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Inequality in democracy: Insights from an empirical analysis of political dynasties in the 15th Philippine Congress

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This article presents metrics to estimate the size of political dynasties in the 15th Congress of the Republic of the Philippines and analyze the relationship between political dynasty and socio-economic outcomes. Results show that political dynasties comprise 70% of jurisdiction-based legislators in the current Congress. They possess higher net worth and win elections by larger margins of victory compared to those not belonging to political dynasties. Jurisdictions of political dynasties are characterized by lower standards of living, lower human development, and higher levels of deprivation and inequality.

Keywords: democracy; political dynasty; Philippine Congress

Democracies are widely touted to be able to facilitate and sustain broader and more inclusive processes of economic and human development. Scholars associate political democracy with more predictable long-run economic growth, enhanced macroeconomic stability, more rational management of economic and political shocks and crises, and improved distributional outcomes.

In theory, democracies guarantee equal voice in government decision-making through a range of mechanisms like one-person-one-vote, equality in political participation, and free speech. A democracy has the potential to cultivate an environment that is responsive to the needs of its citizens that, often, brings about higher levels of human capital investments and more inclusive and equitable social and economic outcomes. However, underdeveloped democratic institutions could be associated with weak political participation and thus produce, in some cases, political dynasties. Still, political dynasties can exist in any democracy regardless of its structure. A brief survey of the literature suggests that the share of legislators with dynastic links to past parliaments range from as low as 6% in the United States (Dal Bo, Dal Bo, and Snyder 2009) or 10% in Argentina (Rossi 2009) to as high as 37–40% in Japan and Mexico (Asako et al. 2010). In the case of the Philippines, the share of political dynasties is estimated between 50% (Querubin 2010a) and 70% (calculations of the authors) if the links to the local government units are included in the count.

There is a view that the prevalence of political dynasties signals the deterioration of political equality and the resulting political monopoly leads to a deterioration of socio-economic outcomes that prevent people from effectively communicating their needs to their government. Moreover, dynastic officials can use the powers of the state for

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self-serving interests without fear of replacement or administrative sanctions. They also skew the selection of political leaders, thereby favoring those with influence, possibly preventing the best and the brightest from serving in the government, and/or biasing policies in favor of certain groups. Yet, an alternative view suggests that political dynasties afford reformists an extended time horizon that enables more effective planning and implementation of policies with long-term goals. Politicians with shorter tenures often yield to populist demands and shun difficult but necessary reforms that pay off in the future, and are critical to sustained, robust, and inclusive growth. It is also possible that dynastic politicians possess legacy-related motivations that are strongly linked with the overall outcomes in their respective jurisdictions. Thus, the longer their tenure the more they tend to care about long-term outcomes. Alternatively, rent-seeking dynastic politicians, upon recognizing the pecuniary benefits of adopting growth-oriented policies and strategies, might also be motivated toward enacting reforms that would result in considerable and sustainable economic growth in their own jurisdictions. In this regard, the net impact of political dynasties on social and economic outcomes remains an empirical question.

This article presents metrics to estimate the size of political dynasties in the 15th Congress of the Republic of the Philippines and analyze the relationship between political dynasty and socio-economic outcomes. It is one of the first comprehensive works to map the landscape of political dynasties in the country. Laying out the dynastic landscape in the Philippines, the article examines several questions. What is the share of political dynasties in the current 15th Congress of the Republic of the Philippines? What is the share of political dynasties in the major political parties in the Philippine Congress? What is the pattern of gender distribution among political dynasties? What is the age distribution of political dynasties in the current Congress? What is the net worth of political dynasties? Are political dynasties associated with higher levels of poverty and inequality and lower levels of human development outcomes? Is the standard of living lower in provinces dominated by political dynasties? While the analysis herein is not meant to be causal in nature, the objective of this article is to lay out an empirical description of dynastic patterns and their socio-economic correlates.

