

**COMPETITION BETWEEN FAMILY MEMBERS OF POLITICAL  
DYNASTIES IN SAMOSIR REGENCY, NORTH SUMATRA  
PROVINCE, INDONESIA****Ruruh Aris Setyawibawa<sup>1\*</sup>, R. Hamdani Harahap<sup>2</sup>, Muryanto Amin<sup>3</sup>, Nurman Achmad<sup>4</sup>**<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>Doctoral Program in Development Studies, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Dr. T. Mansur  
No.9, Padang Bulan, Medan**\*Email:** [ruruhusus@gmail.com](mailto:ruruhusus@gmail.com)**ABSTRACT**

Regional head elections are a political process mandated by the constitution and are essential to implementing a modern democratic system. In a democracy, political dynasties are still hotly debated, especially in their influence on the general election process. This research focuses on the rivalry between family members in political dynasties in Samosir Regency, North Sumatra Province. This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive approach; the data collection method used was the literature study method used to collect data from the results of literature studies and journals. Data analysis techniques through data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The research results show that rivalry between members of political dynasty families is an exciting and complex phenomenon. This is an anomaly from the character of "Tribalism Dynasties," which tends to continue its pattern of power succession by placing families based on certain tribes or ethnicities. This rivalry can be caused by generational differences, differences in ideology, vision, or differences in selecting internal candidates between different family branches, and internal family conflicts. This reflects that factors such as ideology, political strategy, and changes in political culture, especially local culture that underlies the concept of "Tribalism Dynasties," can significantly influence a region's political dynamics.

**Keyword:** Family Rivalries, Local Politics, Political Dynasties, Regional Head Elections**INTRODUCTION**

Along with the wave of democratization, it is relatively easy for a country to transition to democracy. Anggara (2013) states, "Transition begins with the breakdown of the former authoritative regime and ends with the establishment of the relatively stable configuration of political institutions within a democratic regime." However, transition does not necessarily mean a country will always be within a democratic framework. All countries that are moving towards democracy always face the problem of democratic consolidation, including Indonesia. The democratization process in Indonesia has continued since the collapse of the New Order government. Democracy is characterized by three prerequisites: (1) competition in competing for and maintaining power, (2) community participation, and (3) guarantees of civil and political rights. In this case, the electoral system is one of the essential institutional

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instruments in a democratic country to realize these three prerequisites. This system shows competition and participation and guarantees political rights (Hady & Ibrahim, 2023).

The implementation of regional head elections, or Pilkada, is an implementation of democratic values by the constitutional paradigm (Hariyati et al., 2021). Through Pilkada, the people are re-constructed as the owner of the highest sovereignty in the state administration system. General and regional elections are fundamental to implementing a modern democratic system (Nasution et al., 2023). However, implementing regional elections is still not running optimally because power in the regions has been co-opted and hegemonized by several interests of a small group of people in the regions (Hady & Ibrahim, 2023). This can be seen through the holding of the simultaneous regional elections in 2020, which shows that the influence of family identity is still firm on political support for regional election participants (Christopher et al., 2024). The birth of a political dynasty in a democratic system is not a new phenomenon. States that the emergence of political dynasties is unavoidable in a democratic system (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2014). Dynastic politics in Indonesia developed into several political dynasties. Setiajidi (2021) has characterized and mapped the typology of political dynasties in Indonesia, which resulted in four forms of political dynasties: Populist Dynasties, Octopussy Dynasties, Tribal Dynasties, and Feudalism Dynasties. Apart from the various characteristics of political dynasty forms explained above, the dynamics of dynastic politics in Indonesia have become increasingly attractive, especially with competition between members of dynastic families in regional election contestations in several regions. This condition contrasts with the succession pattern of political dynasties, which tends to take turns. If traced, the occurrence of rivalry between members of political dynasties is concentrated in several regions in Indonesia, especially in North Sumatra. In the 2020 regional elections in North Sumatra, of the 69 pairs of candidates for regent and mayor, 28 candidates from the same clan competed in one electoral district. Rivalry between the same clans also occurred successively in the 2015 and 2020 regional elections, especially in Samosir Regency. Referring to the problem of emergence, Political institutions in Samosir Regency, North Sumatra Province, are characterized by competition or rivalry between family members. This research will discuss the forms of rivalry between family members of political dynasties in Samosir Regency, North Sumatra Province.

