

Win For Women or Dynasties?

Consequences of Gender Quotas in Taiwan

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Abstract

What are the consequences of gender quotas for political representation and political selection? This study examines the descriptive and substantive effects of Taiwan's gender quota rule in local council elections, with particular attention to how quota reforms reshape political selection by facilitating the entry of dynastic politicians. Leveraging a regression discontinuity design generated by population-based quota thresholds, I provide causal evidence that gender quotas substantially increase women's descriptive representation while simultaneously increasing the presence of dynastic politicians. Because existing research suggests that dynastic politicians may face weaker incentives to prioritize women's policy interests, these selection effects raise questions about the substantive consequences of quota reforms. Using detailed records of local council bills and speeches, I show that gender quotas are associated with significant increases in women-related policy activity. Overall, these results show that quota-induced dynastic entry, while reshaping elite recruitment, does not undermine women's substantive representation.

Keywords: Gender Quota, Political Dynasty, Descriptive Representation, Substantive Representation, Regression Discontinuity

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1 Introduction

Gender representation in politics has become a central issue globally, with many countries seeking to address the persistent underrepresentation of women. Gender quotas are a commonly used mechanism to increase the number of female candidates in political decision-making bodies. More than 100 countries have implemented some form of quota system, either through legal mandates or voluntary adoption by political parties ([Krook, 2009](#); [Wängnerud, 2009](#); [Verge and Wiesehomeier, 2019](#)).

While gender quotas are generally intended to advance women's rights by improving their descriptive representation, this objective is not always fully realized. The effects of quota policies vary considerably across countries in terms of descriptive and substantive representation. These outcomes often depend on the interaction between quota design and the electoral system. In some cases, this interaction can significantly enhance both forms of representation, whereas in others, it may improve descriptive representation while limiting substantive gains ([Clayton, 2021](#); [Meguid et al., 2025](#)). Whether and how the number of women in legislatures (descriptive representation) influences the promotion of women's policy interests (substantive representation) has long been a central focus in the study of gender and politics ([Mansbridge, 2003](#); [O'Brien and Piscopo, 2019](#)).

Yet quota reforms may also reshape elite reproduction by interacting with family-based political networks that often substitute for parties and programs in candidate-centered electoral settings. A growing literature emphasizes that gender quotas can have broader effects on political selection beyond increasing women's numerical presence ([Karekurve-Ramachandra and Lee, 2020](#); [Folke et al., 2021](#)). By altering candidate recruitment incentives and party strategies, quota rules may reshape the composition of the political elite. Research on political dynasties shows that elite reproduction plays a central role

in patterns of political recruitment and the distribution of political power, with potential implications for representation and accountability (Dal Bó et al., 2009; Geys and Smith, 2017). However, despite rich evidence on how family ties help candidates gain and retain office, this literature remains less developed in assessing the representational and policy consequences of dynastic politics. These insights suggest that evaluating gender quotas requires attention not only to who enters office but also to how institutional reforms interact with existing elite formation structures.

This study examines how gender quotas reshape political selection beyond increasing women’s descriptive representation, particularly by facilitating the entry of dynastic politicians, and whether these selection effects come at the cost of women’s substantive representation. I address this question using evidence from Taiwan’s local councils, where a population-based quota rule for reserved seats generates sharp institutional cut-offs that allow for credible causal identification through a regression discontinuity design. Exploiting this institutional feature, I show that the introduction of gender quotas substantially increased the descriptive representation of women.¹ Simultaneously, quotas altered parties’ nomination strategies by incentivizing the selection of electorally advantaged candidates, leading to a rise in dynastic politicians, defined as individuals related by blood or marriage to previous officeholders (Dal Bó et al., 2009; Geys and Smith, 2017). Because political dynasties are unevenly distributed across parties, these quota-induced nomination incentives systematically reshaped the patterns of political selection and elite recruitment under a candidate-centered electoral system.

To assess whether these quota-induced selection effects translate into substantive representation, I draw on detailed records from local council minutes and measure councilors’ engagement with women-related issues using bill proposals and public speeches. Exist-

¹ The term “local council” here refers to municipality, city, and county councils.

ing work on political dynasties documents their persistence and electoral advantages but remains less conclusive about their representational and policy consequences. The results show that quota-induced dynastic entry, while reshaping political selection, does not undermine women’s substantive representation.

This article contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it shows that gender quota policies can reshape political selection in ways that extend beyond increasing women’s descriptive representation. By altering the parties’ nomination incentives, quotas may influence the types of candidates who enter the electoral competition. Exploiting institutional cutoffs generated by Taiwan’s population-based quota rule, this study provides causal evidence that gender quotas increase the prevalence of dynastic politicians under candidate-centered electoral systems. These findings highlight how quota design interacts with existing elite recruitment structures to shape political selection patterns.

Second, this study shows that the quota-induced rise in dynastic politicians does not come at the cost of women’s substantive representation. A conventional view in the literature is that women who enter office through dynastic or proxy channels may function as placeholders for male relatives, limiting their autonomy and reducing expectations that their presence will translate into independent policy advocacy ([Jalalzai, 2013](#); [Labonne et al., 2019](#); [Bhowmick, 2026](#)). Taiwan’s political context provides a useful setting for evaluating this claim. Using detailed measures of legislative activity, I show that gender quotas are associated with significantly higher engagement with women-related policy issues. Regression discontinuity estimates at the constituency level indicate that districts subject to quotas introduce more women-related bills and speeches, both in aggregate and on a per-councilor basis, suggesting that the increase in substantive representation is not mechanically driven by constituency size.

Individual-level analyses further demonstrate that this quota-induced expansion of women's presence does not translate into a decline in substantive representation. At the same time, dynastic status does not exhibit a strong association with engagement in women-related policy activity. Overall, gender and exposure to quota constituencies are the factors more consistently associated with higher levels of substantive representation.

Third, this study demonstrates that the effects of gender quotas extend beyond female councilors through spillover effects on male legislative behavior. Quota exposure is associated with higher engagement by male councilors in women-related policy issues, indicating that quotas reshape legislative priorities by altering issue salience and peer dynamics within legislative bodies ([Bratton, 2005](#); [Karpowitz and Mendelberg, 2014](#)). This spillover effect is heterogeneous and significantly weaker among dynastic men, a pattern that is consistent with the persistence of substantive representation despite the expansion of political dynasties.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The next section reviews the relevant literature. Section 3 provides background information on the origins of the current state of gender quotas and political dynasties in Taiwan. Section 4 describes the data and empirical strategy. Section 5 discusses the impact of gender quotas on women and dynastic representation. Section 6 illustrates the policy outcomes resulting from the increased participation of dynastic politicians. The final section concludes the paper.

