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# Leaders' Characteristics in Indonesia: What Does the Data Say?

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## Executive Summary

Leaders' qualities are an essential part of economic growth and policymaking. Nonetheless, in many cases, the information about leaders' qualities and characteristics is limited. This study investigates and provides new information about leadership characteristics in Indonesia. We collect novel datasets from the curriculum vitae of local leaders (e.g., mayors, vice mayors, regents, and vice-regents) at districts in Indonesia to understand the leaders in Indonesia's political environment. We find that most of the local leaders in Indonesia are male, highly educated, experienced, and had experience in bureaucracy. Our results suggest that Indonesia's political system is still dominated by specific groups and exclusive to certain groups. However, our study suggests that since it transitioned into a democratized country in 1998, the quality of elected leaders' quality in Indonesia has improved. Nonetheless, it remains unclear whether these characteristics lead to better policy choices.

**JEL Classification:** H1; H70; J45; P16

## Keywords

leaders' characteristics — political entry — political selection — Indonesia

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## 1. Introduction

*If all men were equal in interest and in endowment, natural or artificial, there would be no organized economic activity to explain. Each man would be a Crusoe. Economic theory thus explains why men co-operate through trade: They do so because they are different.*

-James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, *The calculus consent*, 1965

*There is only one country that deserves to be my country. He grew up with action and deeds, and the deeds are my deeds.*

-Mohammad Hatta, Indonesia's first vice president.

An earlier study on political economy tends to focus on how parties compete in promoting the most favorable policies to win an election but neglect elected leaders as the subject of interest in political competition, e.g., Downs (1957). In contrast, the modern studies of political economy, e.g. Besley & Coate (1997) and Osborne & Silvinski (1995), posit leaders as a central subject, where leaders' policy preference is used in elections to guarantee that elected leaders' policy pledges are credible.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, Besley (2007) argues that the quality of leaders is one source of government failure since individual competence as policymakers are reflected in their policy output quality.

Recent studies in political economy have shown that leaders' characteristics are critical in influencing how the government performs. Besley & Coate (1997) and Osborne & Silvinski (1996) show how candidates could implement

their preferred policy once they win the electoral competition. Candidate policy preference is used as a guarantor of promises once they are elected. By exploiting the random transition of leaders that ended due to natural or accidental causes, Jones & Olken (2005) show that leader quality matters in influencing economic growth. Using a similar methodology, Besley et al. (2011) found that economic growth is higher in nations with highly educated leaders. They explain that leaders with higher education levels could be more sensible in economic policy choices.

The study about how leader characteristics affect economic performance continues and has tried to investigate different areas, such as fiscal performance (Hayo & Neumeier, 2014,2016), budget allocation (Hayo & Neumeier, 2012; Kuliomina, 2021), and economic liberalization (Dreher et al., 2009; Li et al., 2020). However, studies about leader characteristics in a developing country still need to be expanded due to unwell-documented and inaccessible data, especially in Indonesia. Political sciences studies on the Indonesian legislature, like Aspinall & Berenschot (2019) and Warburton et al. (2021), found that the Indonesian legislature tends to be dominated by elites. Nevertheless, there is no further research, as far as our research goes, that has yet to identify mayor and regent characteristics in Indonesia fully.

However, there are several notable economic research on the behaviour of Indonesian leaders in the post-reform era. By utilizing the exogenous variation on the time of new-order mayors remained in their position during the transition from an authoritarian to democracy era, Martinez-Bravo et al. (2017) found that the longer the authoritarian regime leader remind in power, the worse government quality becomes in the area.

Kis-Katos & Sjahrir (2017) research that focuses on the difference in Indonesian local public investment between

<sup>1</sup> One of the theoretical problems of Downs (1957) is in the reason on how the candidate may commit to their policy pledge once they are elected.

mayors elected during or before the transition to democracy in Indonesia also found an increase in health and physical infrastructure expenditure in democratically elected mayors. Still, public provision decreased in the second wave of political decentralization.<sup>2</sup> Other research also found similar negative notions in local government political accountability (Sjahrir et al., 2014) and human development outcomes (Skoufias et al., 2014). Indicate that the local governance environment in Indonesia may not improve or worsen in the post-reformacy era.

One argument that may explain those findings in Indonesia is the persistence of non-democratic institutions. Martinez-Bravo (2014) studies on the difference between elected and appointed heads of villages in Indonesia in the same transition era found that appointed villages are more likely to manipulate voters due to career concerns.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the study about leaders' characteristics' impact on policies and economic outcomes in Indonesia still needs to be explored. There is still an immense research gap related to Indonesian leaders' characteristics by exploiting Indonesia's rich exogenous variation and heterogeneous society. Further research on Indonesian leaders' characteristics may be beneficial in evaluating the prerequisites of leaders candidates in the future local election.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, this study fills this gap in the literature by answering what Indonesia's leaders are.

To give a complete view of Indonesian leaders' characteristic studies, we collect novel datasets about the mayor and regent characteristics from mayors' Curriculum Vitae that the General Election Commission<sup>5</sup> officially collected in the election process. This study will relate to several other studies: (1) Leader's characteristics globally (Besley & Reynal-Querol, 2011; Hayo & Neumeier, 2016), (2) Leader's characteristics in developing countries (Chattopadhyay & Dufo, 2014; Besley et al. 2005), (3) Leader's characteristics in Indonesia (Warburton et al., 2021), and (4) in particular the political economy in Indonesia (Rezki, 2022; Sjahrir et al., 2013; Farah, 2019).

We find that Indonesian leaders are characterized by highly educated, experienced, and highly active civic organisations. On average, leaders' education level is equivalent to an undergraduate degree, while the population is only in elementary school. They have an extensive experience in government-related sectors, such as political parties, civil servants, legislature, and executives.

They also have high participation in an organization, either in the entire organization they have participated in or the total positions occupied. Most of their role in the organization is dominated by the leadership role. Their occupation characteristics are in line with the previous characteristics. Most come from government officials, where public duties

<sup>2</sup>Kis-Katos & Sjahrir (2017) defined political decentralization as the first time Indonesia elected leader democratically in post-new order era, in 1999, Indonesia elected local leader indirectly through legislative and in the second wave, at 2005, Indonesia elected local leader directly.

<sup>3</sup>At this research, Martinez-Bravo (2014) empirically test the predictions of electoral results and appointed official turnover using the first democratic election in Indonesia after the fall of Soeharto.

<sup>4</sup>For example, see Law No. 32 2004 article 58.

<sup>5</sup>Indonesia general election commission openly display local leader on their websites; for example, 2017 regional election data was downloaded from <https://pilkada2017.kpu.go.id/paslon/tahapPenetapan>.

directly or indirectly force them to socialize and solve various locally complex problems. However, regarding gender, women have unequally represented in Indonesia's local leaders. We suggest that it may relate to women's disadvantages in various important factors that characterize Indonesian leaders, such as education and occupation. Additionally, we find suggestive evidence that it is important for a local leader to fit the local community's characteristics. Most Indonesian leaders have similar religions and birth in the same place as their domain. This policy paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 provides the institutional context in Indonesia. The data is explored in Section 3. Section 4 discusses the evidence. Finally, section 5 concludes our findings.

## 2. Institutional Context

Indonesia is a young democratic country.<sup>6</sup> The transition between autocratic to democratic governance only began in 1999, when the countries held their first general elections after the Suharto regime. To improve democracy climate and overall Indonesian economic condition, the Indonesian government in Habibie's era introduced regional autonomy in Law No. 22/1999 on Regional Government.

The law directly decentralizes the economic and political power that the national government previously governed. The law gives authority to regional governments to regulate their regions and shift national government supervision function to provincial-level government. It also makes the mayor and regent role more critical as they have more liberty and economic resources to organize their region.

In its development, the law underwent significant changes related to regional leader election and the aims and objectives of regional autonomy itself. At first, the mayor and regent are chosen by an indirect election mechanism, where the regional legislature nominates and votes for the candidate. Indonesia started to use direct election in its local leader election in 2005, following the change of Law No. 22/1999 to Law No.32/2004.

