Youth Out of Touch? Early Assessment of Millennial Leaders' Performance on Human Capital Development at Indonesian Districts

Nur Hidayat Sardini, Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia
Bangkit Aditya Wiryawan, Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia*
Rina Martini, Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia

Abstract
Starting in the second round of local election, participation of millenials has been increasing. The term refers to the young demographic cohort born between 1980 and 2002, known to have distinct characteristics to the previous generations. This study is the first to assess Indonesian millennial leaders' performance at the country level. We gathered seventeen cases of elected millennial district heads between 2010 and 2017 and making an early observation of their impact on human capital development. Simplified difference-in-difference estimation method is applied using province average as the control group. Results show that following the winning of the millennial leaders there is a diverging trend of Human Development Index score at 0.03 and 0.07 in the first and second year, consecutively, before started converging around the third and fourth year. Lacking leadership skills and experiences, that may also be perpetrated by generational gap, are among the contributing factors to the problem. We further find that leaders not affiliated with political dynasty fare better. We check the robustness of our result using poverty data and further find that millennial leaders are also under-perform in combating poverty. This early assessment would benefit from further heterogeneity analyses as well as narrowing the control group, which is our recommendation for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Three decades following the birth wave of Generation Y, a term that is given to a group of demographic cohort born in 1980 or after and before the early 2000s (Foot & Stoffman, 1998; Smith & Nichols, 2015; other scholars define this generation as those born either in 1981 or 1982, see among others Howe & Strauss, 2000; Eckleberry-Hunt & Tucciarone, 2011; Dimock, 2019), the now electorally decentralized Indonesian politics are gradually filled with this distinct demographic group. Currently the millennials, as they are more popularly known, constitute the largest in terms of adult population (rough estimate from BPS stands at nearly 26%), which also reflects voter size. Political coming of age is one of the main issues for this generation (Fisher, 2018), with the growing tendency of political apathism on one hand and inexperiences on the other hand. We consider that higher quality of participation of this young generation in the Indonesian politics

*Correspondence:
Undip Tembalang, Semarang 50139 Indonesia.
Email: b.wiryawan@lecturer,undip.ac.id.

would warranty better inter-generational leadership succession.

Young leader phenomenon by itself is not unprecedented in Indonesian politics. The role of young leaders, here loosely categorized as those between 24 and 37 years of age at the time this research commenced, has been instrumental in securing the countries' independence in 1945 and leading its transformation into a consolidated republic (Anderson, 2006). Among the most famous example of youth leadership was the election of General Soedirman as the commander of the Indonesian army (Tentara Republik Indonesia) in November 1945 when he was just 29 years old. Former Minister of Labor SK Trimurti and former Bandung Regent Wiranatakusumah, both appointed when they were 35 in 1947, are another example as well as former Jakarta governor Henk Ngantung who was appointed into the position when he was 37 in 1964 although this last one is a little bit outside of the definition.

However, following political stability under Suharto's New Order regime beginning in 1967, the role of the youth in politics was no longer as prominent as it was in the early years of independence. Centralization of power for the next 30 years under this regime did not allow for alternative leadership through a free and fair election (Haris, 1998; Uhlin, 1995; Vatikiotis, 1993), that would open opportunities for younger generation of leaders, not until 1999 when the first fair general election after many years was held again. The pathways for a more generationally inclusive leadership change at the regional and local level was further

opened with the enactment of the Regional Government Law (UU no. 32 in 2004) that sets up for the country's upcoming first direct local election in 2005. Then, starting in the second round of local election in 2010 several young candidates from the millenial cohort are running for local executive offices as they reach political coming of age.

In studying Generation Y, Eckelberry-Hunt and Tucciarone (2011) observes their collaborative nature and trial and error approach, some traits that later confirmed by Folarin (2021). Folarin also added that this generation cohort has a distinct leadership style that involves a lot of multitasking in addition to willing to spend longer time to achieve their goals and being more innovative, as they are more technologically savvy (Auby, 2008; Downing 2006) compared to the Gen X before them. However, some of these characteristics of the millennials were also perceived in a negative light, such as their time-wasting tendency.