2 Implication of Gender Quotas

2.1 Descriptive and Substantive Representation

Numerous studies have documented improvements in women's descriptive representation following the adoption of gender quotas (Tripp and Kang, 2008; Jones, 2009; Paxton and Hughes, 2015; Dahlerup, 2013; Hughes, 2011; Krook, 2009). Although many of these studies find positive effects on women's legislative presence, the magnitude of these effects varies with the design of quota rules and the timing of their implementation. For example, Paxton and Hughes (2015) shows that reserved seat quotas, which guarantee a minimum share of seats for women, are more effective in increasing women's representation than candidate quotas that regulate only the composition of party lists. Their research also demonstrates that the positive impact of quotas on descriptive representation strengthens over time as norms surrounding women's political inclusion change. Schwindt-Bayer (2009) further identifies several institutional features that shape quota effectiveness, including the required proportion of women candidates, the placement of women in electable positions on party lists, and the presence of sanctions for noncompliance.

Another important question is whether gender quotas consistently motivate politicians to advocate for more women-friendly or gender-equal policies. As previous studies have shown, male and female politicians often hold different policy preferences (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Beaman et al., 2009). Thus, an increase in the number of women politicians may shift the policy agenda. Most existing studies find that the introduction of quotas can enhance the substantive representation of women (Hughes et al., 2017; Wängnerud, 2009; Pearson and Dancey, 2011; Celis, 2007; Dodson, 2006; Esaiasson and Heidar, 2000; Hogan, 2008; Reingold, 1992; Swers, 2002; Thomas, 1994; Carey et al., 1998;

Clayton and Zetterberg, 2018; Weeks, 2019; Wang, 2023; Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004).

There are several explanations for how quotas influence substantive representation. Clayton (2021) argues that increasing the number of women can either enhance the flow of information or allow women to play a more essential role in decision-making bodies. The “providing more information” mechanism refers not only to the idea that having more women in councils increases overall awareness of women-related issues but also to the effect that the presence of more women motivates male councilors to recognize the need to care about these issues as well. Specifically, women are more likely to advocate for women’s interests because they share similar life experiences, which provide a deeper understanding of women’s needs and perspectives (Franceschet and Piscopo, 2008; Wängnerud, 2000; Wängnerud, 2009).

The “essential role” mechanism means that when women hold key positions in councils or parties, they gain greater power over agenda-setting, which enables them to prioritize legislation related to women’s issues. Chattopadhyay and Duflo (2004)’s study provides empirical evidence for this mechanism. They examine the consequences of mandated representation of women in Indian village council leadership. When women serve as village council heads, they tend to prioritize different types of public goods, such as drinking water and roads, compared with their male counterparts.

However, some studies indicate that a rise in descriptive representation does not necessarily result in greater substantive representation. For example, Weeks and Masala (2023) argue that a higher proportion of women in Italian parliament does not automatically translate into substantive policy change, largely due to structural barriers within the policymaking process that limit their ability to represent women’s interests effectively. Bailer et al. (2021) find that the policy priorities of politicians who represent marginalized

groups may shift over time. For example, female politicians often focus on women-related issues early in their careers, possibly due to career advancement incentives. As their professional goals evolve, their areas of focus may also change. It remains unclear whether growth in descriptive representation results in greater substantive representation, especially when the descriptive representation of political groups other than women is affected simultaneously.

2.2 Effects of Gender Quotas on Other Identity Dimensions

Gender quotas may also impact the representation of other politically significant traits, in addition to gender representation. Some existing studies find that political gender quotas may decrease minority representation ([Karekurve-Ramachandra and Lee, 2020](#); [Holmsten et al., 2010](#); [Cassan and Vandewalle, 2021](#); [Celis et al., 2014](#)). Those effects can arise from the strategic responses of politicians or from the choices made by voters. Research on intersectionality highlights that women are not a homogeneous group, and quota reforms may disproportionately benefit candidates with closer ties to dominant social groups. As a result, increases in women’s representation may coincide with declines in the representation of other communities. These distributional shifts show that quotas can reallocate political power beyond the gender and can also reshape the representation of other social groups, potentially reinforcing pre-existing inequalities.

For example, [Karekurve-Ramachandra and Lee \(2020\)](#) examine the elections in India and find that women from upper castes are more likely to win reserved seats. Hence, the quotas also contribute to an imbalance in the representation of different castes. This result is mainly driven by the socioeconomic status of women in the group and the attitudes of individuals within the same group towards women. [Folke et al. \(2021\)](#) document

another form of identity-based representation change resulting from the introduction of gender quotas in Sweden and Ireland. They find that women with dynastic ties are more likely to be elected in the initial election following quota implementation, particularly in districts with fewer female representatives. However, this effect is short-lived. After several elections, voters no longer rely on dynastic cues because they develop clearer expectations about viable female candidates. The authors attribute this pattern to screening discrimination, which historically made it more difficult for women than for men to receive accurate evaluations. In the early stages of quota implementation, family ties serve as an informational cue that helps voters overcome this uncertainty.

Although [Folke et al. \(2021\)](#)'s research mainly focuses on Ireland and Sweden, they also identify similar declining patterns of dynastic bias across many other democracies. However, it remains unclear how contextual differences, such as party-centered versus candidate-centered electoral systems, mediate the relationship between gender and dynastic recruitment. Previous studies argue that candidate-centered systems are more likely to produce dynastic politicians ([Carey and Shugart, 1995](#); [Smith, 2018](#)), yet the gender composition of political dynasties remains understudied. This gap motivates a closer examination of how dynastic politics intersect with gender under different institutional settings.

2.3 Dynasties and Gender Politics

To situate the analysis of dynasties and gender, it is necessary to review how political dynasties have been evaluated in the broader literature. Political dynasties are often viewed as normatively problematic because the inheritance of political power runs counter to democratic principles of political equality and open competition ([Putnam, 1976](#)). Dynas-

tic politics reflects a self-perpetuating process among political elites, which may undermine democratic accountability when political office is effectively transferred within families.

Beyond these normative concerns, scholars argue that dynastic politicians tend to be less educated, a pattern that can lead to a range of negative consequences, including inferior public policies, weaker political effort, and greater reliance on clientelistic strategies for electoral survival (Geys, 2017; Geys and Smith, 2017; Bragança et al., 2015; Rossi, 2017; Cruz et al., 2017; Chandra, 2016). These concerns are echoed in public opinion. Survey evidence from Taiwan indicates that citizens generally hold negative perceptions of political dynasties (Huang, 2024). When voters elect incompetent politicians, the consequences may persist over extended periods as political power is inherited by family members, further exacerbating concerns about democratic quality.