### METHOD

This research used a descriptive qualitative approach to reveal and understand the phenomena that occur, which is expected to provide a clearer picture and understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hollweck, 2016). The data collection method used is the literature study method, which is used to collect data sourced from the results of literature studies and academic journals that contain theories and analysis of the political system of regional head elections and explore the manifestations of rivalry between family members of political dynasties in Samosir Regency, North Sumatra Province. Data analysis techniques through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2013).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The democratization process in a country is often identified by three fundamental prerequisites: competition, participation, and guarantees of political rights for all citizens (Nasution, 2020). These three prerequisites are an essential foundation for running an effective democratic system. Competition creates more diverse choices for people, while participation allows citizens to participate in politics. In order to realize these prerequisites, the electoral system plays a central role. The electoral system is used in democratic countries to facilitate healthy political competition, increase citizen participation, and protect individual political rights. In this way, electoral systems help create the foundation for a solid and inclusive democracy (Ginting & Fauzan, 2024). The Regional Head Election (Pilkada) is an essential example of implementing the general election process in a democratic system. In democratic ideals, Pilkada participants should be able to represent their function well in channeling the people's aspirations (Prayogi, 2019). Developing field conditions in several regions show that regional election contestants often need to function better as channelers of people's aspirations. On the other hand, regional election results are often determined by candidate figures who are well-known in the local context. This phenomenon indicates that regional head elections, in some cases, do not fully reflect the will of the people but are more related to local wisdom factors or the popularity of candidates. In some contexts, this can foster the emergence of political dynasties at the local level. A political dynasty refers to a family or group that successively holds the highest political office in a region. This shows that local democracy can be manipulated by placing relatives in strategic regional positions.

The strong phenomenon of political dynasties in the context of the Indonesian democratic system has been highlighted by Aspinall & Mietzner (2014). Political dynasty is a phenomenon that occurs in democratic political systems, which is contrary to the principle of equal political rights. Political dynasties reflect inequality in the distribution of political power, which can challenge democratic systems. This research focuses on political dynasties in the context of regional elections in Samosir Regency, North Sumatra Province. In the 2020 regional elections in North Sumatra, of the 69 pairs of candidates for regent and mayor, 28 candidates from the same clan competed in one electoral district. Rivalry between the same clans also occurred successively in the 2015 and 2020 regional elections, especially in Samosir Regency. In the 2015 Samosir Regency Pilkada, of the 4 pairs of candidates who competed, there were 2 candidates from the Simbolon clan, namely Oloan Simbolon (Cawabup Serial Number 1) and Rapidin Simbolon (Cabup Serial Number 4), as well as 2 candidates from the Sinaga clan, namely Alusdin Sinaga (Cawad Regent Number 2) and Juang Sinaga (Cawad Regent Number 4). The 2015 Samosir Regency Pilkada was won by Rapidin Simbolon and Juang Sinaga, contestants Number 4 from the PDIP Party. In the 2020 Samosir Regency Pilkada, of the 3 pairs of candidates competing, there were 2 people from the Simbolon clan, namely Marhual Simbolon (Cabup Serial Number 1) and Rapidin Simbolon (Cabup Serial Number 3), as well as 2 people from the Sinaga clan, namely Guntur Sinaga (Cawabup Serial Number 1) and Juang Sinaga (Cawabup Serial Number 3). The 2020 Samosir Regency Regional Election was won by Candidate Number 2, namely Vandiko Timotius Gultom and Martua Sitanggang.

In the view of dynastic political theory, the ability of political dynasties to thrive in a democratic system is not always in line with the principle of equal political rights, which