Another pessimistic view of the millennials is given by Twenge (2006, 2013) who coined the term 'generation me'. Twenge, drawn from the case in the US, considers this generation as much more spoiled and entitled, as well as self-focused with signs of narcissism and high expectations. She further observes that the later cohort of the millennials are more communal than the earlier ones. A quite similar description of the millennials is given by Ng and Johnson (2015) who see them as impatients with high expectations in furthering their careers but do not possess matching abilities. At the end, many of these

studies highlight the poor leadership skills of the millennials.

Politically, Generation Y is considered as more liberal and more democratic than their predecessor as they are highly educated as well as having global perspective (Fisher, 2018). Ironically, this generation is also showing higher political apathy, as observed by Shames (2017). The politically adept millennials refused to take active part in politics due to the lack of social reward. This could imply that the unqualified ones of the generation are more ambitious in running for offices.

Studies attempt to investigate the impact of millennial leaders on local politics and development in Indonesia is still limited. Larger body of literature discuss the role of this generation as voters (Fernanda & Kartika, 2021; Wibowo & Fauzi, 2021; Zen, 2021; Fitriyah et al., 2021; Yusniyawati & Panuju, 2020), local legislative (Cahyaningtyas, 2022; Handika & Azmi, 2020; Mondir & Hermanto, 2020), whilst none that the authors aware of discusses their role in executive office positions (*bupati* or *walikota*). One of the reason is quite obvious that these leaders were only participating in the political stage recently as they hit the required age of 25 to run for the district election. Thus, this research offers to fill this gap in the literature and shed some light for decision makers taking interest on the role of these young leaders in the society. This research poses the questions of how has elected millennial district heads affected human development at the Indonesian districts? How could

leadership attributes play roles in how they perform in this area?

Giving attention to this group of leaders based on empirical evidence is important at least in two ways. First, it gives better understanding on the impact of youth in practical politics particularly the current one known as Generation Y, especially at the lowest level of government. Second, it supplies information on how well they can quell with tasks related to socio-economic development, which is expected of a district leader. This is important as this generation will be the one that shapes the future of the country's leadership not only at executive offices but also in the other positions.

In the effort to answer above questions, we first gathered a non-exhaustive list of millennial district heads that spans in two waves of local election barring the first one in 2005-2008. The list is shown in Table 1. It covers data for the years from 2010 to 2017 within the time frame of second and third local election. We managed to collect seventeen elected leaders spanning across 12 provinces in Indonesia. Spatially, the list covers almost all geographical regions excluding the Eastern part. Their age ranges from the youngest is at 26 years old in 2013, to 35 years old in 2017. As their involvement in politics grew as they grow older, number of young leaders increased starting in 2016 at around the time they reach mature age at late 20s or early to mid 30s.

The research's focus on executive branch of leadership is due to their more hands-on role in terms of progressing development, and higher political

complexity when compared to the election of district legislative. Provinces' governor is excluded from the focus of this research for two main reasons. First, none of the elected province leaders are from the Gen Y at the time of this research time frame. Second is the

methodological reason as it is more appropriate not to mix province and district in our analysis as the two are different level of administration with different sets of responsibilities as well as political dynamics.

Table 1. List of Millennial district heads and year of inauguration

No.	Name of district head	Inauguration year	Age	District	Province
1	Mardani Maming	2010	29	Kab. Tanah Bumbu	Kalimantan Selatan
2	Yopi Arianto	2010	30	Kab. Indragiri Hulu	Riau
3	Makmun Ibnu Fuad	2013	26	Kab. Bangkalan	Jawa Timur
4	Puput Tantriana Sari	2013	30	Kab. Probolinggo	Jawa Timur
5	Yan Anton Ferdian	2013	29	Kab. Banyuasin	Sumatera Selatan
6	Umar Ahmad	2014	33	Kab. Tulang Bawang Barat	Lampung
7	Mardani Maming	2016	34	Kab. Tanah Bumbu	Kalimantan Selatan
8	Emil Dardak	2016	31	Kab. Trenggalek	Jawa Timur
9	Sutan Riska	2016	26	Kab. Dharmasraya	Sumatera Barat
10	Muhammad Syahrial	2016	28	Kab. Tanjung Balai	Sumatera Utara
11	Adnan Purichta	2016	29	Kab. Gowa	Sulawesi Selatan
12	Mirna Annisa	2016	34	Kab. Kendal	Jawa Tengah
13	Ahmad Wazir Noviadi	2016	28	Kab. Ogan Ilir	Sumatera Selatan
14	Neneng Hasanah	2017	36	Kab. Bekasi	Jawa Barat
15	Ahmadi	2017	36	Kab. Bener Meriah	Aceh
16	Adriatma Dwi Putra	2017	28	Kota Kendari	Sulawesi Tenggara
17	Karolin Margret Natasa	2017	35	Kab. Landak	Kalimantan Barat