While political dynasties are often viewed as normatively problematic, family connections have also played an important role in facilitating women's entry into politics. For example, we can observe numerous "widow's succession" cases in the United States during the early twentieth century, in which women entered politics by inheriting their husbands' positions upon their deaths (Dal Bó et al., 2009). This pattern is also observed in authoritarian regime. Clark and Clark (2000) note that during the authoritarian-era Taiwan, running for office as a family member of a political victim became an important pathway for women to enter politics. Women emerged in public life as widows, daughters, or other relatives of persecuted activists, taking on temporary leadership roles within social movements and helping to sustain the momentum of political opposition (Waylen, 1996). As a result, their entry into politics was often driven by necessity rather than personal ambition, and their political agendas tended to be relatively passive. Given that women's political participation historically occurred primarily through family networks

and under conditions of limited political opportunity, it is not surprising that dynastic women are sometimes viewed as “placeholders”. The de facto power of these women is often constrained by familial expectations ([Labonne et al., 2019](#); [Jalalzai, 2013](#)).

When gender quotas are introduced in such contexts, male politicians may recruit their female relatives to run for office in order to satisfy quota requirements while retaining political power within the family. These women may serve as “proxy candidates” and are expected to prioritize family interests over independent political agendas. For example, several studies shows that in India, male relatives of women politicians frequently usurp political roles that quota systems were designed to reserve for women ([Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004](#); [John, 2007](#); [Huidobro et al., 2025](#)).

Although the placeholder role of female politicians is often assumed, research on dynastic women remains limited, and it remains unclear whether women who enter politics with the support of a family name merely advance their families’ political goals. Put differently, we do not know whether dynastic women who benefit from family reputation and institutional conditions continue the policy agendas of their predecessors or instead develop independent political priorities. Moreover, as a group whose pathways into politics differ from those of their peers, dynastic women may exhibit distinct issue preferences in their legislative behavior. Accordingly, how women respond when confronted with gender quota requirements remains a question worthy of careful examination. In particular, it remains an open question how dynastic and non-dynastic women, as well as women legislators as a whole, respond to the presence or absence of gender quotas ([Smith, 2018](#)). This study aims to address these questions.

2.4 Why Do Gender Quotas Increase Women and Dynasties?

According to previous literature, during Taiwan’s authoritarian era there emerged a tradition known as “Chiashu Campaigns” (Clark and Clark, 2000), in which female relatives of political prisoners—wives, daughters, or other kin—stood for election in place of their imprisoned male family members. This practice reflected a broader form of family-based politics under authoritarian rule, whereby women entered electoral competition as representatives of politically persecuted families rather than as autonomous political actors.

After democratization, political imprisonment disappeared, but the logic of family-mediated political succession persisted and diversified. Family members may step in when male politicians are unable to run because of criminal incarceration, health conditions, or other personal reasons. In some cases, family politics takes the form of joint or overlapping political careers, with spouses or parent–child pairs simultaneously or sequentially holding elected office. These patterns suggest that the mobilization of family members to sustain political representation has remained an enduring feature of Taiwanese politics, even as the institutional context has changed.

Notably, entering politics through family substitution does not preclude the development of independent political agendas. Chiang (2009) shows that many women who initially entered politics unintentionally went on to cultivate their own policy priorities over time. As I will show in a later section, some female dynastic politicians in Taiwan diverge from their male predecessors by shifting their policy focus, indicating that the placeholder role does not universally apply, particularly in the democratic era.

In addition to political family, parties also have strategic motivations for selecting dynastic women as candidates. Consider a situation in which parties compete in a constituency with four seats, where institutional rules guarantee that at least one of the four

winners must be a woman. Parties choose both the number and gender composition of their nominees to maximize expected seat shares. Crucially, the quota operates as a minimum guarantee rather than a cap: female candidates may win more than one seat if their vote shares place them among the top four.

In this environment, nominating at least one woman constitutes a weakly dominant strategy for the following reasons. If a party nominates only men and the quota binds, the guaranteed female seat is awarded to the highest-vote female candidate from a rival party, mechanically reducing the party's expected seat share. By contrast, nominating a female candidate preserves the party's ability to compete for quota-induced seats without reducing its chances of winning non-reserved seats. However, strategic logic does not imply that parties benefit from nominating arbitrarily weak female candidates. Because rival parties face the same incentives, quota-induced competition typically takes the form of cross-party competition among female candidates. When each party nominates a woman, the quota no longer guarantees election to any particular party; instead, the seat is allocated to the woman with the highest vote total across all parties.

The required viability of a party's sole female nominee depends on strategic competition with rival parties (Batto, 2019). A female candidate who is substantially weaker than the party's marginal male contender may still be sufficient as a symbolic or insurance nomination. However, this strategy is unstable at equilibrium. If the quota binds, a weak female nominee is likely to lose to a stronger female nominee from the rival party. If the quota does not bind, she is unlikely to place among the top four candidates on her own merits and may further dilute intra-party votes. Anticipating these responses, parties are incentivized to nominate a woman whose electoral viability approaches that of the party's marginally winnable candidate. In equilibrium, nominating exactly one

woman is optimal only if her electoral viability is high enough to outperform rival parties' female nominees when the quota binds and is not substantially weaker than the party's marginally winnable male candidate when the quota does not bind.

This logic also clarifies when parties may optimally nominate more than one female candidate. A second female nomination is seat-maximizing only if the additional female candidate is strong enough to enter the top four independently, offsetting the vote-splitting costs induced by an expanded party slate. Otherwise, parties rationally limit female nominations to one, not because the quota constrains female success, but because strategic competition raises the viability threshold required for additional nominees to be elected. The model implies that gender quotas can simultaneously increase women's representation and raise the average electoral strength of nominated female candidates through strategic selection, rather than mechanical substitution.

In this context, women from political dynasties emerge as prime targets for parties seeking electorally strong female candidates. First, dynastic politicians tend to be electorally competitive in Taiwan due to the resources they inherit, including political networks, campaign experience, and family reputation (Batto and Read, 2024). Second, female dynastic candidates help parties satisfy gender quota requirements by occupying seats reserved for women. Prior research provides sporadic evidence, based on interviews with political families, suggesting that nominating women within these families is a strategic response to gender quota requirements (Batto and Read, 2024). Consistent with the descriptive patterns discussed above, women candidates are limited in supply overall, with non-dynastic women being particularly scarce relative to non-dynastic men. This imbalance implies that when families nominate female relatives, these candidates face fewer same-gender competitors, thereby further enhancing their strategic appeal to parties. In

short, Gender quotas introduce an additional binding constraint by requiring parties to manage gender composition alongside electoral viability. Prior to the implementation of gender quotas, reliance on female dynastic candidates was optional rather than necessary. The introduction of quotas fundamentally altered this strategic calculus.

The introduction of the gender quota law also raises the cost of candidate recruitment, as parties are often compelled to identify new, viable female candidates. This burden is particularly pronounced for smaller parties, which tend to have more limited candidate pools and fewer resources for recruitment (Weeks, 2018). Although the law applies to all parties, those with fewer established female candidates must invest more in identifying new entrants. However, increased recruitment efforts may result in nominating candidates with limited name recognition, which can negatively affect electoral performance. For example, party officials in France anticipated electoral losses due to nominating unknown female candidates following the adoption of gender quotas (Murray, 2007).