The requirement to nominate local leader candidates has changed several times. Law No. 9/2015 increased the preconditions to nominate a candidate from 15% of total seats to 20% and the accumulation of valid votes of the regional representative council from 15% to 25%. Law No. 8/2008 increased the minimum votes for the candidates to avoid a second-round election from 25% to 30%. Aspinall & Benschot (2019) find that the candidates rely more on personal relations than party cadres to improve their electability. Thus, the election system may favour candidates with more popularity and wealth.

In terms of intergovernmental level relations, there is a change from non-hierarchical to hierarchical. Law No. 23/2014 replaces 'authority' with 'affairs' in decentralization and deconcentration definitions, showing that the newer law sees decentralization as a matter of work section, not regional government rights. The new law also clearly states the hierarchical relation between the governor and the lower government level.

<sup>6</sup>As until today, Indonesia has held four wave of direct local government elections: the first (2005, 2006, 2007, 2008), the second (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013), the third (2015, 2017, 2018), the fourth (2020, 2024).

The change between national and local government relations also appears in civil servant regulation. Law No. 22/1999 states that local governments can appoint, transfer, and dismiss civil servants in their region. However, Law No. 5/2014 about civil servants' mandates managing civil servants to an independent institution, i.e., Indonesia Civil Service Commission (KASN).

Nevertheless, the mayor and regent still have massive authority to influence regional economic performance. Law No. 32/2004 and Law No. 23/2014 permit local leaders to submit and design the local government budget. Law No. 23/2014 also gives a more precise mandate on local leaders' authority to design and submit regional development plans.

The local leader's ability to influence their regions is seen in their responsibility for regional education and health services. Rezki (2022) explains that local governments are responsible for providing primary to secondary education in their region. They are also responsible for providing primary healthcare services and employing health workers in the health sector. In general, the local government is responsible for eight central government functions.

Furthermore, Indonesia's local leader is given more liberty in managing its fiscal power in the decentralization era. Kis-Katos & Sjahrir (2017) find a far-reaching change in the type of expenditure in Indonesia's local government. In the pre-decentralization period, the local government expenditure is dominated by an earmarked expenditure (73%), but in post-decentralization, it has been dominated by non-earmarked expenditure (94.6%).<sup>7</sup>

Regarding the ratio of local to central government expenditure, Indonesia is outstanding compared to other countries. For example, in 2020, Indonesia's sub-national government expenditure ratio to the total national government expenditure was approximately 2 percentage point higher than the OECD unitary countries.<sup>8</sup> Thus, this proof strengthens our previous argument that local leaders have a critical role in affecting Indonesia's performance.

### 3. Data

The descriptive analysis used the Indonesian leaders' characteristics dataset. We collected and digitized the data from various sources, such as the General Election Commission, official regency and city websites, and digital newspapers in Indonesia. It contains various individual characteristics of the winning mayor and regent candidate in each region in Indonesia. The number of districts in this sample is 507 out of 514 regions in Indonesia.<sup>9</sup> This data cover one cycle of a regional election in Indonesia, from 2015 to 2018. Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics of the data in this study.

We analyzed 30 independent variables, which could be divided into eight groups of leaders' characteristics: (1) Age,

<sup>7</sup>Kis-Katos & Sjahrir (2017) percentage of earmarked and non-earmarked expenditure is based on their sample, where their pre-decentralization sample is from 1994–2000 and post-dencentralization sample is from 2001–2009.

<sup>8</sup>Indonesia's sub-national government expenditure is form its realization and OECD unitary countries expenditure is already weighted by average.

<sup>9</sup>We dropped Makassar city in the regional election in 2018 due to empty box wins and district in Jakarta provinces due to difference in election method.

(2) Gender, (3) Religion, (4) Birthplace, (5) Education, (6) Occupation, (7) Organization, and (8) Experience.<sup>10</sup> Some of these variables have been used in previous studies, such as gender (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004; Kuliomina, 2021), occupation (Dreher et al., 2009; Kuliomina, 2021), education (Dreher et al., 2009; Besley et al., 2011; Li et al., 2021; Carnes & Lupu, 2016), status based on occupation (Hayo & Neumeir, 2012,2014,2016), office experience (Freier & Thomasius,2016; Pickard, 2021), ethnicity (Besley et al., 2005), and family background (Han & Han, 2021; Hayo & Neumeier, 2012).

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistic of Indonesian leaders' characteristic datasets. Columns 1, 2, and 3 display our unique dataset's descriptive statistics for combined observation between Indonesia's local government's head and vice leader. The total sample contains 1014 observations of Indonesian leaders' characteristics which 507 is the head of local government, and the others are the vice of local government in Indonesia.<sup>11</sup>

The other columns compare the head and vice leader characteristics in Indonesia's local government. We highlight several essential characteristics of Indonesian leaders. The first two groups of characteristics highlight the difference in Age and Gender. On average, there is no difference in age in the head or vice of local government, but both show a highly unequal representation of women. Approximately there are only one out of ten local leaders who are a woman.

The second group of characteristics highlights the difference in religion and birthplace. Birthplace is used as a proxy of ethnics to measure whether ethnicity is important in Indonesia's local government elections.<sup>12</sup> On average, most Indonesian leader is Muslim, and their birthplace seems to play an important role in the local government election. Approximately six out of ten local leaders were birth in the same place as their domain.

The last group of characteristics is related to human capital, like education, organization experience, experience in government-related activities, and occupation. On average, the head of local government seems to have more experience in almost all of the related-human capital characteristics. For example, on average, the head of local government has one more varied experience in an organization (07.14 vis-a-vis 05.70) and has better qualifications in leadership (05.05 vis-a-vis 03.85) than their vice. Regarding occupation, it seems that, on average, local leaders mostly come from the government.

However, Table 1 only shows high-level information about what we find in the Indonesian leaders' characteristics dataset. In the next section, we will discuss each characteristic of Indonesian leaders in more detail and the external factor that may influence them.

<sup>10</sup>The description of each variable and how we coded them can be seen on Table 2 in Appendix section.

<sup>11</sup>Table 1 show that there are only gender and local leader years as head variable who don't have any missing observations.

<sup>12</sup>Aspinall (2011) explains the complexity of measuring ethnicity in Indonesia, since people in Indonesia tend to have more than one ethnicity due to many mix marriages.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Whole sample			Head		Vice	
	Obs (1)	Mean (2)	SD (3)	Mean (4)	SD (5)	Mean (6)	SD (7)
<i>Age</i>							
Local leader age	964	50.08	8.61	50.57	08.24	49.54	8.96
<i>Gender</i>							
Local leader who are women	1014	00.08	00.28	00.09	00.29	00.08	00.27
<i>Religion</i>							
Local leader religion	972	1.31	00.74	1.34	00.76	1.28	00.71
<i>Birthplace</i>							
Local leader who birth at the same place as their domain	944	00.64	00.48	00.61	00.49	00.68	00.47
<i>Education</i>							
Local leader year of schooling	1000	16.80	2.05	17.15	2.09	16.44	1.95
<i>Organization</i>							
Local leader organization membership	709	5.33	4.69	5.98	5.16	4.63	4.00
Local leader organization position	710	6.45	5.91	7.14	6.59	5.70	4.95
Local leader organization position as leader	701	4.47	4.46	5.05	4.94	3.85	3.76
Local leader organization position as staff	700	1.15	1.90	1.30	2.10	00.99	1.64
<i>Experience</i>							
Local leader experience as legislative	908	00.47	00.57	00.45	00.50	00.49	00.65
Local leader experience as civil servant	901	00.39	00.49	00.40	00.49	00.38	00.49
Local leader experience as party member	889	00.72	00.45	00.78	00.42	00.66	00.47
Local leader years as head	1014	1.77	2.48	2.19	2.45	00.02	00.32
Local leader years as vice	1010	00.42	1.36	1.35	2.44	00.83	1.82
<i>Occupation</i>							
Local leader occupation	959	3.57	1.15	3.73	00.99	3.40	01.27

Notes: The total observation of this dataset are 507 observations regency or city. The whole sample observation represents a combined observation of the head and vice leader in our dataset. Thus, the maximum of it is 1014. The unit of observation is the city and regency in Indonesia. There are differences in total observation in each leader's characteristic variable since there are various missing observations due to unwell-documented data. However, the missing pattern is random. Missing observation percentages in each variable can be seen in Table 3 in Appendix.