Note: Kab. stands for kabupaten (regency), an administrative unit one level below the province led by a regent. Kota is municipality with similar administrative level as kabupaten, led by a mayor.
Source: Author

It is important to note here that this study does not try, in whatsoever way, to provide a complete unbiased result as this current research is still in its preliminary stage despite several improvements. Some possible sources of bias that may contaminate this research is discussed briefly in the method section. The rest of the paper is structured as follows. In the next section we elaborate our methods and data source in the attempt to answer our research questions. The third section

deals with results, that also includes robustness check using alternative measure of development. And finally, the last section concludes this research.

RESEARCH METHOD
This research uses quantitative descriptive method that closely resembles difference-in-difference (DID) estimation (Angrist & Pischke, 2009; Wooldridge, 2015). This method has been used and popularized in a wide number of research (Jayachandran &

Pande, 2017; Courtemanche & Zapata, 2014; Card & Krueger, 1994; Card, 1992). DID approach entails two-way differencing between treatment period and treatment group. Firstly, we set the treatment period using the inauguration year information from Table 1. Then it is followed by gathering human capital data three years before and four years after the treatment year. This provides one half of the necessary DID data. The other half of the data would be the control group. We select province's average as the control group, thus provide comparative perspective of development gap between districts and their provinces.

$$HDI = \sqrt[3]{HIxEIxExp} \, x \, 100 \qquad (1)$$

The main human capital data used in this research is the Indeks Pembangunan Manusia (Human Development Index, HDI) data released yearly by Statistics Indonesia (BPS). The data is available publicly, stretching for over two decades and is calculated at the district level. It is worth to note that BPS made some adjustments in their HDI calculation starting in 2013.

The construction of the Indonesian HDI data follows similar measure used by UNDP (Anand & Sen, 1994) which divides human capital into three main components: health, education, and expenditure. Data on life expectancy at birth is used to represent health aspect (HI). For the education data, mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling are combined (EI). Lastly, individual income expenditure (Exp) is also considered as part of human capital quality, indicates that the higher one's expenditure the higher their human capital. To calculate the HDI data, the formula above in equation (1) is used.
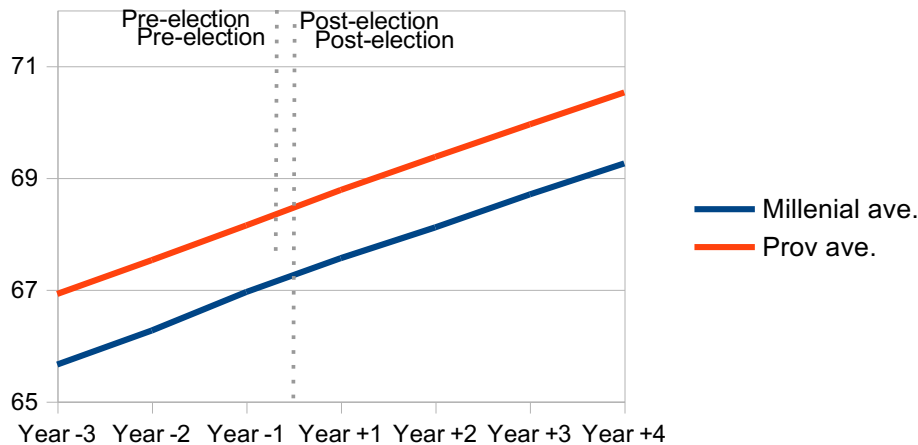
Note: The graph compares overall Human Development Index score between districts led by millennial leaders and their respective province average, while Year indicates relative years to local election
Source: Authors

Figure 1. Yearly HDI Score Relative to Local Election

However simply taking the absolute number of HDI score would not give us a very meaningful results and interpretations. Figure 1 shows that the dynamics between the treated and control group is not observable that in general we could only see similar progression between groups, thus might lead to inappropriate analysis. To overcome this issue, we then resort to taking yearly change of the data (in percentage). Differencing the data provides a more dynamic picture of human capital development at Indonesian districts.