Given that dynastic candidates are typically more electorally competitive within each gender due to inherited resources, name recognition, and established organizational bases, parties are especially inclined to nominate dynastic women once quotas apply. At the same time, quotas reduce the number of seats effectively available to male candidates. This crowding intensifies competition for the remaining male seat, leading parties to allocate it to the safest and most viable option—often a dynastic man. In summary, quotas activate the nomination of dynastic women while reinforcing the selection of dynastic men through crowding. The combined effect is a systematic increase in the overall dynastic share of party nominations. This mechanism does not imply that gender quotas enhance the intrinsic electoral strength of dynastic candidates. Rather, the rise in dynastic representation following quota adoption reflects strategic party adaptation to new

institutional constraints, not changes in the underlying appeal of dynastic candidates themselves. These lead to Hypothesis 1 and 2:

H1: Constituencies with gender quotas have more women candidates and councilors than constituencies without gender quotas.

H2: Constituencies with gender quotas have more dynastic candidates and councilors than constituencies without gender quotas.

A further question is whether politicians adjust their behavior in response to this type of gender quota. More specifically, do they shift their policy preferences when quotas are in place? Wang (2023) finds that women elected through national-level quotas in Taiwan devote greater attention to welfare, health, and education issues than women elected without quota support. This evidence suggests that, in the Taiwanese context, gender quotas may also generate changes in substantive representation. This expectation leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: Constituencies with gender quotas exhibit higher levels of women's substantive representation than constituencies without gender quotas.

3 Gender Quotas and Political Dynasties in Taiwan

3.1 The History of Gender Quotas In Taiwan

In most countries that introduced gender quota laws, women’s representation was limited prior to reform (Clayton, 2021). Taiwan represents a slightly different case from this broader pattern. Although gender quotas existed at the local level as early as 1947, these rules were not sufficiently effective in facilitating substantial increases in women’s political participation.² In 1998, 53% of districts had no reserved seats, and 46% had only one reserved seat. Only 16% of candidates and 18% of elected councilors were women. Dissatisfaction with these outcomes—especially among feminist activists—motivated calls for reform.

To understand why earlier quotas had limited impact, it is important to situate them within Taiwan’s broader gender structure. Taiwan during the authoritarian and early post-authoritarian era remained strongly patriarchal. Clark and Clark (2000) document that many patriarchal norms persisted, including heavy domestic burdens on women and the enduring expectation that they serve as “virtuous wives and good mothers.” Despite advances in education and labor-force participation, women continued to face significant gendered constraints in family responsibilities and workplace hierarchy.

Within this context, the Kuomintang (KMT) created specific organizational roles for women—most notably in the Women’s League, the military system, and veterans’ communities—that aligned with traditional expectations of women as caretakers and community stabilizers. Although these positions were rooted in conventional gender norms, they provided one of the few legitimate pathways for women to move from the domestic sphere

² Districts with 5 to 14 seats have one reserved seat, and districts with 15 to 24 seats have two reserved seats.

into the public realm. Through such work, women were able to build organizational experience, develop extensive local networks, and accumulate political resources that later facilitated their entry into electoral politics ([Chiang, 2009](#)).

Prior to the quota reform, gender was not a salient political cleavage in Taiwan. Women were generally understood as members of other social categories rather than as a distinct political constituency with shared interests. The introduction of the quota, by increasing the visibility and numerical presence of women in councils, gradually elevated gender into a more meaningful axis of political representation.

In 1998, the national parliament began drafting a new set of local government laws. The revision of the gender quota rule became one of the key issues. The proposal was initially championed by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). With the support of women's organizations, the Legislative Yuan enacted a new quota system for local councils, which was first implemented in the 2002 elections ([Hu, 2004](#); [Yang, 2000](#); [Huang, 2016](#)). The electoral system for local councilors is a Single Non-Transferable Vote with Multiple Member Districts (SNTV-MMD), meaning that constituencies often have more than one seat. The new 1/4 quota rule requires that in any constituency with four or more seats, at least one must be reserved for women. A district with eight seats has two reserved seats, and one with twelve seats has three. If the top four vote-getters are all men, the fourth man is replaced by the highest-ranked woman. Table 1 reports the distribution of total seats and reserved seats across constituencies. More than half of the constituencies reserve at least one seat for women, and approximately 20 percent reserve more than one.

Table 1: Number of Seats For Constituencies in Local Elections (2002-2022)

# of Seats	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
# of Reserved Seats	0			1				2				3		
(Proportion)	(0.47)			(0.32)				(0.17)				(0.03)		
Count	333	129	125	125	111	87	79	71	62	51	28	17	15	1

3.2 Political Dynasties in Taiwan

With the new quota law for local elections, more women are expected to enter politics. However, it is also noteworthy that dynastic politicians, who play a significant role in local politics, have also seen growth during the same period. According to the data, the percentage of dynastic councilors has grown from about 10% to 35% in the past two decades. The current percentage is much higher than 20 years ago (see Figure 1), which shows an opposite trend than several recent studies on political dynasties (Dal Bó et al., 2009; Gertzog, 1995; Folke et al., 2021).³

³ Prior to the nationwide unification of local election timing in 2014, election dates differed between municipalities and non-municipal jurisdictions. Given the limited time gap between these elections and the small number of municipalities before unification, election years are consolidated for analytical convenience. Specifically, elections held in 2005 and 2006 are coded as 2006, and elections held in 2009 and 2010 are coded as 2010.

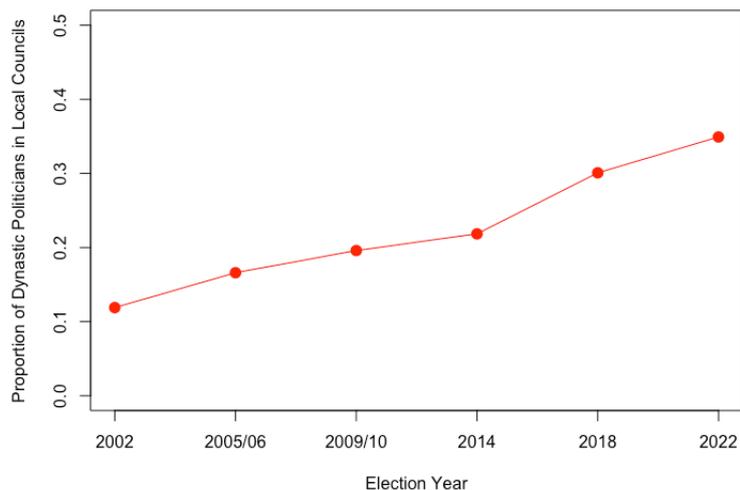


Figure 1: Proportion of Dynastic Politicians in Local Councils (2002 - 2022)

The prominence of political dynasties in local councils may be related to the electoral system. As mentioned earlier, the SNTV-MMD system implies that there are multiple seats in a constituency. In most districts, parties often nominate more than one candidate. Given that the election outcome is determined by individual votes, it implies that candidates need to compete with candidates from other parties and within the same party.

