaign strategies used by candidates from political dynasties, including how they utilize their resources and influence to win the election. Finally, regional expansion theory will explore how the expansion process can influence local political dynamics and support the formation or expansion of political dynasties (Hasanuddin, 2017). By using these three theories, the discussion will provide comprehensive insight into the interaction between power, political strategy, and structural change in the context of dynastic politics on the West Coast.

## 3.2. Regional Elections and Dynastic Political Opportunities

In the early days of Kab. Pesibar is led by H. Kherlani as the first Acting Regent of Pesibar since April 2013. In the period 2005 to 2010, Kherlani fulfilled his obligations as Deputy Mayor of Bandar Lampung together with Edy Sutrisno, and currently, he holds the position of Acting Regent of Lampung South replaces Rycko Menoza. Kherlani has had a long career in politics, and his footsteps have been an inspiration for his younger brother, Rustam Effendi, who once succeeded in holding a high position as Governor of the Bangka Belitung Islands (2013-2017). Two years into his term of office, he was replaced by Qodratul Ikhwan as Acting Regent in accordance with the provisions contained in Article 10 paragraph 5 of Law Number 22 of 2012 concerning the Establishment of the West Coast Regency in Lampung Province (Kantor Alumni Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2015).

Qodratul has the responsibility to continue all the programs launched by Kherlani. One of them is organizing the new Pesibar Regional Government, as well as facilitating the implementation of the first regional elections in the district. The interesting thing about the former Head of the National Unity and Politics Agency (Kesbangpol) in Lampung is that he was born in Krui. He successfully won three international awards for Best Performance in 2023 while currently serving as Regent in the District. Tulang Bawang (Elkana, 2023). The era of his leadership was also the holding of the first district elections. Pesibar was successfully held on December 9, 2015, won by candidate pair AI and Erlina (Er).

The 2015 simultaneous regional head elections became the foundation that marked the peak of the start of a new era in Pesibar's autonomous political dynamics, where prominent local elite figures had the opportunity to compete competitively in the democratic process of simultaneous regional elections. The election process involved four pairs of candidates, namely: (1) AI – Er; (2) Aria Lukita Budiwan (ALB) – Efan Tolani (ET); (3) Jamal Naser (JN) – Syahrial; and (4) Oking Ganda Miharja (OGM) – Irawan Tofani (IT). As a result, AI and Er were appointed as the elected candidate pair for Regent and Deputy Regent of Pesisir Barat. The victory of the number one pair cannot be separated from the political communication and political mapping strategy of the new Pesibar region. AI – Er is supported by three parties, namely Nasdem, PAN and PKB. This pair managed to get 25,534 votes which dominated in five sub-districts (Wijaya, 2016). It should be

remembered that at that time, as a newly formed district and taking part in the first elections to determine regional leaders for a five-year period, the political dynamics in Pesibar were still difficult to predict.

However, the team believed that AI's victory was superior based on the results of mapping the candidate's strengths and weaknesses. The 2015 regional elections were his second candidacy, where previously AI had run for the Lambar Regency regional elections. The popularity and electability of the incumbent is also a factor and is supported by a mass network base. Since childhood, AI has also been known as an intelligent, independent individual and has a good social spirit by his friends at Way Krui, when he was still studying at elementary and middle school levels. It is not difficult for incumbents to build their political communication, where face-to-face communication is dominantly carried out to be more convincing and attract voter enthusiasm for the candidate.

Simultaneous regional elections in 2020 in Kab. Pesibar is starting to show that there are political dynamics in each candidate pair. Incumbent AI decided to form a new axis with ZS during this period. Meanwhile, his previous deputy, Erlina, ran together with ALB who is the second treasurer of the Democratic party. This candidate pair is the strongest competitor for AI, where ALB's electability in the 2015 regional elections was quite strong with a vote percentage of 30.71%. Apart from the existence of the two candidate pairs, the name of a new figure emerged, a private entrepreneur based in Pesibar, named Pieter, who was paired with Fahrurrazi, Functional Personnel for the Intermediate Auditor for the Lampung Inspectorate.

