Family Advantage? Exploring Candidate Quality, Spending and Votes in Taiwan

Abstract

Family politics is one of the important features in Taiwan. Many candidates have family members that hold offices concurrently or previously and they bring candidates name recognition, visibility, and working experience. Political families may encourage loyalty to persons instead of policies or values. As political equality is a core value of democracy, elections must offer both the freedom to vote and the right to fair competition. If pre-existing family background determines who governs, there is concern about the level of healthy democracy. Whether campaign spending reinforces or attenuates family background is another issue. Previous researches have suggested that a candidate’s attractiveness and skill can have direct effect on the vote and that incumbent spending is a significant determinants of vote share. Therefore, we intend to examine the extent to which spending and family background contribute to challengers vote shares while incumbents outspend challengers. It will shed lights on family politics in Taiwan and bring insights to election studies in general. Our data comes from the 2012 and 2016 legislative elections and various data collected by Nathan Batto, Chia-hung Tsai, and Yen-tu Su.