According to [Shugart \(2001\)](#), this electoral system has several features. Intra-party battles are more prominent than inter-party competition. It is particularly challenging for candidates to receive support from the party when resources are limited, and the party has multiple candidates in the constituency. Second, issues and ideologies play a minimal role in the election because voters find it challenging to identify candidates' positions solely based on the party label. In addition, candidates have a strong incentive to build personal connections with voters through constituency service and pork barrel projects. In short, SNTV-MMD is a highly candidate-centered system, and this type of system is usually correlated with particularistic strategies ([Farrell et al., 1996](#); [Norris, 2004](#); [Muraoka, 2018](#)). Hence, candidates who have name recognition, such as dynastic

politicians, can have a huge advantage. Parties are more inclined to recruit dynastic candidates because of their capacity to amass personal votes (Smith, 2018).

Table 2 presents the gender distribution of dynastic and non-dynastic politicians in local council elections. First, there were slightly more female candidates than male candidates from political families for every local council election after 2002. The distribution is entirely different with non dynastic candidates. There are many more men than women among non-dynastic candidates. This indicates that men are generally more active in politics, but women with family ties have slightly higher chances of entering politics than their male counterparts. Secondly, there are still more men than women among elected representatives due to the significant disparity between the number of male and female candidates. However, women have a slightly higher chance of winning. For non-dynastic candidates, the probability is 48% for men and 51% for women. The number of dynastic politicians is even higher, with 70% of male dynastic candidates and 72% of female dynastic candidates securing seats, which implies that dynastic politicians are the ones with the advantage. Last but not least, a higher proportion of female politicians (39%) than male (15%) politicians come from dynasties. Similar results can be found in other countries (Dal Bó et al., 2009; Basu, 2016; Smith and Martin, 2017; Nishizaki, 2018).

Table 2: Gender Representation of Candidates and Councilors (2002-2022)

	Men	Women
Dynastic Candidates	820	886
(Councilors)	(571)	(642)
Non Dynastic Candidates	6777	1969
(Councilors)	(3232)	(1012)

4 Empirical Design and Data

The identification strategy exploits a discontinuity generated by Taiwan’s gender quota rule for local council elections. Under the current electoral law, only constituencies electing more than four councilors are subject to gender quotas, which require the reservation of at least one seat for a woman. The number of council seats allocated to each constituency is determined by the following statutory formula:

$$\# \text{ of Total Seats in the local council} \times \frac{\text{Constituency Population}}{\text{Municipality Population}}$$

The resulting value is then rounded according to a mechanical rule. A constituency with a calculated seat value exceeding 3.5 is assigned four seats, which triggers the reservation of one seat for a woman. Similarly, constituencies with values exceeding 7.5 are assigned eight seats, with two woman-reserved seats, and so on. As a result, treatment status changes discontinuously at known cut points of the forcing variable.

This institutional feature gives rise to a regression discontinuity design (RDD). I compare constituencies located just below and just above the first relevant cutoff, where the predicted number of seats crosses 3.5. The unit of analysis is the constituency. The running (forcing) variable is the predicted number of seats implied by the statutory formula, and the treatment is the application of the gender quota, defined as the presence of at least one woman-reserved seat. Because nearly all constituencies with more than four seats are automatically subject to the quota, treatment assignment at the cutoff is effectively deterministic.⁴

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Treat}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{Pred}_{it} + \beta_3 \text{Treat}_{it} \times \text{Pred}_{it} + \theta_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

⁴ Approximately 1% of constituencies (14 observations) do not comply with the assignment rule due to idiosyncratic rounding adjustments. These cases are excluded from the analysis.

$Treat_{it}$ is the dummy variable indicating whether the constituency applies quotas, while $Pred_{it}$ is the distance from the formula cutoff, θ_{it} represents a set of covariates (voter turnout and number of parties in the constituency). I also include the constituency fixed effects and year fixed effects. Following a standard procedure, observations are weighted using the triangular kernel, and only observations within the bandwidth are included in the estimation (Calonico et al., 2014).

I retrieved the election data of candidates from the Central Election Commission website and information about dynastic politicians from Batto (2018)’s article. He collected data from three major newspapers (United Daily News, China Times, and Liberty Times) in Taiwan by utilizing the local sections of the newspapers for each municipality.⁵ Because his dataset only covers elections from 2002 to 2014, I have employed the same approach to update the data to 2022. It is important to note that in coding whether a candidate belongs to a dynasty, I include cases in which the candidate’s relatives have been elected to public office at any level of government.⁶

5 Results

Figure 2 and 3 visualizes the impact of gender quotas on several outcomes: (1) the gender ratio of all candidates, (2) the gender ratio of elected candidates, (3) the ratio of dynastic to non dynastic candidates, and (4) the ratio of dynastic to non dynastic elected candidates. Table 3 presents the estimated effects of gender quotas on various descriptive representation outcomes. In constituencies with gender quotas, the gender ratio of candidates increases by 13.1 percentage points, representing a 52% increase relative to the

⁵ This method may be the most effective way to gather information on family ties, but it is still likely to under report the overall percentage of family ties.

⁶ Positions include village heads; township, county, and city councilors; executives at each level of local government; and the president.

control group mean of 25%. Similarly, the proportion of dynastic candidates increases by 12 percentage points, an 86% rise from the baseline of 14%. This increase reflects a change in the composition of candidates rather than a mechanical implication of the quota rule, suggesting that quotas reshape party nomination strategies.

Beyond candidacy, the results also reveal positive and statistically significant effects on electoral success. These effects closely track the changes observed at the candidacy stage, indicating that quotas influence both who runs and who wins, rather than operating solely through reserved seats. Further analysis indicates that the proportion of female dynastic candidates and elected candidates also increases in constituencies with gender quotas. The share of dynastic candidates who are women is significantly higher in treated constituencies, both among those who run for seats and those who are elected. This pattern is not mechanically implied by gender quotas and points to a strategic reliance on female candidates from political families when parties face binding nomination constraints. These findings suggest that gender quotas not only encourage greater participation from women and dynastic candidates but also improve their likelihood of electoral success.⁷

Notably, this finding stands in contrast to evidence from Japan. [Smith \(2018\)](#) shows that, at the national level, institutions that facilitate dynastic representation are associated with weaker women's representation. The case of Taiwan's local elections, however, suggests that a candidate-centered system does not necessarily hinder women's representation. With the implementation of gender quotas, it is possible to accommodate the interests of both dynasties and parties while simultaneously enhancing women's representation. The major difference between Japan and Taiwan is the existence of gender quotas, which motivate dynasties and parties to nominate female dynasties.