In what follows, section 1 provides a review of literature on political dynasties, covering issues such as measurement, tenure, and their linkages to poverty, inequality, and other socio-economic outcomes. Section 2 describes the methodology in this article then section 3 analyzes the results. A final section reiterates the main findings of this article.

1. The setting of political dynasties

Why study political dynasties?

Because of the important nexus between democratic institutions and the market economy, political inequality, in turn, could be a crucial factor behind other forms of inequality, including income inequality. Political inequality could be self-reinforcing, as it could worsen economic and other forms of inequality. What results is a type of “low level democratic equilibrium” where mutually reinforcing forces of weakened democratic institutions lead to poor economic outcomes and vice versa. Thus, studying political dynasties adds further empirical and theoretical insight to an analysis of the broader concept of political inequality.

Modern democracies are often characterized by dynastic leadership to some degree. The more interesting issue especially for policy is the relationship between political dynasties and socio-economic outcomes. Studies that focused on the link between

democracy and economic growth have still not settled the direction of causation (e.g., Burkhart 1997; Doucouliagos and Ulubasoglu 2008; Rodrik 2007; Lee 2005; Morrisson and Murtin 2009; Murtin and Wacziarg 2011; Plümer and Martin 2003) and need to be differentiated from those that examine political dynasties within democratic regimes more specifically. With the possible exception Dal Bo, Dal Bo, and Snyder (2009), Rossi (2009), and Asako et al. (2010), and a few path-breaking studies in the Philippines (e.g., Balisacan and Fuwa 2004; Querubin 2010a, 2010b) there is little empirical evidence on how political dynasties affect socio-economic outcomes, and vice versa.

Why study the political dynasties in the Philippines?

Political dynasties in the Philippines have been the topic of a growing number of studies. Teehankee (2007), for instance, argues that the emergence and persistence of political dynasties stems from the highly unequal socio-economic structure of Philippine society and the failure of the country to develop a truly democratic electoral and party system. The inability of the majority to contest the elite is argued to engender numerous political dynasties. Coronel (2007) further suggests that a combination of factors like wealth, popularity, political machinery, alliances, myth, and violence contribute to the formation of political dynasties. Wealth is crucial because running for and remaining in office is costly. Indeed, Sidel (1997) notes that Philippine politicians spend an inordinate amount of money in order to have an effective political campaign because of the need to compete with and/or engage in vote buying, electoral fraud, and coercion. On the other hand, political success opens opportunities and resources to enable political dynasties to consolidate and expand their economic and power bases (McCoy 1994).

But wealth and popularity are not sufficient to form political dynasties because political success requires political machinery. Coronel (2007) thus argues that the success of a political campaign is contingent on the creation of a political network capable of transforming wealth and influence into votes. Coronel notes that political dynasties often consolidate their power through mergers, but Sidel adds that several dynasties succeed because of their affiliation with more powerful political entities. Thus, forging alliances with the larger and more powerful political families enables prospective political dynasties to draw upon larger pools of resources and broaden their political influence. Some political dynasties are also known to complement their advantages or compensate for their disadvantages with the systemic use of violence and intimidation.¹ The long history of politically motivated assassinations indicates that violence provides some dynastic politicians the opportunity to remove or grievously cripple the rival political dynasties.²

Recent analyses on the Philippine Congress arrive at results that cohere with the earlier studies. Querubin (2010a), for example, estimates that the capacity for self-perpetuation of Filipino legislators is three times higher than that of legislators in the United States. Meanwhile, Balisacan and Fuwa (2004) uncover evidence that the presence of political dynasties influences the growth in expenditure but not the reduction in poverty. In addition, they find that political dynasties are negatively associated with subsequent income growth.

Possible framework for political dynasties research

In forging an agenda for an empirical analysis of political dynasties, it would be useful to outline its possible linkages with socio-economic outcomes. In theory, democracies promote political equality through, say, the one-person, one-vote arrangement, equality

before the law, and free speech, among others. In turn, such provisions are expected to enhance the equal consideration of the preferences and response to the needs of citizens. In countries where the vast majority is from the lower income segment of society, democratic institutions potentially open the door for more responsive and pro-poor policy-making. This setting is critical in terms of investments in human capital, which are important for long-term economic growth. Democracies could therefore contribute to the reduction of poverty and income inequality as well as to the promotion of inclusive economic growth.