In fact, the incumbent's victory for two terms was not as smooth as in the previous period. A number of clientelism and patronage practices and even money politics accused against AI were successfully filed in a lawsuit at the Constitutional Court by candidate pair ALB – Er (Arfana, 2021). Patron-client relationships are very likely to be built by the incumbent in his political marketing strategy since his first career as Regent of Pesibar. Incumbent AI won the majority of votes through the support of traditional leaders in each clan and promotion of development programs to the community (Yanto, 2022). This is reinforced by the customs in Pesibar which are still very strong, especially towards AI as a native son. Traditional leaders as marshaling actors have the ability to gather political support from the community which ensures the political victory of the incumbent dynasty. The role of community institutions is also quite effective in supporting incumbents to win political contests, where institutions have a base of voter votes that can be exchanged for the incumbent's resources offered to institutions.

Such clientelism and patronage practices could be a major factor causing the emergence of political dynasties, especially in relatively new expansion areas. The profits resulting from the practice of both will create political dependence between the candidate and third parties which allows the candidate to maintain sustainable power in his dynasty. This motivation to enrich oneself encourages incumbents to extend their term of office or pass on power to their closest family. As power elite theory shows, political dynasties are a manifestation of a strong elite structure, where power and wealth are concentrated in certain families (Hasanal Bolqiah & Raffiudin, 2020). The state administrator's wealth report (LHKPN) noted a significant increase in AI's wealth, namely 4 times greater after becoming regent (Adkhiyah, 2023). Political families use their networks of power and wealth to maintain their dominance in local politics, often hindering political regeneration and wider participation from society. The client-patron relationship will certainly form a strong and organized political network around the incumbent political dynasty.

Another factor is the party recruitment system which is based more on popularity and wealth as capital to achieve victory rather than ability and quality of competence (Wazni, 2011). This fact is proven by the emergence of the name Septi Heri Agusnaeni Istiqlal (SH), wife of AI, as a candidate for regional head from the Nasdem Party in the upcoming 2024 regional elections. His two children, M. Emir Lil Ardi (member of the Pesibar Regency DPRD), Nuril Anwar (member of the Lampung Provincial DPRD) also followed in their mother's footsteps as bacalonkada. Several names of the political elite are also said to have the potential to run for the 2024 regional elections, including former Acting Regent of Pesibar Kherlani, former member of the District DPRD. Pesibar Dedi Irawan, Rahman Kholid, Kompol Fery Anda Eka Putra, up to Jon Edwar who currently serves as Acting Regional Secretary of Pesibar. Finally, political parties are seen as political entities that function solely as political machines, which as a consequence hinder the achievement of the party's ideal function.

Factors causing the emergence of dynastic politics can also be easily and coincidentally formed, especially in new expansion areas. The expansion process is often accompanied by the allocation of resources and the establishment of new government structures. In this case, what is called the theory of regional expansion is a pathway for political dynasties to strengthen their position and reorganize power according to their interests. This risk exists because of the limitations of political institutions that are not strong enough and that political traditions are not yet well established (Zainuddin, 2015).

The tendency for public support for a well-known political family will occur when a new region elects a leader who can provide stability and influence, in addition to the candidate's track record of achievements and competence. In regional head election theory, this strategy is intended not only to demonstrate their ability to control the election process, but also to confirm their position as dominant actors in local politics (Ishak, 2015). Apart from that, the coalition domino effect also strengthens this phenomenon. Political coalitions formed in the Pilkada process often influence local political dynamics. This coalition can function as a check and balance mechanism in government (Wazni, 2013). However, these coalitions can also strengthen the dominance of certain families, especially if those families have significant influence in the coalition. This strengthens the family's position in the local political structure and reduces opportunities for candidates from outside the circle of power.