⁷ Table A1 in the Appendix presents the descriptive statistics of the original dataset.

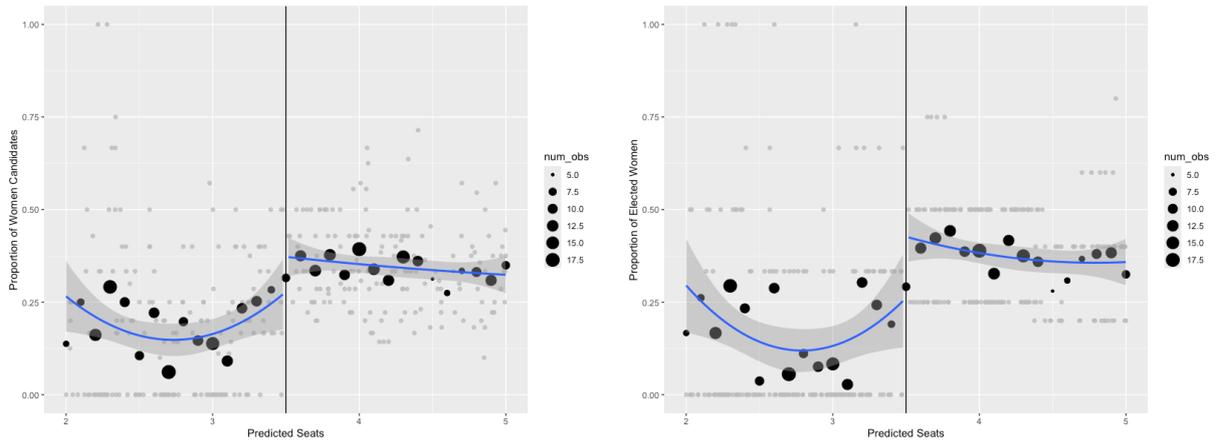


Figure 2: Effect of Gender Quotas on Female Candidates and Councilors

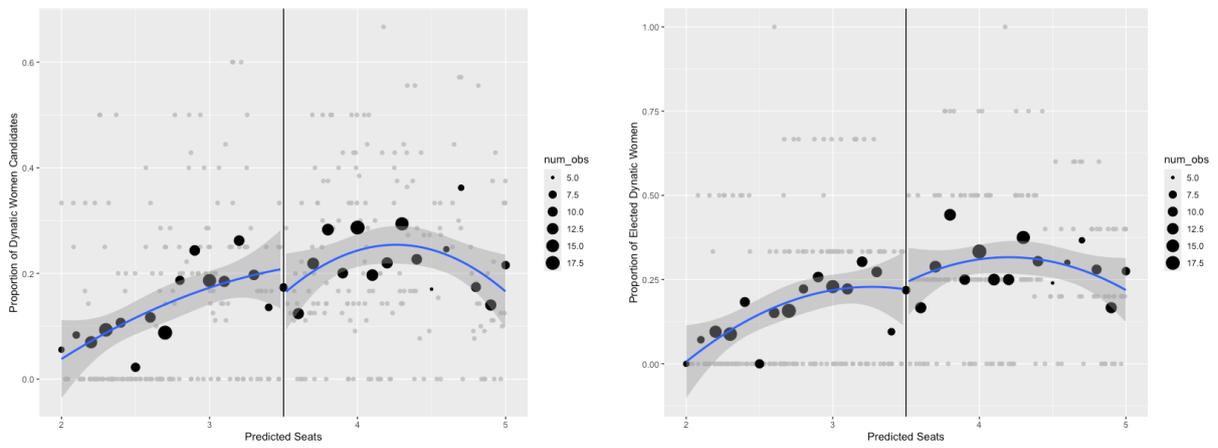


Figure 3: Effect of Quotas on Female Dynastic Candidates and Councilors

Table 3: RD Effects of Gender Quotas on Descriptive Representation

	Women / All Candidates	Elected Women/ All Elected	Dyn/ All Candidates	Elected Dyn/ All Elected
RD Effect	0.131* (0.068)	0.229*** (0.049)	0.120** (0.048)	0.152** (0.074)
Control Mean	0.25	0.27	0.14	0.18
Observations	146	146	168	169
Bandwidth	0.60	0.60	0.71	0.72
	Dyn Women/ All Candidates	Elected Dyn Women/ All Elected	Dyn Women/ All Dyn	Elected Dyn Women/ All Elected Dyn
RD Effect	0.073*** (0.027)	0.135*** (0.049)	0.373*** (0.117)	0.294* (0.153)
Control Mean	0.067	0.084	0.283	0.253
Observations	200	234	263	308
Bandwidth	0.83	0.97	1.14	1.34
Bandwidth rule	optimal	optimal	optimal	optimal
Covariates	Y	Y	Y	Y
Polynomial	linear	linear	linear	linear

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Dyn refers to dynastic candidates, Elected Dyn refers to elected dynastic candidates, Female Dyn refers to female dynastic candidates, and Elected Female Dyn refers to elected female dynastic candidates. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity-robust and clustered by constituency, reported in parentheses. All regressions include constituency and year fixed effects. Covariates include voter turnout and the number of parties. Observations are weighted using the triangular kernel.

To confirm the robustness of the main findings, I conducted a series of tests. First, the McCrary test is employed to demonstrate that there was no manipulation around the cutoff. The results of this test are presented in the Appendix (Figure A1). Secondly, a placebo test was conducted to verify the results in Table 3 by using an alternative cutoff. In accordance with the gender quota rule, constituencies with five and six seats are allocated the same number of reserved seats (one seat). Thus, the objective was to ascertain whether there is a notable ratio increase for female dynastic candidates in six-seat constituencies relative to five-seat constituencies. Table A2 in the appendix indicates that the available evidence does not substantiate the assertion that the increased availability of seats is a primary driver of the observed rise in female dynastic candidates. Consequently, it can be inferred that the reserved seats for women, rather than the additional available

seats, are a key factor in the increase in female candidates and female dynastic candidates. Third, I also show that the results remain consistent with different bandwidths (see Table A3 and A4 in the Appendix).

As discussed earlier, I argue that Taiwan’s gender quota rules incentivize parties to nominate women, as this represents the most strategic response under the institutional constraints. If one party fails to nominate a woman, it effectively cedes the reserved seat to its opponent. However, not just any female candidate can secure the seat. She must be electorally competitive. In the Taiwanese context, such competitiveness is often associated with dynastic background (Batto, 2018). Therefore, we should expect to observe higher rates of female and dynastic nominations, particularly dynastic women, in constituencies subject to gender quotas.