## 4. Evidence

We start the analysis by looking at leaders' characteristics in Indonesia based on several indicators. Figure 1 shows that higher education, specifically postgraduate students, dominates the head of local government. The same pattern also appears in the vice head, which undergraduate students dominate. If we compare the mean value of the overall Indonesian population, Indonesian local leaders' education level is considered more highly educated than the rest. There are 47.1% of leaders in our sample have a postgraduate degree compared to the sample of the Indonesian population, which is only 0.34%.<sup>13</sup> In other words, approximately five out of ten leaders in Indonesia have a postgraduate degree.

The difference between leaders and the population in terms of the average years of education is much starker. Leaders' average education is equivalent to an undergraduate degree, while the population is only in elementary school.<sup>14</sup>

We could interpret these highly segmented education groups on Indonesia's local leaders into two main possibilities: First, there is a possibility that being a local leader requires a high-quality individual with high education level and experience. Therefore, people who are running for mayor or regent are highly educated. The role itself may function as a filter to select people who have high competency. This possibility could be seen from the average age

of the head and vice of local government, ordinarily at the top of their career ladder.

Second, there is another possibility that this high education level is affected by the prerequisites for the election candidate. The General Election Commission requires candidates to have a minimum age of 30 and a senior high school educated. Thus, it may incentivize people who want to apply as candidates to fulfill beyond the prerequisites. There may also be a social norm in Indonesia where an education degree is considered a signal that the candidate is competent.

The latter argument aligns with Besley & Reynal Querol (2011) findings, where countries that implement democracies tend to select more highly educated leaders. Selecting a good quality leader may increase the quality of governance. However, there is still a debate on the importance of leader education on government performance. Empirical studies in economics like Besley & Reynal Querol (2011) find the importance of educated leaders on economic growth, but studies on political science like Carnes & Lupu (2016) find otherwise.

The other reason why Indonesian leaders' education is concentrated on higher education level groups may be related to the structure of political institutions. As explained in the institutional context section, we analyzed that the law may shape the candidate pool by benefiting more popular and wealthier candidates. Thus, it is contrary to the benefit of a democratic system, which it should provide a much lower barrier of entry than the autocratic system (Besley & Reynal Querol, 2011).

On the other side, empirical evidence supports our former argument about the positive relationship between education and the chance to be elected. In India, Besley (2007)

<sup>13</sup>The sample of Indonesia population is from The National Socioeconomic Survey (SUSENAS) 2015 data.

<sup>14</sup>The average education years for leaders is 16.80 and 6.67 for Indonesia population. The standardization of total years of education could be seen on Table 2 in the Appendix. In addition, the result of Indonesia population score could be less because SUSENAS group diploma 1 and 2 together.

found that education does increase the chances of being elected for local offices. They also found that it positively affects how they use their power. More educated candidates are less likely to behave more opportunistically.

Men highly dominate local leaders in Indonesia. Figure 2 shows that men dominate Indonesia's local leaders, where approximately nine out of ten Indonesian leaders are men. On average, the presence of women in a local leader is much lower than the population of women in Indonesia.<sup>15</sup> There is approximately only 8% of women in our leader sample, much less than 49.8% of Indonesia's women population.

This gender inequality may result from Indonesia's previous education system, which tends to favor males over females. Afkar et al. (2020) found that the Gender Parity Index (GPI) for school enrollment rates for children in the 1970s is way lower than the current GPI, showing a strong female disadvantage in the previous Indonesian education system. They also find that cultural norms are essential in keeping women to play a minimum role in the household. Marriage is one of the main reasons females drop out of school earlier than men.

In terms of labor market participation, women are also disadvantaged. Women are paid less than their male counterparts and lack childcare options. They are often burdened with unpaid work and household responsibilities. In the civil servant case, Afkart et al. (2020) found that women are promoted less often and seek fewer opportunities for promotion than men. Some cultural norms posit that the holder of public office should be male.

Discrimination against females in Indonesia is visualized clearly in Indonesian law. World Bank (2020) analyzed Law No. 13/2003 on labor and found a lack of worker protection for women returning from maternity leave. The law specified protection for female employees, which can perpetuate the notion that women are the weaker sex. Regarding taxation, women, who are typically meant as the second earners, face a disproportionately high tax burden than men. Marriage law in Indonesia also discriminates roles between men and female in households.

Female disadvantages in education and the labor market affect their participation in Indonesia's local leader election. Political science research like Aspinall et al. (2021) on women's political representation in Indonesia's legislature found that women have fewer material resources and networks that play a critical role in winning the elections. Thus, our finding of low female representation at the regional head level is not surprising. They are disadvantaged in many which ultimately affects their ability to win or participate in the election.

Increasing women's participation in Indonesian leadership may positively influence Indonesian government quality. Chattopadhyay & Duflo (2004) research on randomized policy experiments in India found that women elected as leaders invest more in public goods that closely relate to their concerns. Thus, this result shows that improving gender equality in Indonesian local leaders' proportion may affect policymaking.

<sup>15</sup>The average gender for leader is 0.08 and 0.49 for Indonesia population. In addition, the sample of Indonesia population is from The National Economic Survey (SUSENAS) 2015, where women code as 1 and men as 0.

Many winning local leader candidates come from previous government officials. Figure 3 shows that the head of the local leader is dominated by the executive, e.g., the village head, mayor, or regents. Approximately six of ten local leaders were previously leaders in Indonesia's local government. Incumbent success in maintaining their power can be seen in Table 1. The average years of experience as a previous executive are high, and the local leader's head dominates it. On average, they have at least one year as vice of local leader and two years as head of the local leader in the previous period. In other words, incumbents succeed in winning their next election.<sup>16</sup>

The high proportion of incumbents in a local leader is closely related to the authority they have. As explained in the institutional context section, the mayor and regent have the authority to affect regional development planning. For example, political science research like Aspinall (2014) found that decentralization allows the local leader to compete in providing more generous local health insurance schemes. Thus, incumbents may implement expansionary policy, especially in their last year. Sjahrir et al. (2013) research on local Government in Indonesia found a political budget cycle possibility in the first direct elections of regencies or cities in Indonesia.

The high proportion of government officials in both leader and vice could be interpreted into two main perspectives: First, government officials may use their authority to mobilize votes for their benefit. Regarding the patron-client relationship, Aspinall & Benschort (2019) studies on the Indonesia election found that local leaders may use the local government budget for patronage. They may also divert civil servant roles into vote brokerage and improve their public visibility through government service advertisements or banners.

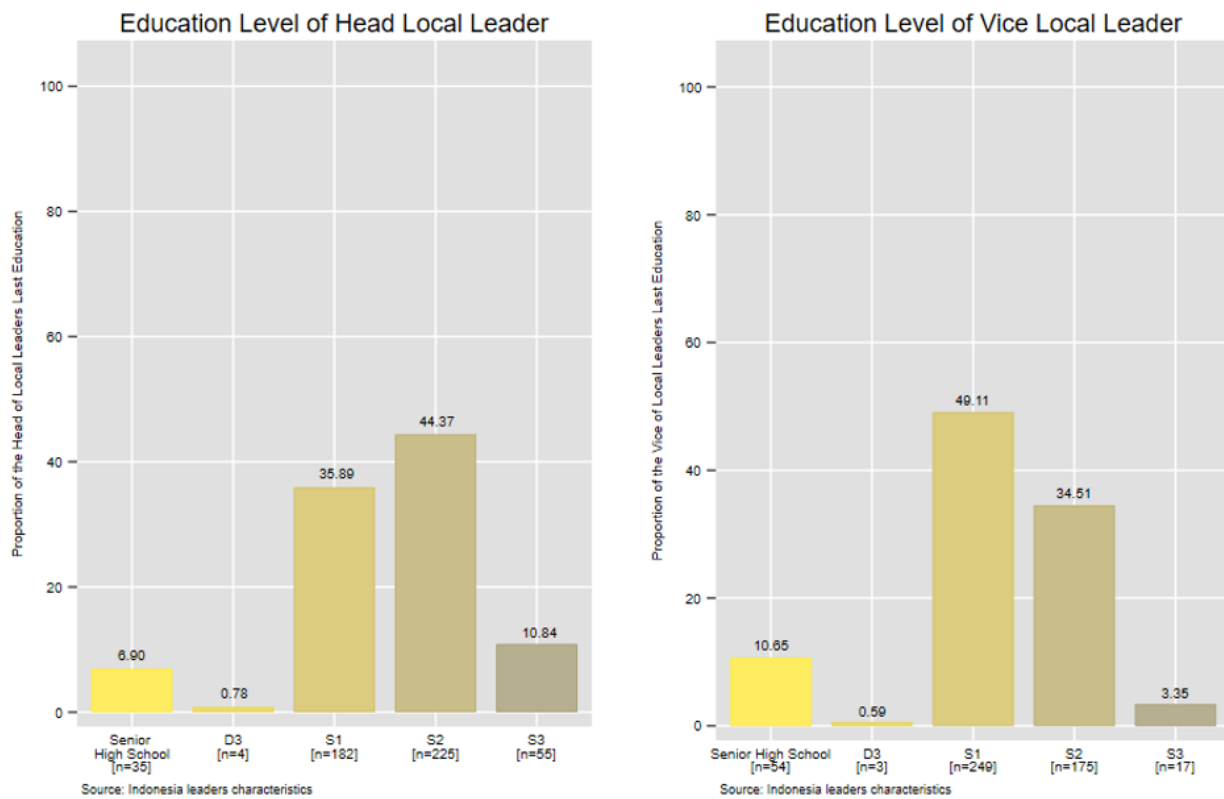
There is empirical research in economics that does show the competitive advantage of incumbency in Indonesia's election. Lewis et al. (2020) found that the Incumbent has an advantage in providing local public service, making them more likely to be voted again by society even though they found that the incumbent tends to perform less in the next term.