Table 2 illustrates how the data is arranged in order to attain us between groups difference. At the first stage, difference between the post-election period and pre-election period for the treated group is calculated (B – A). This result resembles the effect of the election but is biased as it did not control for other confounding factors. To control for other contributing factors, it is necessary to take the second difference comparing pre and post data for the control group (Y – X). Finally, we calculate the difference between the two groups as shown in the bottom right of the table.

Table 2. Treatment Effect Measurement Matrix

Group	Pre-election periods	Post-election periods	Difference
Treated	A	B	1st difference B – A
Control	X	Y	2nd difference Y – X
			Net difference **(B – A) – (Y – X)**

Note: Pre-election periods consist of two years before the local election, while post-election periods consist of three years after the local election

In supporting our finding, as a form of robustness check, we compare our result using human capital with poverty data. This is also done by using yearly data released by the Statistics of Indonesia. Survey for poverty data starts in March, with subsequent second round of survey in August. The data presents number of impoverished people according to district criteria, measured as a share of population (%) at the district level.

As previously mentioned, this preliminary research applies descriptive approach and thus it is not designed to handle major bias methodologically. Sources of bias includes omitted variables as this research does not allow controlling for other necessary variables that explain the output phenomenon. Second possible source of bias is the violation of SUTVA, stands for stable unit treatment value assumption, which is one of the most important assumptions in studying causal effect

(Rubin, 1980). In this case, the bias comes through spillover effect between the treated and the control group.

Related to the previous problem, this research also has not been able to sufficiently establish parallel trend assumption test which is essential in a DID research. This assumes that the treatment group, in the absence of same treatment effect, would follow the same trend with the control group. Failure to establish the parallel trend assumption can be overcame by applying propensity scoring matching (PSM) techniques, which aims to reduce selection bias in non-experimental studies (Stuart et al., 2014). However, as this study do not involve rigorous econometric method, and rather we use alternative dataset to confirm our finding, we will leave the use of PSM in our next follow up research in the future.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Our simple two-way differencing method using human capital data as the dependent variable is shown in the Figure 2 below. A more detailed calculation showing the exact numbers, upon which the figure is based, is provided in the appendix. We can observe from the figure that actually two years before local election both group shows positive growth of HDI, despite the growth is much smaller for province average. However, interestingly following the local election where millennial leaders' triumph, the growth in HDI started to fall below province average in year +1. The drop carried over to the second and third year. The score for province average, while share the same declining progression, do not fall as deep as the treated group in the first and second year after local election. The figure also shows that starting in the third year there is a tendency of convergence between the groups.