should give every individual the same opportunity to participate in political contestation. It is revealed that political dynasties play a significant role in local politics. Although the community still upholds the concept of "dalihan natolu," which describes three levels of relationships in Batak society (Mailin et al., 2023), kinship in politics has declined. The clan system, such as Simbolon, Sinaga, Gultom, and others, is essential in the Samosir Regency Pilkada, where regional head candidate pairs often have close ties to these clans. Competition even occurs between couples from the same clan, and clan names and familial relationships can influence the choice of potential leaders. The context of political dynasties can also be seen through efforts to influence the election of potential leaders through meetings and solidarity at traditional events. The existence of political money can also have a significant influence on political dynamics in Samosir Regency, where the practice of distributing money to voters is common. Although there is competition between clans, after elections, communities tend to reunite without significant post-Pilkada conflict. The rivalry between family members from various clans, especially between Simbolon and Sinaga, in Samosir Regency politics has complex dynamics. Although this rivalry can divide society in some aspects, it also creates healthy competition that encourages citizens' political development and awareness. This shows that although political dynasties still play a role, there are efforts and signs of change towards elections based on better quality and vision of leaders and more mature political development efforts in Samosir Regency. Thus, political dynasties are not the only factor shaping the local political landscape, and there is a shift towards elections based on people's competence and aspirations. The Samosir regional elections witnessed intense political competition between two pairs of candidates from the Simbolon and Sinaga clans, reflecting the polarization in Samosir society with equal support for the two clans. Despite this, relations within the Simbolon clan in Samosir Regency remain good because the Simbolon clan prioritizes customary law over political law. The Simbolon clan has succeeded in distinguishing between politics and their traditional solid relations, and there has never been any conflict or dispute within the Simbolon clan. Rivalry within the Simbolon clan during the regional elections is interpreted positively as an effort to determine the best candidate for developing Samosir.

### **Anomalous Forms of Tribalism Dynasties**

In the context of political dynasties, Tribalism Dynasties reflect tribal or ethnic-based political domination in a particular region. In research discussing dynastic politics in various regions in Indonesia, such as Banten, Bantul, Kendal, Probolinggo, Indramayu, North Sulawesi, South Sulawesi, Papua, the Special Region of Yogyakarta, and Bali, it can be seen that dynastic politics is often related to a solid local political culture. One form of dynastic politics identified is Tribalism Dynasties, which shows the tremendous political influence of certain tribes or ethnicities in the region. In the cases mentioned in the dissertation, dynastic politics was often used to secure power by placing family or relatives in essential posts in government or business projects. In this context, Tribalism Dynasties reflect how certain tribes or ethnicities can dominate politics in their region by utilizing tribal or ethnic identity to maintain power. The familial, political culture that characterizes dynastic politics in Indonesia influences the character of dynastic politics despite its different forms in various regions. This familial, political culture seems to have penetrated various levels of politics in

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Indonesia, where dynastic politics is more synonymous with heredity than the quality of political actors or the cadre of political parties. Thus, Tribalism Dynasties manifest dynastic politics in Indonesia, which reflects a solid local political culture and the dominant influence of tribe or ethnicity in politics in a particular region (Sufajar & Guridno, 2021).

In the Pilkada in Samosir Regency, local culture tends to be firm with local wisdom or the concept of "dalihan natolu" in Batak culture. "Dalihan Natolu" is the social structure of the Toba Batak community's kinship system. Dalihan Natolu creates a structure in society so that we can live with mutual respect, help each other, and keep people away from internal tribal and religious conflicts. The concept of local wisdom is also often used in maintaining political power, which tends to cadre successors based on the similarity of certain clans by dynastic tribalism. However, in the last two periods of the Samosir regional elections, anomalies have been seen in the political dynasties in the area, where there has been rivalry between clan members within the dynasty's family. This becomes very interesting, where rivalry between members of political dynasty families can be seen as part of the dynamics of political competition. The concept of political competition shows highly competitive relationships between political actors, including rivalry between members of political dynasty families. This creates an atmosphere of intense competition in the Pilkada, where various parties compete to get voter support and votes. Thus, political dynasties, political culture, local wisdom, political dynasty typology, and political competition are interrelated elements in the context of regional elections in Samosir Regency, North Sumatra Province.

### **Members of Political Dynasties from Different Generations**

The form of rivalry between family members in the Samosir regional elections was the existence of political dynasties of different generations. This can occur between generations in a political dynasty family where the more mature and younger generations compete with each other. Another reason also occurs when a particular political dynasty family has previously occupied a specific position or position. However, at another time, another family also wants to be able to occupy that position, resulting in a struggle for power between different generations in the political dynasty family. In the 2020 Samosir Regency Pilkada case study, this aspect occurred where previously, those who ran as candidate pairs in the Samosir Regional Head Election were adults. However, in 2020, candidate pairs came from young people. The candidate pair with serial number 2, namely Vandiko Timotius Gultom and Martua Sitanggang, is considered younger than the other candidate pairs. Apart from that, if you look at the results of previous wins for the nomination for Regional Head in Samosir Regency, which were won by political dynasty families from the Simbolon and Sinaga clans, then in the 2020 Samosir Regency Pilkada, different results were obtained where the candidate pairs from the Gultom and Sitanggang clans were against Candidate pairs with the Simbolon and Sinaga surnames can get more votes than others.