Nevertheless, there are factors that can weaken political participation and representation. Put differently, there are many *de jure* democracies but less *de facto* democracies. The contention of this article is that an important element of such scenarios is political dynasties.

Various factors contribute to the rise of political dynasties, including the prohibitive cost of running for office, rising influence of political lobbies, and factors influencing voting behavior such as name recall.³ As noted earlier, membership to a political dynasty increases one's chances of being elected into office and allows the politician to constrain competition by excluding most citizens from participating in political leadership roles. Once in the position of power, dynastic officials could (but not necessarily) promote narrow class interests. Political participation can be further weakened (and political dynasties strengthened) through imperfect information and voter disillusionment. In turn, the people may misinterpret political platforms, vote candidates who do not represent their interests, or altogether dismiss the need to scrutinize political platforms and go for personality or vote along patronage lines.

The lack of political competition and the prevalence of political dynasties affect socio-economic outcomes through at least three channels. First, if the prevalence of political dynasties prevents the majority of the citizenry from effectively communicating their needs to the government, it could prevent the government from effectively responding to social and economic problems. The misrepresentation (or inadequate representation) of the excluded groups could skew poverty reduction policies and income redistribution mechanisms, worsen poverty and income inequality, and ultimately compromise the capacity of the government to provide the most necessary public goods. Second, democratic institutions could be compromised if dynastic officials use the powers of the state for self-serving interests. Finally, political dynasties could skew the selection of political leaders favoring those with influence and prevent the best and the brightest from serving in government to bring about sub-optimal policy and, in the end, weak socio-economic outcomes.

On the other hand, dynastic rule can be argued to provide longer time horizons on which to plan and implement reforms with long-term development objectives. One possible outcome is that a politician with short tenure and who is seeking re-election may opt for projects and policies with immediate results, providing less emphasis on promising projects and policies whose returns become visible only under a longer horizon and may therefore become realized under subsequent regimes. The recognition of longer time horizons can induce improved performance even from rent-seeking politicians. Upon recognizing that their personal pecuniary interests are inimitably tied to the social and economic outcomes of their jurisdictions, these politicians could be inclined to invest in the productive capacities of their jurisdictions. As with the so-called "stationary bandits" argument, rent-seeking politicians would work toward ensuring the continued survival and expanding the productive capacities of their constituents (Olson 2000). Accordingly, it is possible that patronage politics contribute to the survivability of political dynasties.⁴

Moreover, political dynasties could have a causal effect on socio-economic outcomes through policy choices made by incumbents. At the same time, socio-economic conditions could be part of what explains the emergence of political dynasties. Political equality in a democratic setting can help facilitate inclusive economic growth by promoting broader access to public services that enhance human capital and providing better employment and business opportunities to a greater proportion of the population through a more responsive government. In this way, democracy indirectly enhances social outcomes through improvements in the provision of public health and education and the elimination of unnecessary transaction costs and social costs brought about by corruption. The emergence of a truly representative and democratic government could bring about these outcomes. Furthermore, a truly representative and democratic government could be more attuned to the needs of its constituents and as such has an enhanced capacity to respond to economic and political shocks and crises.

2. Data and methodology

The empirical mapping of political dynasties begins with the House of Representatives of the 15th Congress of the Republic of the Philippines and extends back to the 12th Congress. Socio-economic and demographic profiles of the legislators are obtained along with the district level indicators for standard of living, poverty, and inequality. Data on the party list are not covered by the database.