Difference from the proportion of the head of the local leader, the vice of the local leader's previous occupation tends to be more variate. Approximately three out of ten vices of local leaders come from the legislative, and two out of ten are from civil servants. In general, most of the local leaders come from the public sector.<sup>17</sup>

People who work in the public sector do have a competitive advantage in winning an election. For example, Aspinall & Benschort (2019) find that the legislature may use its authority to supervise various government stakeholders as a channel to lobby and improve their constituency development. Some regions in Indonesia provide development funds for the legislative to build their constituency,

<sup>16</sup>The average local leader's total years as head and vice is 1.77 and 0.42. The head of local leaders contributes significantly to the average years of experience as local leaders since the average total years as the previous head is 2.19 and 1.35 as previous vice local leaders.

<sup>17</sup>In total there are 74.74% of the vice of local leaders come from the public sector, such as civil servants, legislative, executive, military, and police.



**Figure 1. Indonesia Local Leader Education Proportion**

generally called “aspiration funds.”

On the other hand, civil servants may be benefited from their authority to directly distribute government programs to society. It may give them publicity to be known in their area or control the access to government services that the society needs. They may also exert their relation to the upper or lower level of government to help them win the election. Martinez-Bravo (2014) research on Indonesian officials finds evidence that supports our argument. She finds the possibility of higher-level government manipulating the lower-level government in Indonesia to help them win an election.<sup>18</sup>

The evidence of the Indonesian government that tend to act by private interest could be found in economics (Martinez-Bravo, 2014; Martinez-Bravo et al., 2017; Kis-Katos & Sjahrir, 2017) and political science literature (Aspinall, 2005,2013; Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019).<sup>19</sup> Both evidences emphasize the persistence of the non-democratic reign of the new order as the primary source of the poor quality of the Indonesian government.

Second, government officials may have a higher chance of winning the election because they succeed in carrying out their responsibilities in government. They are considered individuals with high competency and familiarity with government affairs. Ordinarily, they have sufficient knowledge

<sup>18</sup>Martinez-Bravo (2014) found stronger incentives for appointed local officials (*lurah*) than elected local officials (*kades*) in sporting the upper level of government.

<sup>19</sup>Besley (2007) defined the behavior of a government that mainly sees private interest as related to rent-seeking, corruption, bribes, lack of sufficient incentives to perform better for their citizen, and diverting resources for their needs.

about how to improve government services. They may also have been selected because they successfully introduced good programs to society. This argument aligns with Lewis et al. (2020) finding that improving access to public service affects incumbent electability.

Both perspectives of our argument come from two broad camps of government in a political economy perspective, either based on private or public interest. Nevertheless, both emphasize the same point in determining who has a better chance of winning an election. Which jobs require them to interact with the broader community?

The analysis of leaders' occupations can be expanded to the level of electability and its impact on government performance. There are extensive examples of the economic literature on the impact of leaders' profession on government policy in various countries, directly using occupation or socioeconomic status based on the occupation we mentioned earlier. For example, Dreher et al. (2009) research on leaders from 72 countries found that former entrepreneurs and military leaders are more likely to liberalize their country's economy. However, Kuliomina (2021) research on Czech municipalities found the opposite.

The other characteristic of Indonesian leaders is their involvement in various organizations. On average, each Indonesian leader participates in approximately five organizations and occupies approximately six organizational positions, mostly leadership. Leaders' high participation contradicts the declining trend of Indonesian citizen participation in organizations (Antlöv et al., 2016).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup>Antlöv et al. (2016) evaluate the implementation of the 2014 Village Law in Indonesia using three-round Local Level Institution studies panel