A key assumption underlying this argument is that dynastic candidates are, on average, more electorally competitive. Using candidate-level vote share as the outcome, Figure 4 shows that dynastic candidates consistently receive higher vote shares across pooled, female-only, and male-only specifications. Crucially, this pattern holds in multi-member districts, where electoral victory and vote share are not mechanically linked. These results indicate that dynastic background is associated with greater electoral prospects, providing parties with a strategic incentive to rely on dynastic women when responding to gender quota constraints.⁸

⁸ The OLS specifications underlying Figure 4 control for candidate age, incumbency, and major party nomination (KMT and DPP). Even with these controls, dynastic background is associated with a positive and statistically significant effect on vote share. Full regression results are reported in the Appendix. Educational background is not included in the main specifications because education data are missing for earlier election cycles, and including this control would substantially reduce the sample size. Nevertheless, Appendix Table A5 shows that the estimated dynastic effect remains positive and statistically significant when education is included as a control.

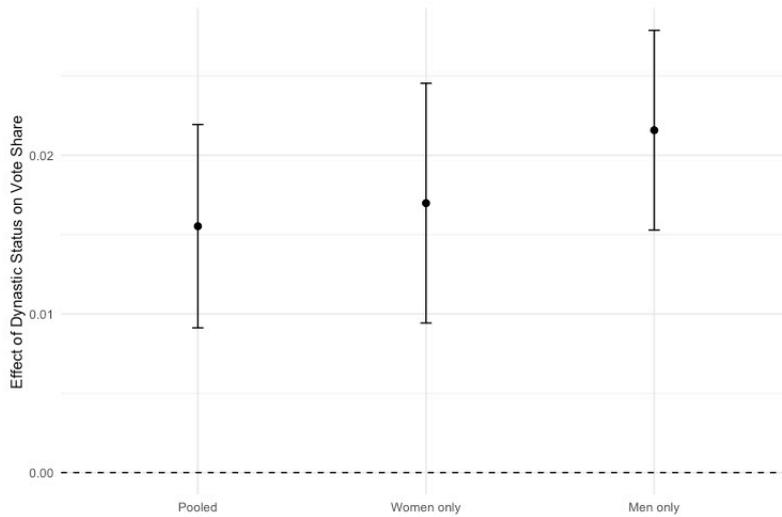


Figure 4: Dynastic Background and Candidate Vote Share

To test this claim, I examine the nomination strategies of the two major parties, the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The results, presented in Figure 5, support this argument: in districts with gender quotas, both parties nominate a higher share of women among all party nominees, a higher share of dynastic candidates among all party nominees, and a higher share of dynastic women among female nominees. Notably, these patterns are more pronounced for the DPP. While the KMT also shows positive coefficients for the share of women and the share of dynastic candidates among its nominees, these effects are not statistically significant. By contrast, when focusing on the nomination of dynastic women among female candidates, the effect is positive for both parties and statistically significant for the KMT, indicating a greater reliance on dynastic women when nominating female candidates in quota districts.⁹

⁹ See Table A6 in the appendix for the complete table.

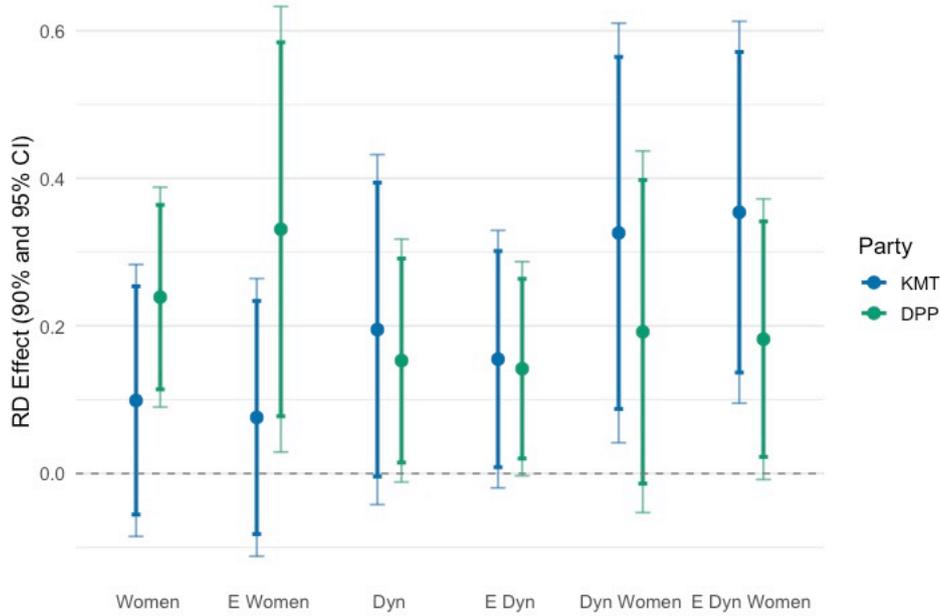


Figure 5: RD Effects of the Gender Quota on Parties' Nomination Strategy

Figure 6 further illustrates the gap in vote share between female candidates from two major parties and other minor parties in constituencies with quotas. The coefficients for the aggregate major parties and one of the major parties (DPP) are positive and significant. Though the coefficient for the other major party (KMT) is insignificant, it is still positive. The vote share gap between the two major parties and minor parties is aligned with their behaviors during the legislation of the gender quota. In comparison to the KMT, the DPP has experienced a more pronounced advantage following the implementation of a gender quota. This pattern is consistent with the DPP's earlier and stronger commitment to quota adoption, which may have allowed it to better internalize and strategically adapt to the new nomination rules.

Generally speaking, it is more difficult for small parties to find competitive female candidates, so they either do not nominate or recruit candidates with low name recognition. As a result, quotas impose asymmetric constraints across parties, disproportionately binding smaller parties with thinner candidate pools. This results in a situation where

the stronger parties become even stronger, while the weaker ones become even weaker.¹⁰