Measuring political dynasties

The measurement of political dynasty is achieved through a family name identification approach that is applied on two levels: the House of Representatives and the Local Government Units. Several limitations to this procedure need to be pointed out. First, kinship relations can extend beyond consanguinity to include affinity and other relations associated with the extended family setup. Such a dimension of kinship relations is particularly relevant when there are intermarriages between political dynasties. Second, two individuals can share the same family name yet they may not be related at all. Third, the starting point in the identification process is the membership of the 15th Philippine Congress: political dynasties that do not have a family member in the current Congress (for whatever reason) end up excluded in the count. Similarly, given that the coverage of the count is between the 12th and 15th Congresses, other political dynasties also end up being excluded in the count. Nonetheless, we argue that our estimates are minimum measures of political dynasty in the Philippines. Querubin (2010a, 2010b), however, notes that datasets that include middle names in the compilation turn out to give similar results to datasets that are restricted to family names only.⁵

Hence, a current representative in the 15th Congress is identified as belonging to a political dynasty if that legislator shares the same last name with at least one other legislator in the 12th, 13th, or 14th Congresses. The result is called “Dynasty1,” which, in turn, is extended in three ways. “Dynasty2” is defined as a legislator who shares the same last name with past officials at the local government units elected in 2001, 2004, or 2007. To manage the mapping, identification is limited to the governors, vice governors, mayors, and vice mayors – this adjustment has not yet been carried out in the literature on political dynasties but it is especially relevant to the Philippines. “Dynasty3” is defined as a legislator who shares the same family name with other legislators who served in at least one Congress between the 12th and 15th Congresses as well as with at least one official at

the local government units elected between 2001 and 2010. Lastly, “Dynasty0” is defined as a legislator who shares the same family name with another legislator who was a member in the previous Congresses *and* another current member of the present Congress as well as past *and* present officials at the local government units elected between 2001 and 2010. In summary, the four indices are:

- *Dynasty1*: The share of legislators in the 15th Congress with kinship links to at least one legislator in the 12th, 13th or 14th Congress;
- *Dynasty2*: The share of legislators in the 15th Congress with kinship links to at least one legislator in the 12th, 13th, or 14th Congress, or at least one local government official elected in 2001, 2004, and 2007;
- *Dynasty3*: The share of legislators in the 15th Congress with kinship links to at least one legislator in the 12th, 13th, 14th, or 15th Congress, or at least one local government official elected in 2001, 2004, 2007, or 2010.
- *Dynasty0*: The share of legislators in the 15th Congress with kinship links to at least one legislator in the 12th, 13th, *and* 14th congress *and* at least one other legislator in the 15th Congress as well as at least one local government official elected in 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010.

3. Analysis of political dynasties

Descriptive results

Statistics on the 15th Congress of the Republic of the Philippines at the district and province level are shown in Tables 1 and 2. Estimates on the political dynasty indicators are show in Table 3. Close to 40% of the Congressmen (84 of 229) have kinship links with legislators in the previous three Congresses. There is extensive anecdotal and journalistic evidence suggesting that Dynasty1 needs to be expanded to cover the linkages not just to past members of Congress but also elected officials of the local government units. Thus, Dynasty2 indicates that political dynasty increases to 63% of the Congress. About 70% (Dynasty3) of the district legislators of the 15th Congress possess kinship links to past legislators, past local government executives, as well as present legislators and elected officials of the local government units. Only 10 legislators in the 15th Philippine Congress belong to the restrictive category “Dynasty0.”

Table 4 reveals that the proportion of female legislators who are characterized as dynastic is proportional to male legislators who are also characterized as dynastic. This pattern holds across the three different definitions of political dynasty. This finding provides evidence that political dynasties in the Philippines are gender neutral. Then, Table 5 presents a snapshot of the party affiliations in Congress, using the “official” affiliations at the time the data gathering was undertaken (i.e., the affiliations immediately

Table 1. Summary statistics of district representatives.

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Age	229	52.71	12.95	28	85
Tenure	229	1.60	0.73	1	3
Net worth	229	PhP53,603,123	PhP109,815,892	PhP1,046,500	PhP1,134,233,000
Margin of victory	229	31%	24%	0.12%	88%

Table 2. Provincial economic statistics.