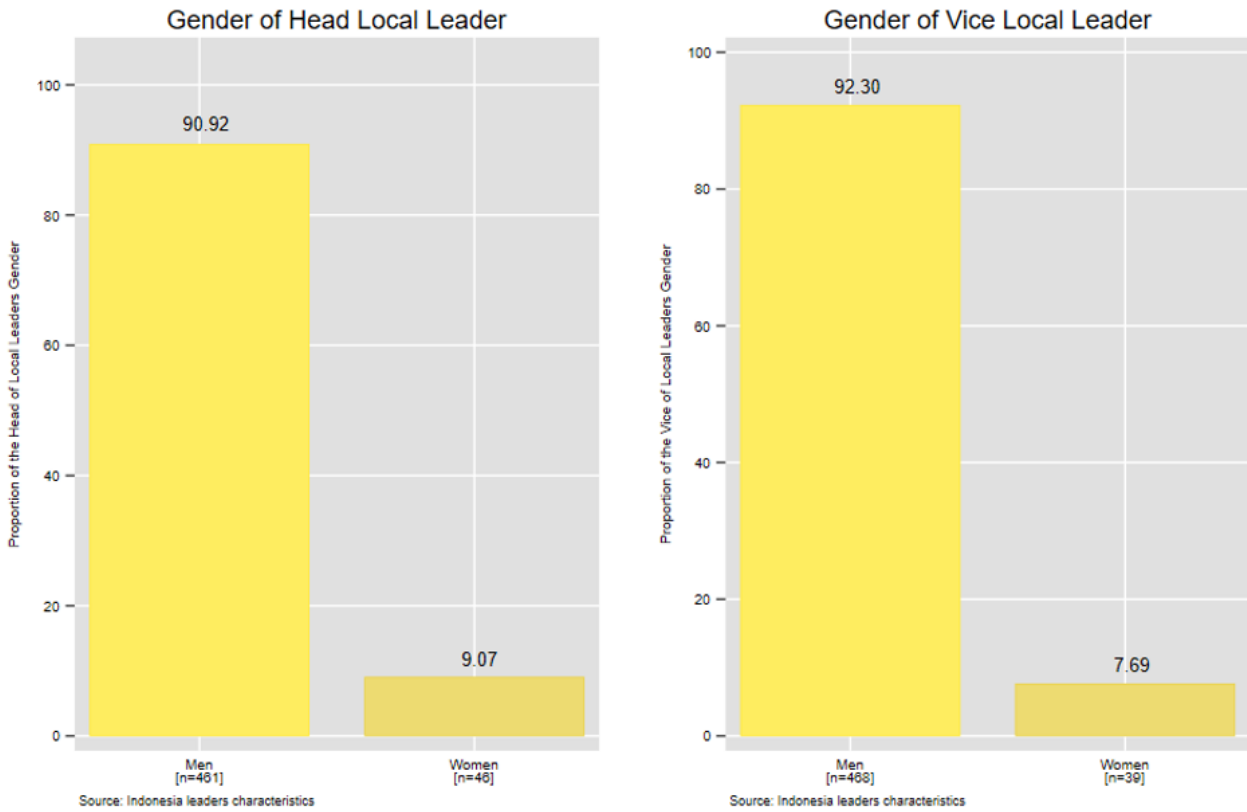


Figure 2. Indonesia Local Leader Gender Proportion

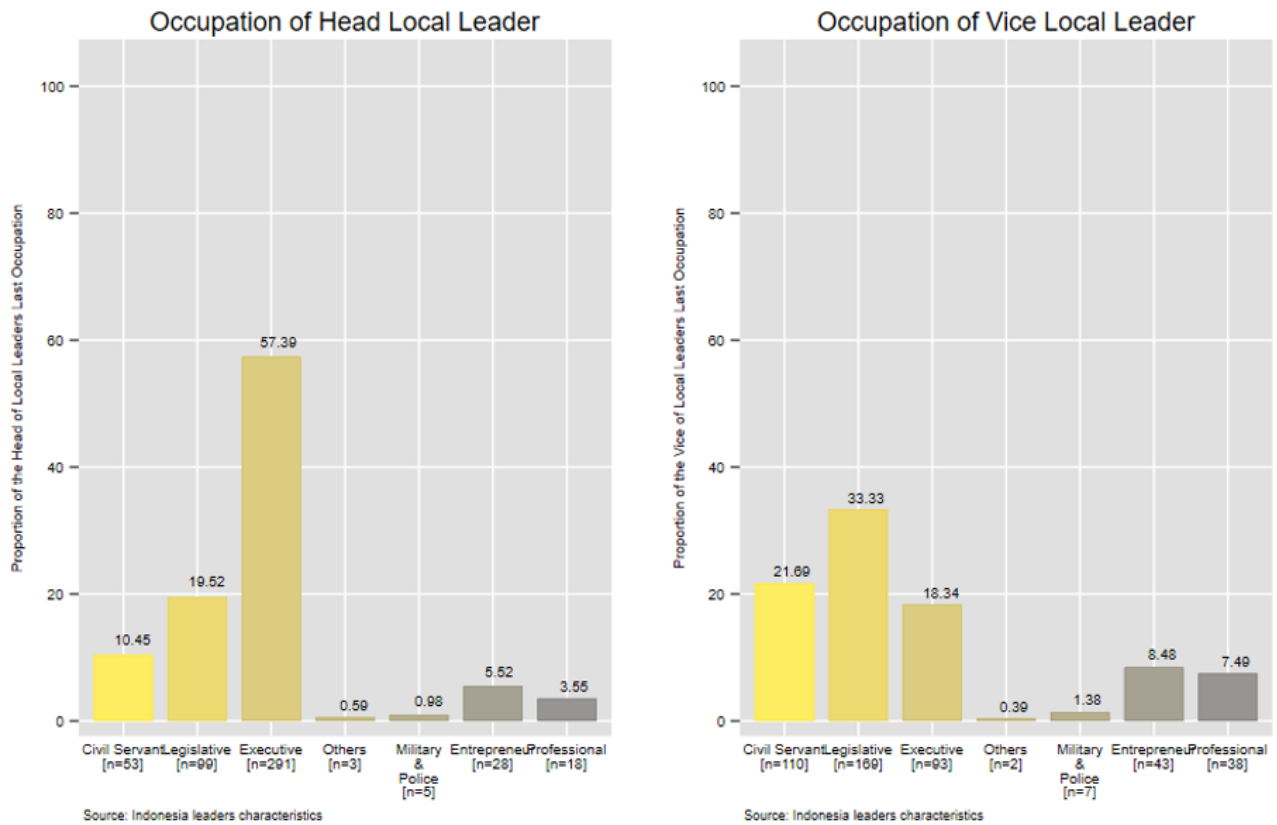


Figure 3. Indonesia Local Leader Occupation Proportion

The head and vice of local leaders in Indonesia equally participate actively in the organization. Figure 4 shows that approximately five out of ten local leaders had six or more organizations memberships prior they took office. There is only a minority of our leader sample who do not have any organization.

The importance of organizational participation may relate to their needs to win the election. Aspinall & Brenschot (2019) argue that personal networks play a more critical role than parties in mobilizing voting for the candidate in Indonesia. Studies in other countries like India also found the importance of political connections to elected leaders (Besley et al., 2005). The importance of connection is aligned with our analysis in the institutional context section, where individual persona considers the most crucial aspect of Indonesia's current election system.

Personal networks in various organizations could be recruited to the campaign teams and function as vote brokers. Aspinall & Brenschot (2019) find that in Indonesia's election, vote brokerage is assigned to convince the voter about candidate competency and distributing patrons since they usually have a close relationship with grass-root society. Aspinall (2013) argue that personal network becomes more critical as patronage distribution in Indonesia continues to be necessary due to fragmented political relations built not based on ideology or identity but on an exchange between political loyalty and rewards.

To prove this argument further, we estimate the ratio of leadership position and total organization position they take before they serve as a local leader. Figure A1 in the appendix shows that leadership roles dominate Indonesia's local leader position. Approximately 90% of the head and 80% of the vice of the local leader position in the organization structure is a leader. The leadership position is critical in influencing and mobilizing the organization members to support the local leader candidate either in an election or during the reign.

In terms of experiences, Figure 5 shows that Indonesian leaders are considered experienced individuals, especially in government-related sectors. Party experiences stand out in both head and vice-local leader experiences. There are approximately seven out of ten head local leaders and approximately six out of ten vice of local leaders who currently or previously is a party member.

In terms of experience as a district-level government leader, the head of local leaders has much more experience than the vice. Approximately six out of ten heads of local leaders had served as the head of subnational government in the previous era. This result is aligned with our findings on occupation, where the head of the local leader tends to be dominated by an incumbent.

In other experiences, such as legislative and civil servant, both have a similar proportion. Four out of ten head and vice of local leaders have an experience in the legislature. There are also approximately four out of ten heads of local leaders and three out of ten vices of local leaders with experience as civil servants.

The importance of party experiences could be interpreted in two ways. First, ideally, the party is still function-

ing as a "gatekeeper" to filter prominent candidates with similar ideologies or values. Second, party membership is only important as a formality to register as a candidate in the local leader's election since prerequisites to run as an independent candidate are way harder than carried by the party.

However, current evidence tends to promote the latter argument. Aspinall (2013) find that, in general, candidate tend to tread their party only for their advancement and network of influence. This trend persists in rural and remote areas where few local bureaucrats or business people have substantial resources, i.e., in terms of influence or relation and financial power. This minority dominance creates a political "party shopping" pattern in certain regions.

The harmful impact of one dominant figure may be explained by the effect of less competitive elections on resource allocation in certain regions. Rezki (2022) finds political competition necessary to improve the region's economic condition since higher political competition is positively associated with higher public spending and pro-business policies.

Further, we see whether there is evidence that supports the former argument regarding the importance of the party in selecting qualified candidates. Figure A2 in the appendix section shows that Indonesian leaders have extensive government-related experience.

A considerable number of individuals have two and three categories of experiences. Approximately 76.92% of the head and 52% of the vice of local leaders have at least two experiences. There are also approximately three out of ten head of local leaders who have at least three categories of experience. Thus, the party may still play an important role in nominating qualified candidates. They must have a high degree of education, occupation, and experience in various government sectors.

Ethnicity and religion have been two of the most sensitive topics in Indonesia, which are heterogeneous and consist of many cultures, tribes, and religions.<sup>21</sup> Contrast with Aspinall (2011), we find that ethnicity and religion matter for the candidate's electability.

Aspinall (2011) argues that decentralization undercut ethnicity's ability to play a significant role in national politics by setting a higher condition for parties to compete in national legislative elections. In addition, he also argues that Indonesia's democratic system that forces parties to form a coalition has created norms of compromise that shatter ethnic identities, even at the subnational level.

Ethnicity may not become the central theme of national politics. However, our evidence found the importance of leaders' origin in Indonesia's sub-national politics. To define a leader's ethnicity, we use whether the head of a local leader is born in their domain as a proxy to consider whether they come from the same ethnicity. This method is a better proxy to estimate whether identity is essential. It is challenging to justify people to one ethnicity category since Indonesia is diverse, with many marriages that mix one ethnicity. Thus, one might think of themselves as crossing ethnic categories.