This possibility also occurs due to limited political alternatives and low political participation. If no other candidate emerges with a vision or platform that appeals to society, then an existing political family is likely to be the most sensible choice, which in turn strengthens political dynasties due to the lack of viable alternatives (Hasanuddin & Syamsuadi, 2011). So, it is clear that local support is one of the other determining factors in building local dynastic politics. The lack of an effective monitoring and accountability system in new areas also allows political families to strengthen their dominance without being affected by appropriate sanctions (Pratitaswari & Wardani, 2020).

Dynastic politics relies on reducing kinship relations in the transfer and maintenance of power, which violates basic democratic principles. This practice will certainly have a significant impact on local democratization. The decline in political pluralism is the most obvious result of the dominance of one particular political family. Reducing the diversity of political views and ideas in the local political process will further undermine government accountability. Especially if this occurs in a new expansion area, Pesibar will experience limitations in the variety of political perspectives presented in decision making, the ability to assess and criticize government performance will also be hampered. As a result, governments may feel freer to act without having to be effectively accountable to their citizens. The potential for corruption and abuse of power will increase as the dominant power of political elites strengthens. In the long term, dynastic politics can also give rise to a sense of public apathy towards the political process and weaken public control over political elites. Moreover, in the context of new expansion areas that do not yet have a stable government, this condition poses a big challenge for local democracy in Indonesia.



**Figure 1.** Factors in the Existence of Political Dynasties in Pesisir Barat Regency

## 4. Conclusion

Behind regional expansion, which is often seen as a step for community development, there are actually complex political dynamics. This is sometimes used by political elites to control resources in the region, as well as paving the way for the growth of political dynasties controlled by dominant local political elites. This risk becomes increasingly real due to the limitations of weak political institutions and political traditions that are not yet well established in the region.

Research has proven that there is a strong potential for the emergence of dynastic politics, as seen in the case of AI and his family as initiating actors. The main factors that led to the emergence of political dynasties in Kab. Pesibar, firstly, is the process of regional expansion, which is often accompanied by the allocation of resources and the formation of new government structures, which can be utilized by political families to strengthen their position. Second, clientelism and patronage allow incumbents to build strong support networks through patron-client relationships, leveraging resources and influence to win elections. Third, the party recruitment system which tends to select candidates based on popularity and wealth, not competence, also supports the continuation of political dynasties.

Apart from that, a further factor is the existence of local support for political families that are well known and have a track record of achievements which is often greater, especially in new regions seeking stability and influence. Fifth, the coalition domino effect also strengthens this phenomenon, where the political coalition that is formed can strengthen the dominance of certain families in government. Sixth, limited political alternatives and low political participation cause existing political families to become the most reasonable choice for society, strengthening political dynasties due to the lack of viable alternatives. The combination of these factors creates conditions conducive to the continuation of political dynasties in Pesisir Barat Regency. In reality, dynastic politics in the context of regional head elections in Indonesia has not been fully democratic. This dynastic politics can hamper the local democratization process in Pesibar by reducing political pluralism,

accountability and healthy political participation, which is a challenge in building a more inclusive and democratic political system.

To overcome the risk of dynastic politics and strengthen local democratization in Pesibar, several steps can be taken. First, there is a need to reform political institutions that are stronger and more transparent, including increasing supervision over regional head elections and providing strict sanctions against unhealthy political practices. In addition, it is important to increase people's political awareness through education and public awareness campaigns about the importance of political pluralism, accountability, and active participation in the political process. Building the capacity of civil society institutions can also be an important contribution in monitoring and putting pressure on the government to better implement the principles of democratization. There is also a strong commitment from the central government to support political reform at the local level, including providing resources and technical support to strengthen political institutions and support healthy political diversity. Through these efforts, it is hoped that Pesibar can move towards a more inclusive, transparent and democratic political system.

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