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
Poverty incidence	94	22.726	14.507	0	52.9
GINI	94	0.384	0.05	0.183	0.513
Per capita income	94	24,345	7,724	6,664	37,039
Employment	94	93.205%	4.43%	79.6%	100%

Table 3. Dynastic and non-dynastic district legislators by definition, total number and percent share.

	Dynasty0	Dynasty1	Dynasty2	Dynasty3
Dynastic	10 (4.36% of legislators)	84 (36.7% of legislators)	144 (62.9% of legislators)	155 (67.7% of legislators)
Not dynastic	219	145	85	74

Table 4. Dynastic and non-dynastic district legislators by gender, political party and age, total number and percent share.

	Legislators	Dynasty0	Dynasty1	Dynasty2	Dynasty3
Female	50	3 (6% of female legislators)	21 (42.0% of female legislators)	32 (64% of female legislators)	36 (72% of female legislators)
Male	179	7 (3.9% of male legislators)	63 (35.2% of male legislators)	112 (62.6% of male legislators)	119 (66.5% of male legislators)
Total	229	10	84	144	155

after the elections in 2010.) Clearly, it is possible that these affiliations continue to change (notably as politicians prepare for local elections in 2013).⁶ Nevertheless, based on the snapshot of affiliations, the evidence suggests that the four largest political parties in the Philippine Congress are predominantly dynastic.

Take the Nacionalista Party (NP) results, for instance. The NP has the highest share of political dynasties in the Congress. It has fewer kinship links to past legislators (Dynasty1) when compared to legislators in other parties but has extensive connections to local government executives (Dynasty2). What is interesting, perhaps, is that this pattern holds across the major political parties in the Congress. Meanwhile, more than 70% of legislators aged at least 70 can be considered dynastic. Younger legislators do not seem to change the pattern of political dynasties. About 77% of the youngest legislators (aged 26–40) are actually dynastic. This pattern seems to suggest that that the second or third generation members of political families are entering politics as well.

Moreover, political dynasties seem to win by larger election margins than non-dynastic candidates. Table 6 reveals higher average margins of victory of dynastic candidates (under all definitions) of at least five percentage points.⁷ Such large margins of victory are seen to be critical because political dynasties need to demonstrate that they

Table 5. Dynastic and non-dynastic district legislators by political party and age, total number and percent share.

		Political party			
Legislators		Dynasty0	Dynasty1	Dynasty2	Dynasty3
LAKAS-KAMPI	76	7 (9.21% of LAKAS-KAMPI Legislators)	38 (50.0% of LAKAS-KAMPI Legislators)	53 (69.7% of LAKAS-KAMPI Legislators)	58 (76.3% of LAKAS-KAMPI Legislators)
Liberal Party	75	1 (1.33% of LP legislators)	18 (24.0% of LP legislators)	40 (53.3% of LP legislators)	43 (57.3% of LP legislators)
NPC	34	0	17 (50.0% of NPC legislators)	24 (70.6% of NPC legislators)	25 (73.5% of NPC legislators)
Nacionalista Party	21	1 (4.76% of NP legislators)	7 (33.3% of NP legislators)	17 (81% of NP legislators)	17 (81% of NP legislators)
Total	206	9	80	134	143
		Age			
Legislators		Dynasty0	Dynasty1	Dynasty2	Dynasty3
26-40	39	4 (10.26% of age 26-40 legislators)	18 (46.2% of age 26-40 legislators)	29 (74.4% of age 26-40 legislators)	30 (76.9% of age 26-40 legislators)
41-55	98	3 (3.06% of age 41-55 legislators)	34 (34.7% of age 41-55 legislators)	60 (61.2% of age 41-55 legislators)	63 (64.3% of age 41-55 legislators)
56-70	67	2 (2.99% of age 56-70 legislators)	21 (31.3% of age 56-70 legislators)	37 (55.2% of age 56-70 legislators)	41 (61.2% of age 56-70 legislators)
70 +	25	1 (4% of age 70 + legislators)	11 (44.0% of age 70 + legislators)	18 (72.0% of age 70 + legislators)	21 (84.0% of age 70 + legislators)
Total	229	10	84	144	155

Table 6. Average margins of victory of dynastic and non-dynastic legislators.