Our evidence shows that most local leaders in our sam-

data that is collected by World Bank.

<sup>21</sup>In 2017, the Indonesian government officially acknowledged belief to be put on the religion section of the identity card.

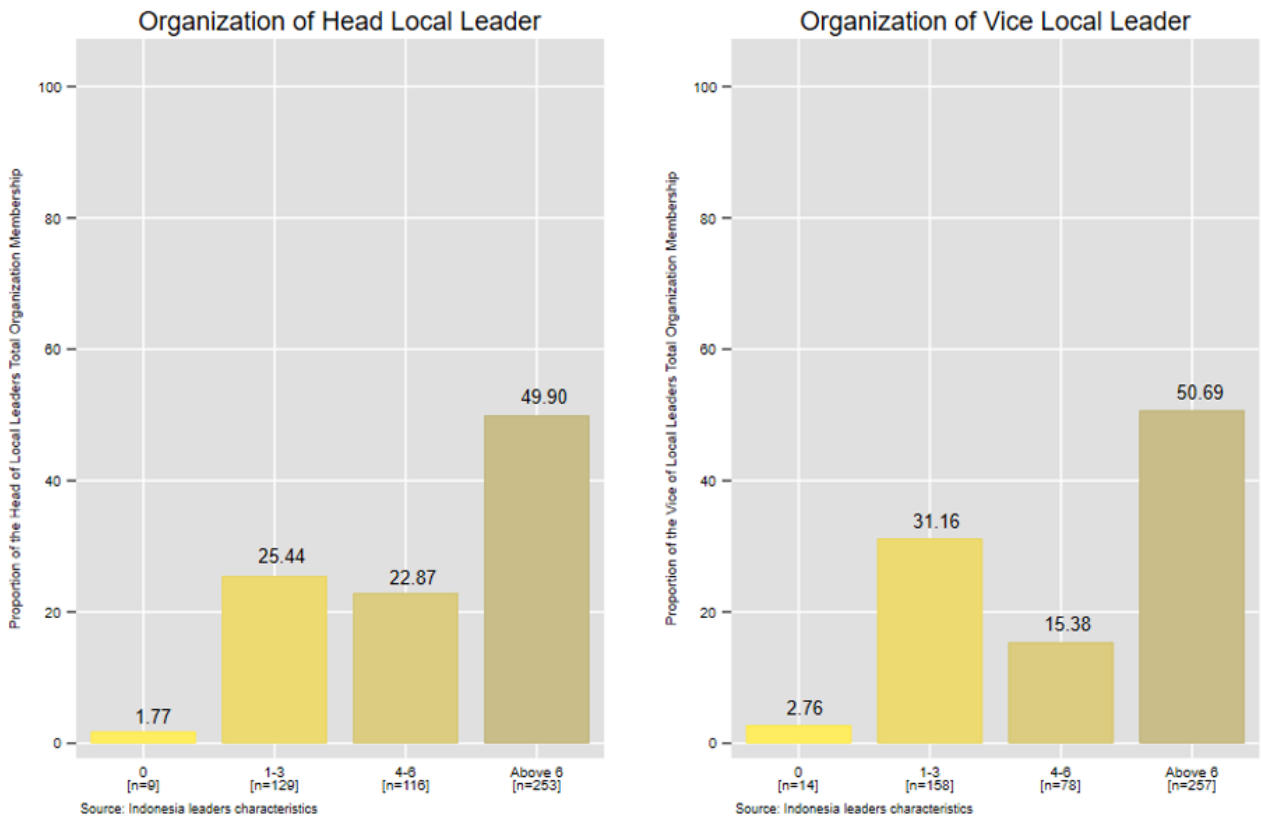


Figure 4. Indonesia Local Leader Organization Participation

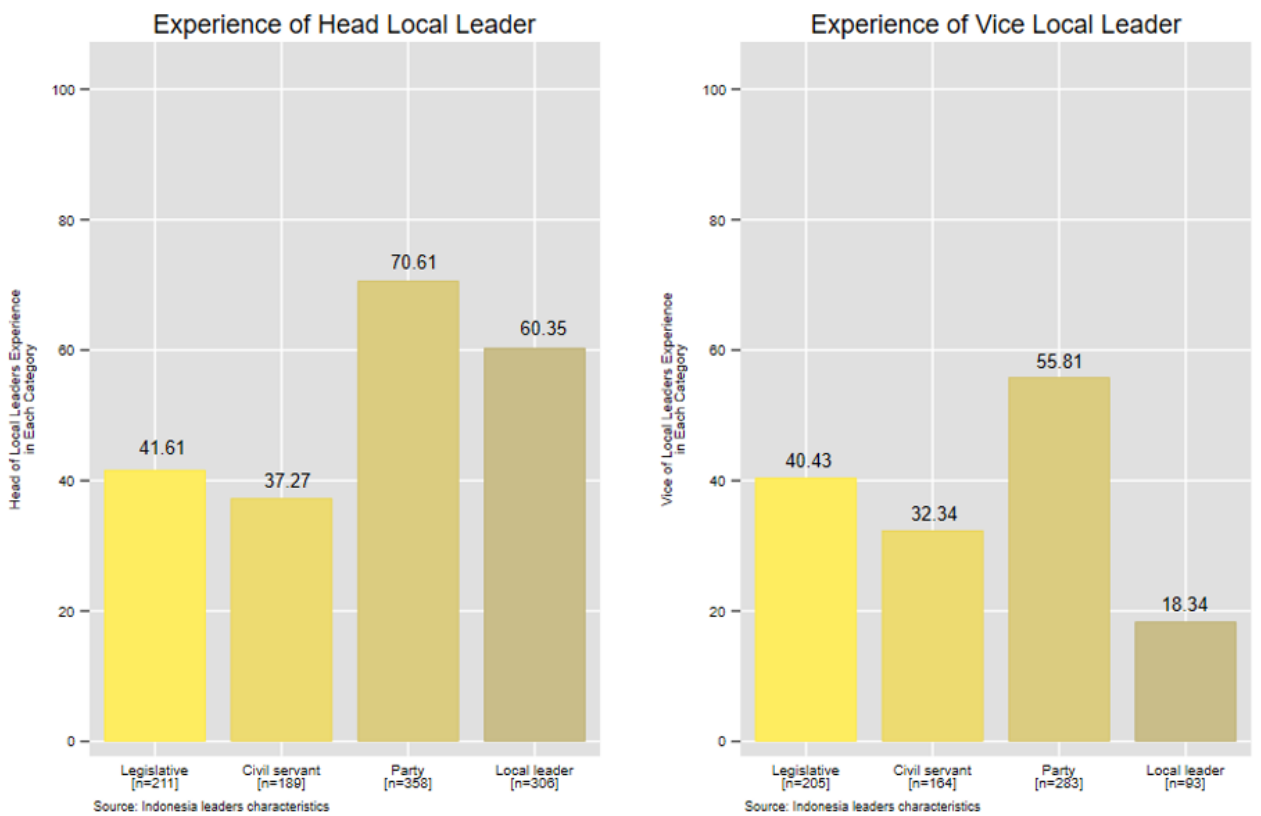
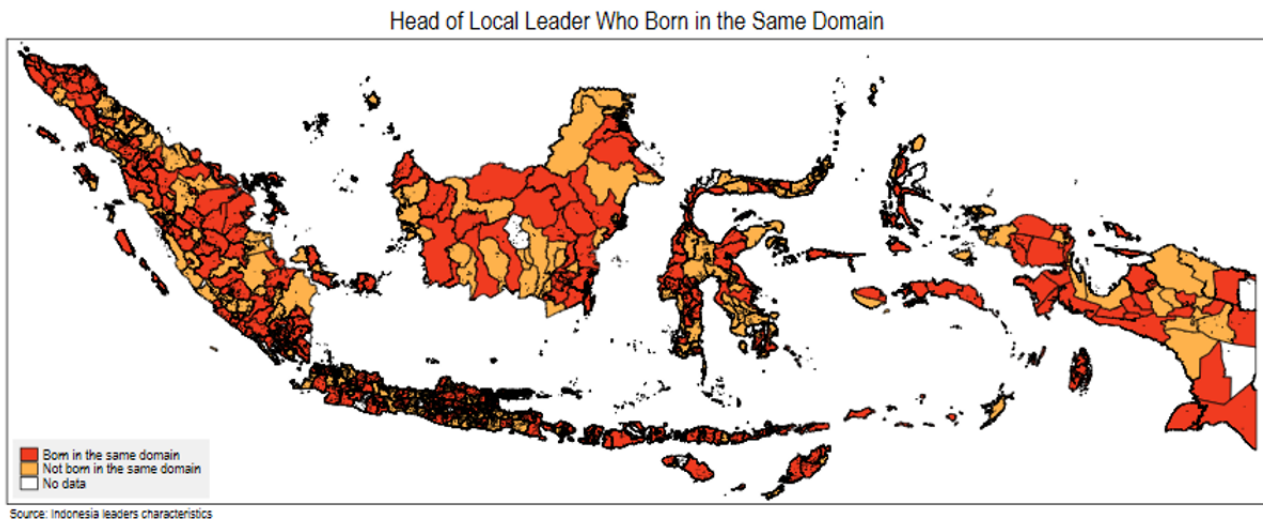