Upon observing the negative result when compared to the control group as described above, this study strives to explore further on the effect of leadership change. In doing so, we select districts with leaders at the age above 30 years old. Selection of older leaders would indirectly reflect their experience, as they tend to be more experienced than the younger ones. We then find that experience is quite a determinant factor in leadership quality. Figure 3 shows group difference between provinces and millennial-led districts. In this case we select older cohorts of leaders aged 30 or over, and fit them into the reduced form. It shows that these older youths do not exhibit the same tendency as shown previously. The growth between the group in the period before and after the election are very similar even though small difference exist. Following positive growth in HDI in the first year, it started to decline in the second and third year for both groups.
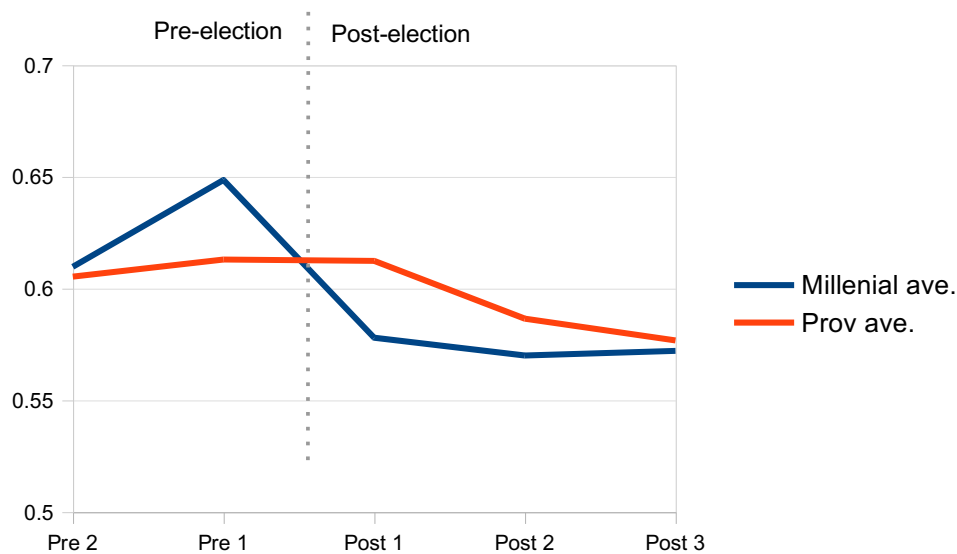
Note: The graph compares point changes in HDI score between districts led by millennial leaders and their respective province average. Pre indicates bi-yearly average score before local election, while post indicates bi-yearly average score after local election.
Source: Authors

Figure 2. HDI Growth Relative to Local Election (smoothed)

Result using HDI data shows that there is considerable widening gap between the election of millennial local leaders and human capital quality. The gap tends to be narrowing close to the five years administrative period, but apparent in the first three years. One might suspect that the result is bias to other factors such as rural-urban bias. To check for result consistency, we compare result shown in Figure 1 using poverty data for the same time.

Figure 3 shows the change in poverty rate between the treated and control group. Lower score indicates lower incidence of poverty in the districts, while higher score means higher poverty rate. From the figure we can see that districts led by millennial leaders exhibit higher poverty incidence compared to their provinces average, which is similar with the HDI trend. In the period after local election, we can observe that in both groups share of poverty decreases. However, it shows a slight divergence starting in the second year while poverty rates keep decreasing in the control group.
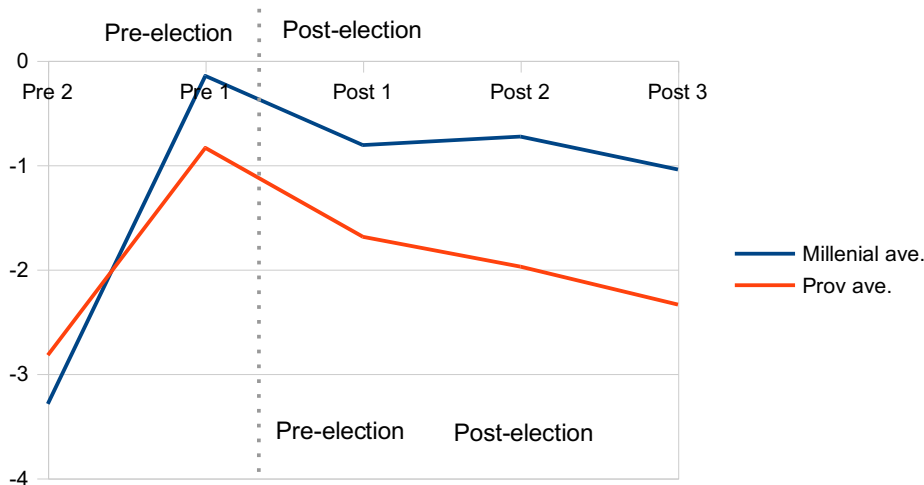
Note: The graph shows yearly growth (%) of poverty between districts led by millennial leaders and their respective province average, with Pre indicates bi-yearly average score before local election and post indicates bi-yearly average score after local election.