	Dynasty1	Dynasty2	Dynasty3
Dynastic	36.43pp	33.34pp	33.26pp
Non-dynastic	28.49pp	28.23pp	27.64pp
Mean difference	7.94pp	5.11pp	5.62pp
Test statistic	2.3477 (0.0094***)	1.5068 (0.0655*)	1.6602 (0.0485**)

Notes: pp = percentage points; p-values in parentheses: *significant at 0.1, **significant at 0.05, ***significant at 0.01.

enjoy sufficient support from their constituents and, more importantly, dispel or invalidate insinuations of vote-rigging and other illicit election-related activities.

In what follows, we focus on the more extensive dynasty definition (i.e., Dynasty3) given our main interest in the political and kinship connections that may influence local governance. Are political dynasties richer? Table 7 reveals that dynastic legislators are, on average, PhP10 million wealthier than non-dynastic legislators.⁸ This difference in net worth is not statistically different from zero.

Finally, Table 8 presents our attempt to analyze the links between political inequality and income inequality.⁹ Measures for poverty incidence, poverty gap, and poverty severity are consistently higher in districts with dynastic legislators compared to other areas. Specifically, jurisdictions with dynastic legislators tend to have poverty incidence that is five percentage points, poverty gap that is one percentage point, and poverty severity that is half a percentage point higher than other areas. Not surprisingly, the average income of districts with dynastic representatives is lower than that those with non-dynastic representatives.

Table 7. Legislators' net worth, using Dynasty3.

	Net worth	Net worth (sans MP)
Dynasty (in 1,000 pesos)	PhP52,012	PhP52,013
Non-dynasty (in 1,000 pesos)	PhP56,913	PhP42,155
Mean difference (in 1,000 pesos)	-PhP4,901	PhP9,857
Test statistic and p-value	-0.2525 (0.4013)	0.7671 (0.2236)

Notes: The calculations for both columns exclude Congressman Ronald Singson who was replaced in early 2011. The calculations in the last column exclude Congressman Emmanuel Pacquiao whose net worth is an outlier in the Congress. p-values in parentheses.

Table 8. Per capita income, poverty incidence, gap and severity for dynastic and non-dynastic districts, in percent.

	Per capita income	Poverty Incidence	Poverty gap	Poverty severity
Dynastic	PhP23,275.43	24.15	6.18	2.31
Non-dynastic	PhP26,872.38	18.95	4.93	1.86
Mean difference	-PhP3,596.95	5.2	1.25	0.45
Test statistic	-3.565	2.606	2.107	1.794

Notes: Calculations use Dynasty3 definition (i.e., share of legislators in the 15th Congress with kinship links to legislators in the 12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th Congresses, as well as local government officials elected in 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010). Income variable is 2009 GDP per capita.

Table 9. Partial correlations of Dynasty3 vs per capita income.

Controls	Per capita income (1997 prices)
Population (Pop)	-0.297 (0.004)***
Employment (Emp)	-0.331 (0.001)***
Poverty incidence (Pov)	-0.248 (0.016)**
Pop-Emp	-0.309 (0.003)***
Pop-Pov	-0.246 (0.018)**
Emp-Pov	-0.259 (0.013)**
Pop-Emp-Pov	-0.259 (0.013)**

Note: p-values in parentheses: *significant at 0.1, **significant at 0.05, ***significant at 0.01.

Correlates of political dynasty prevalence

A more formal empirical analysis of the correlates between political dynasties, the social and demographic profile of legislators, and the socio-economic context of districts is necessary to establish the cause-and-effect relations of the variables. It is possible that the correlation of dynastic prevalence with certain outcome indicators becomes less pronounced once confounding factors are properly controlled in the empirics. For now, the examination is limited to the links between dynastic prevalence and poverty and inequality (adjusting for factors like the population size and employment). The objective is to analyze the overall patterns without yet claiming causality.