Figure 5. Indonesia Local Leader Experience



**Figure 6. Indonesia Local Leader Birthplace**

ple are born in their domain. Figure 6 shows that approximately 61% of the head of local leaders are born in the same region as their constituency. The number of vice of local leaders is similarly high; approximately 68% are born in their domain. Thus, it shows that individual identity does matter in Indonesia.

Regarding religious similarity, we find startling evidence that religion matters in Indonesian elections. Approximately 93% of the head and 87% of the vice of local leaders have the same religion as their domain.<sup>22</sup>

We see this stark evidence of the importance of religion and birthplace as confirmation that Indonesia is highly heterogeneous, and it visualizes well in their taste of leader. They need local representatives to present and implement a policy that aligns with their tastes or preference. It supports the main reason for decentralizing economic and political power in Indonesia. It recognizes the importance of local variation in applying policy in a highly heterogeneous nation like Indonesia.

## 5. Conclusion

This policy paper finds seven unique characteristics of Indonesian leaders in sub-national government. First, they are mostly middle-aged individuals. Second, most of them are men. Third, religion and birthplace are essential factors of local leader electability. Fourth, most of them are highly educated. Fifth, many of them come from government officials. Sixth, they actively participate in various organizations. Seventh, they are also highly experienced in government-related sectors.

<sup>22</sup>We measure religion using The Village Potential Statistics (PODES) 2014 data by calculating the average value of all village religion majority in regent or city. Religion is coded by using the PODES standard, where (1) Islam, (2) Christian, (3) Catholic, (4) Buddha, (5) Hindu, (6) Confucianism, (7) Others. If the average value of religion in a particular district is below 1.5, it is considered a Muslim majority regent. However, if the score is equal to or above 1.5, it is considered more heterogeneous, which we consider a non-Muslim religion area. We acknowledge the potential error of our method, but it is a powerful tool too to capture minority influence in one area. It is better than generalizing a more dominant religion as a sole justification to decide whether one district is dominant only on one religion. See Figure A3 in the appendix section.

The characteristics of Indonesian leaders may be inter-related with each other. For example, the age characteristics may relate to the majority occupation background of each leader, where higher career positions are usually achieved in middle age. In terms of gender representation, women have been unequally represented by Indonesia local leaders. This characteristic is related to the findings of Indonesian women's disadvantages in education, household, and labor market. Thus, it is unsurprising to see women less represented in sub-national government leadership since other characteristics such as education, organization, and experience reflect a high-quality individual.

Our findings on education, organization, and experience are similar to Dal Bó et al. (2017) finding in Sweden and Besley et al. (2005) in India. We find that Indonesian leaders are not only highly educated but also actively participate in various organizations and have an extensive experience in leadership roles and other-related government sectors.

In terms of occupation, most of our sample is from government officials. We suggest various reasons that may cause this result. However, following other economics and political science literature findings, their authority in the public sector gives them a competitive advantage to be known and widely influential.

These characteristics of Indonesian leaders open the possibility of further research. Whether these characteristics' importance must be tested with various government performance variables. If there is a strong relationship between them, the policy implication is clear, it may give a reason for the Indonesian government to reconsider the prerequisites of local leader candidates.

As James Buchanan said in our introduction, individuals are different, and by studying their characteristics of them, we could examine which characteristics are critical. Following Mohammad Hatta, the selection of leaders is important because they must be responsible for their actions that may impact much longer than their term in government. In the end, we want democracy not only to elect but select the best figure.

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## Appendix

Table 2. Dataset Variable

Variable	Definition
<i>Age</i>	
Total_age	Winning mayor/regent and vice mayor/regent age
Age_mayor	Winning mayor/regent age
Age_vice	Winning vice mayor/regent age
<i>Gender</i>	
Total_Women	Winning women mayor/regent and vice mayor/regent
Women_mayor	Winning women mayor/regent
Women_vice	Winning women vice mayor/regent
<i>Religion</i>	
Total_Religion	Winning mayor/regent and vice mayor/regent religion
Religion_mayor_code	Winning mayor/regent religion
Religion_vice_code	Winning vice mayor/regent religion
<i>Birthplace</i>	
Total_Ethnicity	Winning mayor/regent and vice mayor/regent who born at the same region as his/her domain
Ethnicity_mayor	Winning mayor/regent born at the same region as his/her domain
Ethnicity_vice	Winning vice mayor/regent born at the same region as his/her domain
<i>Education</i>	
Total_Schoolyear	Total year of school of winning mayor/regent and vice mayor/regent
Education_mayor	Total year of school of winning mayor/regent
Education_vice	Total year of school of winning vice mayor/regent
<i>Occupation</i>	
Total_Occupation	Winning mayor/regent and vice mayor/regent last occupation
Mayor_occupation_code	Winning mayor/regent last occupation
Vice_occupation_code	Winning vice mayor/regent last occupation
<i>Organization</i>	
Total_Organization	Total difference organization that regent/mayor and vice regent/mayor currently held/was held in
Organization_mayor	Total difference organization that regent/mayor currently held/was held in
Organization_vice	Total difference organization that vice regent/mayor currently held/was held in
Total_Organization_position	Total difference organization position that regent/mayor currently held/was held in
Organization_position_mayor	Total difference organization position that regent/mayor currently held/was held in
Organization_position_vice	Total difference organization position that vice regent/mayor currently held/was held in
Total_Leadership_position	Total difference organization leadership position that regent/mayor and vice regent/mayor currently held/was held in
Position_leadership_mayor	Total difference organization leadership position that regent/mayor currently held/was held in
Position_leadership_vice	Total difference organization leadership position that vice regent/mayor currently held/was held in
Total_Lowerrank_position	Total difference organization low rank position that regent/mayor and vice regent/mayor currently held/was held in
Position_lowerrank_mayor	Total difference organization low rank position that regent/mayor currently held/was held in
Position_lowerrank_vice	Total difference organization low rank position that vice regent/mayor currently held/was held in
<i>Experience</i>	
Total_Legislature_experience	Winning mayor/regent and vice mayor/regent as legislature member
Legislature_experience_mayor	Winning mayor/regent experience as legislature member
Legislature_experience_vice	Winning vice mayor/regent experience as legislature member
Total_Civilservant_experience	Winning mayor/regent and vice mayor/regent as civil servant
Civilservant_experience_mayor	Winning mayor/regent experience as civil servant
Civilservant_experience_vice	Winning vice mayor/regent experience as civil servant
Total_Party_experience	Winning mayor/regent and vice mayor/regent as party member
Party_experience_mayor	Winning mayor/regent experience as party member
Party_experience_vice	Winning vice mayor/regent experience as party member
Total_yearexperience_mayor	Winning mayor/regent and vice mayor/regent years of experience as mayor/regent
Mayor_yearexperience_mayor	Winning mayor/regent years of experience as mayor/regent
Vice_yearexperience_mayor	Winning vice mayor/regent years of experience as mayor/regent
Total_yearexperience_vice	Winning mayor/regent and vice mayor/regent years of experience as vice mayor/regent
Mayor_yearexperience_vice	Winning mayor/regent years of experience as vice mayor/regent
Vice_yearexperience_vice	Winning vice mayor/regent years of experience as vice mayor/regent

Notes: Religion variables is coded based on the Village Potential Statistic, where (1) Islam, (2) Christian, (3) Catholic, (4) Buddha, (5) Hindu, (6) Confucianism, (7) Others. Occupation variables are coded based Indonesian Standard Classification of Occupations 2015 (KBLI 2015) with modifications to differentiate occupations even though they are in the same group of KBLI: (1) Police/Military, (2) Civil-servant, (3) Legislative, (4) Executive, (5) Professional, (6) Entrepreneur, (7) Blue-collar worker/Farmer, (8) Household activities or no-work. The years of education variable is standardized based on Indonesia's total years of schooling, where Paket A/SDLB/SD/MI is assumed as 6 years, Paket B/SMPLB/SMP/MTs is assumed as 9 years, Paket C/SMLB/SMA/MA/SMK/MAK is assumed as 12 years, D1 is 13 years, D2 is 14 years, D3 is 15 years, D4/S1 is 16 years, S2/Profesi is 18 years, and S3 is 21 years.