### **Differences in viewpoints, ideologies, vision, and mission**

Differences in ideology, vision, or development plans between individuals from different clans can drive competition, as each candidate tries to win voter support with different arguments and promises. In politics, vision and ideology are often used together to form platforms and policies because vision is the final goal to be achieved. In contrast,

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ideology provides a framework for thinking about achieving it. In this case, each candidate pair in the Samosir Regency Pilkada has a different ideology and vision, even though the final result is to develop the Samosir Regency. Even though each pair of competing candidates comes from the same clan, if they have different ideologies in the world of politics, they could separate themselves and form their leadership. If you look at the previous regional elections, there was only one pair of candidates with the Symbolon and Sinaga surnames, but in the 2020 Regional Elections, there were 2 (two) pairs of candidates competing with the same surname, namely Simbolon and Sinaga. This suggests that political dynasty families can split if they have different ideologies and visions.

### **Internal family conflict occurs**

The emergence of family conflict in political dynasties, this form of rivalry can include internal conflict in political dynasty families because it can be related to inheritance, assets, or power in the family structure of political dynasties. The 2020 Samosir Regency Pilkada was attended by 3 (three) pairs of candidates competing, where 2 (two) of the 3 (three) pairs of candidates came from the same clan, namely Simbolon, and Sinaga, which clan is always said to win the Regency Regional Head Election. Samosir. Candidate pairs from the two clans always collaborate to gain appreciation from the people of Samosir Regency through the Regional Head Elections that have been held. However, conditions are different in the 2020 Samosir Regency Regional Head Elections, where the Simbolon and Sinaga clans have been split into 2 (two) strongholds. This happened because the Simbolon and Sinaga clans nominated 2 (two) pairs of candidates in the regional elections. The two candidate pairs in question are the candidate pair with serial number 1, namely Marhual Simbolon and Guntur Sinaga, while the candidate pair with serial number 3 (three) are Rapidin Simbolon and Juang Sinaga. The nomination of these two pairs of candidates from political dynasty families, especially from the Simbolon and Sinaga clans, can be used as a reference if there has been an internal family conflict between each member of the Simbolon and Sinaga clans so that there are 2 (two) pairs of candidates from the Simbolon and Sinaga clans. Even though politically, they are divided into 2 (two) camps, in terms of cultural closeness, they are still united. This internal conflict occurred only because of political aspects, which could have been due to a power struggle that ultimately divided the votes of sympathizers in the Regional Head Election of Samosir Regency.

### **CONCLUSION**

This research reveals the complex dynamics between political dynasties and democratic principles in Samosir Regency, North Sumatra Province. An effective electoral system is essential to ensure healthy political competition, broad citizen participation, and the protection of individual political rights. In Indonesia, local elections serve as a critical tool for realizing these democratic principles at the local level. However, the local elections in Samosir Regency demonstrated the dominance of political dynasties, where political power is often controlled by specific families or clans, such as the Simbolon and Sinaga clans, which creates inequality in the distribution of political power and contradicts the principle of equal political rights for all citizens. Local Batak culture, particularly the concept of "dalihan natolu," plays a vital role in political dynamics in Samosir, emphasizing respect

and cooperation within the community that can both support and hinder the development of democratic practices. The 2015 and 2020 elections showed competition between members of the same clan, which can arise from generational differences in ideology, vision, and outlook. This suggests that while political dynasties are still dominant, there are signs of a shift towards evaluating candidates based on merit and political vision. The emergence of young candidates such as Vandiko Timotius Gultom in the 2020 Pilkada reflects a shift towards evaluating candidates based on competence and the people's aspirations rather than solely on clan affiliation. Despite the intense competition between clans, no significant post-election conflicts indicate that communities can reunite after the political competition. This indicates that although political dynasties still play a role, Samosir society is maturing in accepting election results and moving towards more vision- and mission-based politics. Overall, this research reveals that while political dynasties remain a dominant factor in the local political landscape in Samosir, there are signs of positive change. Intra-dynasty competition and the emergence of younger and more competent candidates indicate an effort towards a more inclusive and competitive democracy.

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