Tables 9–11 present results on the correlation between the proportion of political dynasties (within a province) and the socio-economic outcomes (at the province level). Controlling for population, employment, and poverty incidence, the partial correlation coefficient reveals a negative relationship between average income and the proportion of dynastic representatives in each province. Various combinations of control variables do not alter the finding. In other words, there exists an inverse relationship between average

Table 10. Partial correlations of Dynasty3 vs poverty incidence and Dynasty3 vs GINI.

Controls	Poverty incidence	Provincial GINI
Population (Pop)	0.179 (0.086)*	-0.099 (0.345)
Employment (Emp)	0.217 (0.037)**	-0.077 (0.461)
PCI	-0.56 (0.595)	-0.012 (0.909)
Pop-Emp	0.181 (0.084)*	-0.099 (0.347)
Pop-PCI	-0.050 (0.633)	-0.007 (0.946)
Emp-PCI	-0.039 (0.710)	-0.010 (0.928)
Pop-Emp-PCI	-0.051 (0.629)	-0.018 (0.868)

Note: P-values are in parentheses; p-values are in parentheses, *significant at 0.1, **significant at 0.05, ***significant at 0.01.

Table 11. Partial correlations of Dynasty3 vs HDI.

Controls	HDI-I	HDI-II
Population (Pop)	-0.251(0.015**)	-0.125(0.232)
Employment (Emp)	-0.293(0.004***)	-0.167(0.109)
Pop-Emp	-0.267(0.01***)	-0.131(0.212)

Note: P-values are in parentheses; p-values are in parentheses, *significant at 0.1, **significant at 0.05, ***significant at 0.01. + AMDG.

income and the proportion of dynastic representatives at the provincial level. This result might cohere with at least two possible explanations: (a) dynasties may not be successful in pursuing or do not pursue policies that raise average incomes; and (b) that part of the constituency with lower average incomes may tend to support dynastic politicians. It should nevertheless be noted that these observations refer to aggregated data rather than individual micro-data.

Controlling for employment or population size (or both), the partial correlation coefficient finds a positive relationship between poverty incidence and the proportion of political dynasties in each province. However, the other results give mixed outcomes. These results are indicative of the multifaceted nature of poverty. Since poverty can be said to be the confluence of a variety of factors, its relationship with the proportion of political dynasties in each province is difficult to isolate. Similarly, there is a negative partial correlation between human development and the proportion of political dynasties in each province. Given that the index used in the procedure is underpinned by health, education, and income, the result coheres with two possible explanations: (a) provinces with lower aggregate levels of health, education, and income tend to elect dynasties; and/or (b) dynasties implement policies and programs that may not necessarily improve (or possibly lower) aggregate levels of income, health, and education.

Initially, the above results seem to be inconsistent with earlier findings by Solon, Fabella, and Capuno (2009) that Philippine local government politicians are re-elected through stronger public spending in education and health. If political dynasties are successful in retaining power, then it is expected that they channel substantial resources toward human capital investments. However, it is possible that spending does increase – and, on the margin, generates political support for the incumbent – but corruption and leakages tend to stifle the impact on human development.¹⁰

4. Conclusion

The relationship between political dynasties and socio-economic outcomes is an empirical question. This study developed metrics on political dynasties in the Philippines and examined them vis-à-vis standard of living, poverty, and human development. The main findings provide much food for thought. About 70% of the 15th Philippine Congress is dynastic. On average, political dynasties are spread across the different age and gender groups of legislators. So there appears to be little, if any, bias against the young or against women. But political dynasties tend to dominate the major political parties and, on average, are located in areas with relatively higher poverty levels and inequalities, and relatively lower average incomes. Political dynasties tend to be wealthier than non-dynasties. They also win elections by much larger margins compared to non-dynasties. While these findings do not answer causality, this article pointed out several important patterns based on empirical evidence.