**Table 3. Dataset Missing Observation**

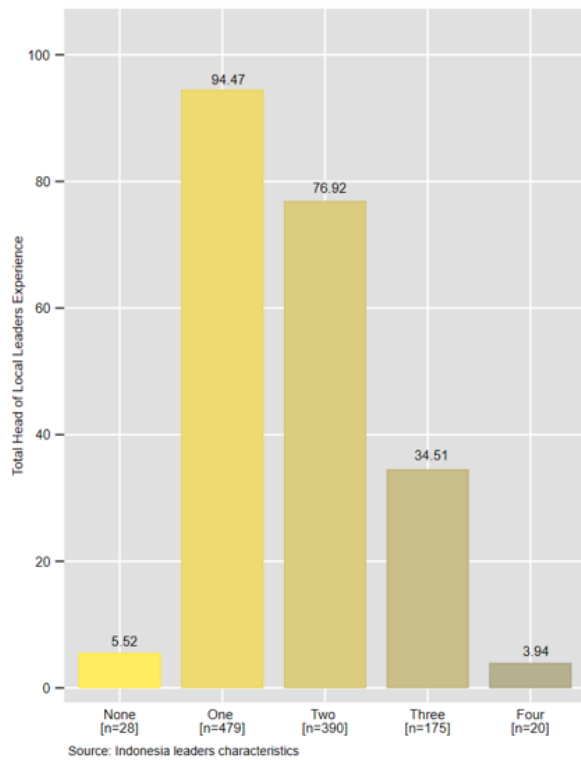
Variable	Missing Observation
Age	
Total_age	4.93%
Age_mayor	0.99%
Age_vice	8.88%
Gender	
Total_Women	0.00%
Women_mayor	0.00%
Women_vice	0.00%
Religion	
Total_Relegion	4.14%
Religion_mayor_code	3.35%
Religion_vice_code	4.93%
Birthplace	
Total_Ethnicity	6.90%
Ethnicity_mayor	2.37%
Ethnicity_vice	11.44%
Education	
Total_Schoolyear	1.38%
Education_mayor	0.99%
Education_vice	1.78%
Occupation	
Total_Occupation	5.42%
Mayor_occupation_code	1.97%
Vice_occupation_code	8.88%
Organization	
Total_Organization	30.08%
Organization_mayor	26.82%
Organization_vice	33.33%
Total_Organization_position	29.98%
Organization_position_mayor	26.82%
Organization_position_vice	33.14%
Total_Leadership_position	30.87%
Position_leadership_mayor	28.01%
Position_leadership_vice	33.73%
Total_Lowerrank_position	30.97%
Position_lowerrank_mayor	28.01%
Position_lowerrank_vice	33.93%
Experience	
Total_Legislature_experience	10.45%
Legislature_experience_mayor	6.51%
Legislature_experience_vice	14.40%
Total_Civilservant_experience	11.14%
Civilservant_experience_mayor	7.10%
Civilservant_experience_vice	15.19%
Total_Party_experience	12.33%
Party_experience_mayor	9.27%
Party_experience_vice	15.38%
Total_yearexperience_mayor	0.00%
Mayor_yearexperience_mayor	0.00%
Vice_yearexperience_mayor	0.39%
Total_yearexperience_vice	0.39%
Mayor_yearexperience_vice	0.00%
Vice_yearexperience_vice	0.39%





Figure A1. Indonesia Local Leader Leadership Position on Organization

How much experience do local leaders at least have?  
Head



Vice

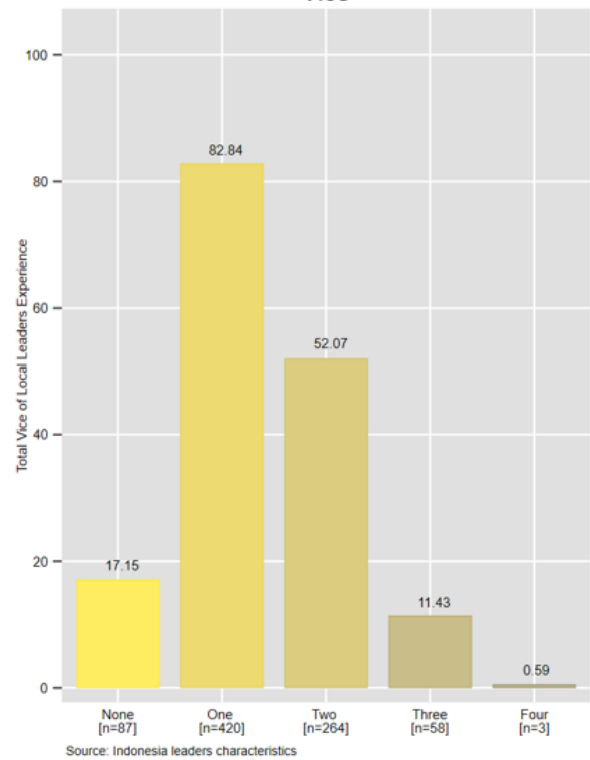


Figure A2. How Much Experience do Local Leaders Have?

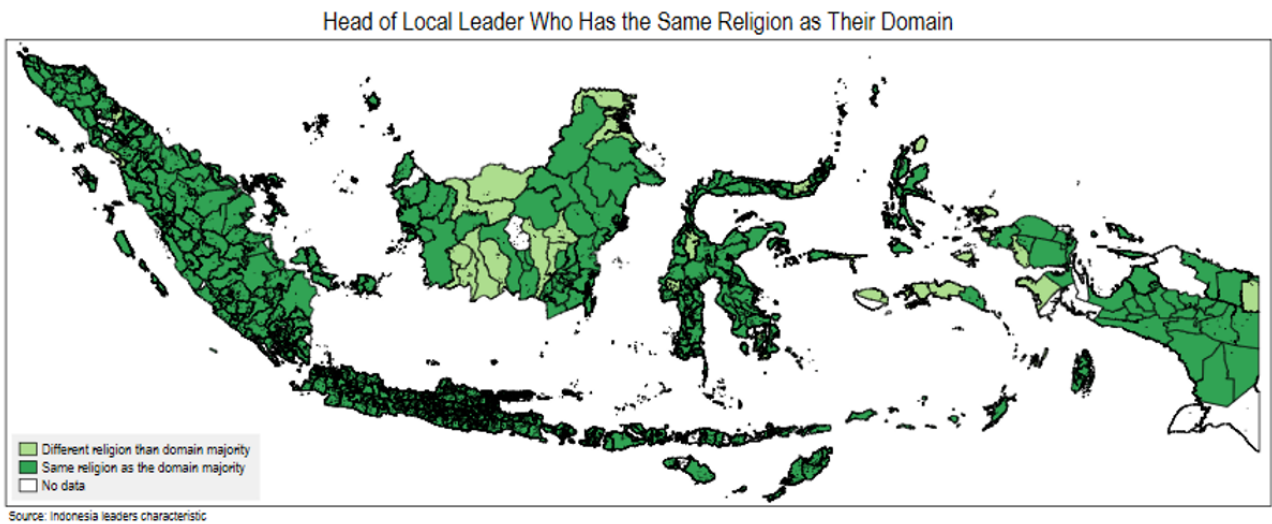


Figure A3. Indonesia Local Leader Religion

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