Figure 3. Poverty growth relative to local election (smoothed)

This research finds negative trend of human capital growth under millennial leaders. Using two different dataset, HDI and poverty data, we find similarly negative trend. However, we need to remind again here that our model is a preliminary one, that does not adequately control several sources of bias. A possible source of bias is urban-centered development across provinces. Our treatment group is predominantly district-level data, with only one urban case (Kendari City). Any post-election intervention isolated at the city level, or vice versa at the district level, might skew our result.
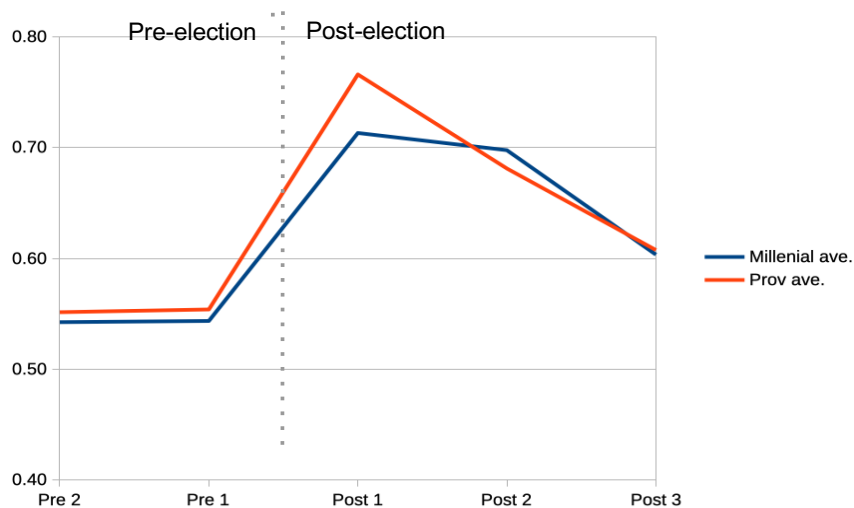

Figure 4. HDI Growth Relative to Local Election for Older Millennials (smoothed)

Despite the concern above, this result still provides merit for discussion. Our finding echoes general sentiment on the characteristics of Generation Y, such as their tendency for multitasking work, and willingness to spend more time to achieve their goals (Eckleberry-Hunt & Tucciarone, 2011; Folarin, 2021). The divergent result with the control group as shown in Figure 2 could be the manifestation of this issue. However, our follow up exercise seems to suggest that this issue disappears as leaders' experiences increase, as demonstrated by Figure 4. Older millennial district heads, age over 30, do not show significant departure from their provinces' average in terms of human capital growth. This age level is the requirements for governorship candidacy, which may imply that this problem is less severe at the province level.

Results imply that younger leaders do not have sufficient quality to sustain their leadership ambition. This discrepancy between ambition and skills to a certain degree confirms the concern of Ng and Johnson (2015) regarding lacking abilities of the millennials. From a policy point of view, it is then necessary to impose age limit as a requirement for running in the local election. Current regulation limits the age of district-level leader at 25 years old. We recommend that to prevent development lag at the district level, age limit for local leader should be the same with province level that is 30 years old.
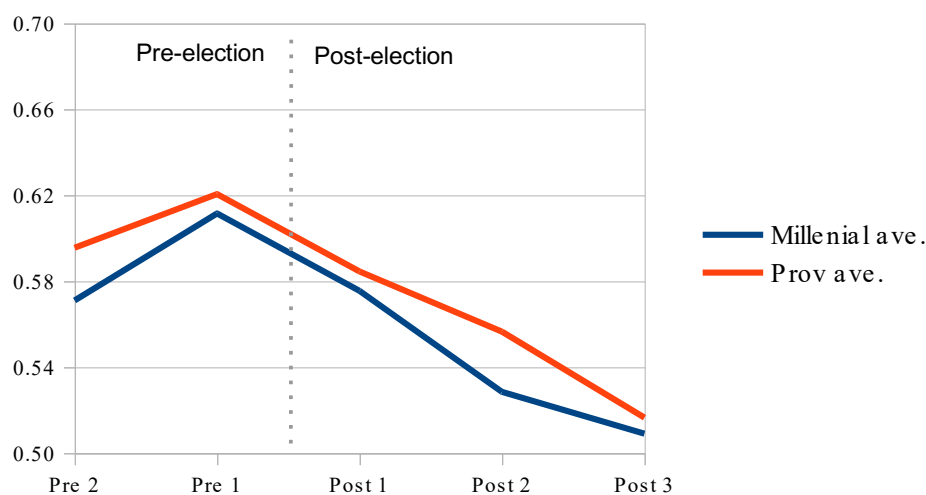