Future research in this area could focus on several key angles. First, as noted, it would be interesting to examine the direction of causality between dynastic prevalence and poverty in the Philippine context. To this end, effective instrumental variables need to be developed in order to solve the identification issues associated with the estimation procedure. Second, it would also be useful to examine the extent to which term limits in the 1987 Philippine Constitution produced an unintended effect of encouraging senior politicians to transfer their mantle of power to relatives in order to circumvent term limits. An argument can be made that term limits made things worse by exacerbating the prevalence of political dynasties, but the extent of the “damage” needs to be empirically

verified. Third, this study has only touched the surface as far as its empirical analysis of political dynastic patterns. The political science literature is rather rich in terms of studying political dynasties and the politics of dynasties in the Philippines, but it would still be useful to take the examination in two directions. One is to deepen understanding of the factors that contribute to emergence and persistence of political dynasties and their consequences. Another is to scrutinize political performance of – and understand the policies that emerge from – political dynasties. Finally, further empirical analysis in this area could look into the role that political dynasties play in the otherwise weak development of political parties in the Philippines. It has been noted by numerous scholars that in the Philippines the politics of personality trumps the development of robust political parties and political platforms. This observation seems to be validated by the dominance of political dynasties in most of the major political parties. Further empirical analyses of party dynamics using measures such as “turn-coatism” and the party list system could help shed light on whether and to what extent clear political platforms and robust political party development could offer a viable alternative to more traditional dynastic politics. These studies could usefully complement existing literature that already flags the challenges related to the development of political parties in the Philippines (e.g., Manacsa and Tan 2005; Rivera 2011).

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Notes

1. See Fegan (1994) and Cullinane (1994) for a historical account of how some political families in the Philippines turned to violence and intimidation as part of their political strategies.
2. Indeed, there are similar experiences in Europe where aristocracies thrived even with broader democratization and political change in that region (Lacey 1983).
3. The elite could become more powerful under maturing democratic regimes for several reasons. First, the elite could possess growing control over the party system as organizations tend to be captured by those who run them. Second, in maturing democracies, more organized and well-endowed groups could have growing opportunities to gain power and influence. See Proud'homme (1995), Hutchcroft and Rocamora (2003), Acemoglu and Robinson (2006), Manacsa and Tan (2005), and Rivera (2011).
4. Since patronage politics may be dominant in areas with high poverty and inequality, it is possible that they influence dynastic patterns across the country. Indeed, Solon, Fabella, and Capuno (2009) finds evidence that Philippine governors enjoy higher success of getting re-elected with larger public spending on education and health, among other development spending items. That study, however, does not account for the possible leakages in development spending which journalistic reports have estimated to be in the range of 12–25% for infrastructure projects to well over 50% for schoolbooks, medicines, and other human capital investment inputs (Parreño 1998). Some spending may be beneficial to each local jurisdiction and could translate to votes. However, continued corruption and rent-seeking may prove inimical to sustained human capital investment, economic competitiveness, and growth in the longer term.
5. Such problems and other data issues can be minimized through consultations with key resource persons who are more familiar with the local context and ground level politics.

6. To capture changes in party affiliations, it might be possible to develop a measure of the number of times a particular politician has changed political parties over their political careers. This is another area for further study and data gathering.
7. Data from the province of Lanao Del Sur have not been compiled by the Commission on Elections at the time of writing.
8. One legislator (with a reported net worth of about PhP1.3 billion) and considered as non-dynastic is an outlier in the dataset and was excluded from the calculation.
9. Poverty incidence measures the proportion of families below the poverty line. The poverty gap refers to the average income shortfall in proportion to the poverty line of poor families. It is the average amount of additional income necessary to bring a family above the poverty threshold expressed as a proportion of the poverty line. Poverty severity is the squared poverty gap divided by the number of poor families. The value of this measure is its sensitivity to the income distribution among the poor.
10. A cursory investigation reveals that from 12–25% of the budgets for infrastructure projects to over 50% of the budgets for schoolbooks, medicines, and other human capital investment are lost to corruption (Parreño 1998).

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