Figure 5. HDI growth relative to local election for non-political dynasty (smoothed)

When discussing about local politics in Indonesia, it is more often than not necessary to discuss kinship politics popularly known as *dinasti politik* (political dynasty). This has been a wide phenomenon in contemporary Indonesian politics recently explored by a number of scholars (Prianto, 2016; Susanti, 2017; Mariana & Husin, 2017; Razzaq & Ridho, 2018; Fitriyah, 2020). In defining political dynasty, we use the term from Mariana and Husin (2017) who describes this phenomenon as "the transfer of political power from an

incumbent leaders to their family members by rigging the electoral system", although for us rigging the system is not strictly necessary to be classified as political dynasty. With regard to this issue our study finds, by excluding dynasty-tied millennial leaders from our observations, that the treated groups show similar progression with their provinces' average. Before the local election (see Figure 5), we can see that both groups experienced inreasing HDI index, then following the election HDI score starts to drop but it happened almost similarly between those two groups, which imply that the drop was not due to the change in local leadership.

This last finding also imply that districts that are invested by family-tied leaders performs worse that the more democratic ones. The finding in a way is in line with the work of Razzaq and Ridho (2018) that highlights the inability of dynastic leaders in reducing poverty and increasing number of workers at the province level. Reluctance of qualified millennials to run for office has seemingly left the space being exploited by unqualified-but politically well-connected individuals. This leads us to recommend policy makers to regulate the extent of family politics in local election in Indonesia, in addition to the age/ experience limitation elaborated above.

CONCLUSION

Following two decades of direct local election in Indonesia, studies focusing on the role of the millennials in Indonesian politics is still skewed, mostly dominated by their role as participants, while research on the performance of millennial district leaders based on empirical data is still scarce. This study attempts to fill this gap in the literature by looking at the impact of seventeen Gen Y leadership, those born between 1981/1982 and 1996, on human capital development between 2010 and 2017, using HDI data provided by the Statistics of Indonesia. In general we find negative tendency of human capital growth under the millennial leaders, using their provinces as the control group. HDI growth in the treated group is 0.03 and 0.07 lower than the control group in the first and second year after local election. It shows small change but the trend is consistent. The finding is robust when we use alternative measurement of development which is poverty data. Poverty, measured as percentage of people live below district poverty line, grew around 1% higher in the districts led by the millennials. We find that this problem seems to waning away as the leaders get older, suggesting strong effect of political experiences as well as maturity. Furthermore, regarding the wide phenomenon of political dynasty in deeply decentralized Indonesia this study finds that the districts that are immune from this issue do not show the same negative tendency, implying that districts invested with political dynasty performs worse in promoting the growth of human capital. This confirms several previous studies.

The findings lead us to suggest policymakers to consider the following; (1) adding age limit as one of the requirement for running for district executive office, and (2) regulating local electoral system to limit the extent of youth political dynasty. We left details

regarding the necessary regulations to the key stakeholders i.e. General Election Commission (KPU) and General Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu), or others. As this research serves as an early assessment on the role of young leaders in Indonesian politics, specifically for the executive position of *bupati* and *walikota*, our finding is subject to various possible bias that is not yet sufficiently tackled due to methodological limitation. The use of more rigourous estimation method will be applied in our next research.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix

Table A. Average Treatment Effect of Millennial Leaders on HDI

Group	Pre-election	Post-election	Difference
Millennial average	0.629	0.573	-0.056
Prov average	0.609	0.592	-0.017
		Net difference	-0.039

Note: Data is calculated using seventeen millennial-led districts, compared to its respective provinces' average. Yearly difference data is used in the table.
Source: Authors

Table B. Average Treatment Effect of Millennial Leaders on Poverty

Group	Pre-election	Post-election	Difference
Millennial average	-1.72	-0.86	0.86
Prov average	-1.83	-2.00	-0.17
		Net difference	1.03

Note: Data is calculated using seventeen millennial-led districts, compared to its respective provinces' average. Yearly difference data is used in the table.
Source: Authors