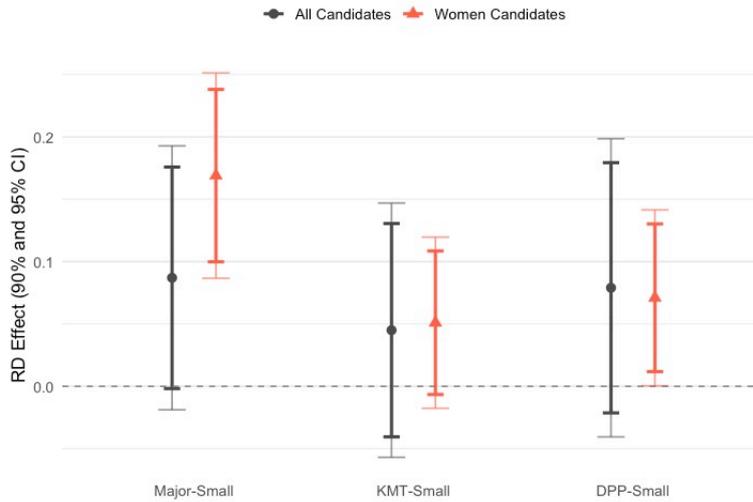


Figure 6: RD Effects of the Gender Quota on Parties' Vote Share

While the previous analyses show that the gender quota creates incentives for major parties to nominate women, particularly competitive dynastic women, these benefits depend critically on the availability of suitable candidates. Strategic responses operate within real-world supply constraints. Not all districts provide parties with an adequate pool of electorally viable women, and this constraint becomes more severe as the number of reserved seats increases. Table 4 illustrates this point. Both the KMT and the DPP exhibit substantially higher rates of “gender deficit” districts when more seats are reserved for women. These deficits reflect situations in which parties cannot find enough competitive female candidates to fully meet the quota requirement.

In this sense, the quota system creates both strategic advantages and practical challenges. When strong female candidates are available, parties gain from nominating them. When they are not available, parties face quota obligations that are difficult to satisfy. This duality helps explain why media reports occasionally note that major parties forgo

¹⁰ See Table A7 in the appendix for the complete table.

contesting certain women-reserved seats because they lack “suitable” candidates (Young, 1998). It also suggests that, in practice, candidate quality often outweighs strict numerical compliance. Parties tend to nominate fewer but more competitive women to protect their electoral position, especially in districts with a larger number of reserved seats.

Table 4: Gender Deficit Districts of Major Parties

	1 reserved seat	2 reserved seats	3 reserved seats
KMT	18.4%	40.6%	54.5%
DPP	35.0%	74%	91.0%

Notes: % means the percentage of gender deficit districts among all districts in the category. A deficit district indicates that the party nominates fewer female candidates than the number of women-reserved seats that the constituency has.

6 Substantive Representation of Women

Given that the gender quota leads to an increase in certain types of politicians, what are the potential policy implications? As demonstrated in previous sections, the implementation of gender quotas led to an increase not only in women’s representation but also in the presence of dynastic politicians. Most of the existing literature suggests that dynasties are generally viewed as less attentive to women’s interests, even when the dynastic politicians themselves are women (Jalalzai, 2008; Choi, 2019; Thompson, 2022; Ascencio and Malik, 2024). Schwindt-Bayer (2010) also points out that elite women have different life experiences from those of ordinary women. This divergence may shape distinct policy preferences and limit the extent to which they represent broader women’s interests.

To assess whether gender quotas still result in policy changes beyond shifts in descriptive representation, I examine the legislative behavior of councilors in local councils. To be more specific, I look at the frequency and context of sponsored bills and speeches that

covered women-related issues from 2002 to 2023.¹¹

The next question is how to construct the keywords for women-related issues. To build a comprehensive list of women's issues, I draw on several previous studies (Meguid et al., 2025; Burrell, 1996; Gerrity et al., 2007; Lawless, 2015; Karpowitz and Mendelberg, 2014). Generally, issues such as gender equity, child care, employee flex time, and abortion are typically included. The most appropriate approach is to rely on prior studies conducted in the same country. However, because most official surveys in Taiwan provide only broad categories of women's issues without specifying particular keywords, I ultimately draw on the keywords they employ, while making minor modifications to suit the Taiwanese context.¹²

I utilize the official database of local council minutes as the primary source of information.¹³ For cities and counties not included in the database, I supplement with keyword searches on the respective local council websites. And then, I filter the council minutes by searching for relevant Chinese keywords. These keywords are selected to capture speeches or bills related to the topics of interest. I then manually review the context of the filtered paragraphs. Table 5 provides two examples. If a bill is co-sponsored by multiple councilors, every co-sponsor is counted separately. Therefore, for this type of bill, the unit of analysis is the individual councilor.¹⁴

¹¹ In the context of local councils in Taiwan, the main difference between bills and speeches lies in the requirement that the former must be seconded by multiple councilors, whereas the latter does not. It is common to see councilors mention the same issues in both their proposals and speeches, and the local governments need to respond if there are some requests or questions in bills or speeches. Moreover, the number of required seconders for a bill is usually low (1-2 councilors). Therefore, in this paper, I treat both as forms of legislative behavior in a broad sense.

¹² For the complete list of keywords and the corresponding descriptive statistics, see Tables A6 and A7 in the appendix.

¹³ <https://journal.th.gov.tw/>

¹⁴ Figure A2 shows the frequency trend of women-related bills and speeches. We can see the related bills and speeches increase over time.

Table 5: Examples of Bills and Speeches

Councilors	Content	Type	Keyword1	Keyword2	Year	County/City
Tai Ning	For the safety of the learning environment for young children, it is recommended that the Chiayi City Government actively address the "Seismic Reinforcement Project of Chiayi City Wu Feng Kindergarten."	Bills	children	kindergarten	2018	Chiayi City
Huang Tian-Tsai	...Looking back over the past six or seven years, especially in the last two or three years, unemployment among workers in the southern region has increased even more. Disadvantaged groups have also been growing in number, including a worsening situation among single-parent families due to divorce.	Speeches	single parent	divorce	2007	Kaohsiung City

Furthermore, Figure 7 visualizes the most popular keywords included in bills and speeches, and the three most popular keywords are kindergarten, children, and women.¹⁵ It is understandable that child-related issues, such as asking for new kindergartens, have become popular. On one hand, this is a concern shared by fathers and mothers, not just a women-specific issue. On the other hand, advocating for new public facilities is one of the easiest achievements for local councilors to claim credit for. Compared to discussing abstract law or policy changes, new public infrastructure is more visible and tangible to voters. This finding also aligns with previous research, suggesting that gender quotas are more likely to influence policies that transcend party lines or ideological divisions. These issues tend to face less resistance from conservative groups, who are generally more hesitant to adopt progressive policies. (Barnes, 2016; Weeks, 2022; Wiliarty, 2010).

¹⁵ Since this study focuses on local councils, laws or regulations about parental leave or women's employment protection fall outside the jurisdiction of local governments. As a result, local councilors are less likely to address these issues.

Having established that quotas increase women-related bills and speeches, I next examine which types of councilors drive this pattern. This disaggregated analysis compares how different types of councilors, distinguished by gender and dynastic status, contribute to women-related legislation and clarifies whether quotas merely increase descriptive representation or whether specific subgroups translate them into substantive policy engagement. Figure 8 indicates that both dynastic and non-dynastic women introduce more bills and speeches than their male counterparts, whereas the difference between dynastic and non-dynastic women is relatively modest. This suggests that gender, rather than dynastic status, is the key determinant of legislative attention to women’s issues.

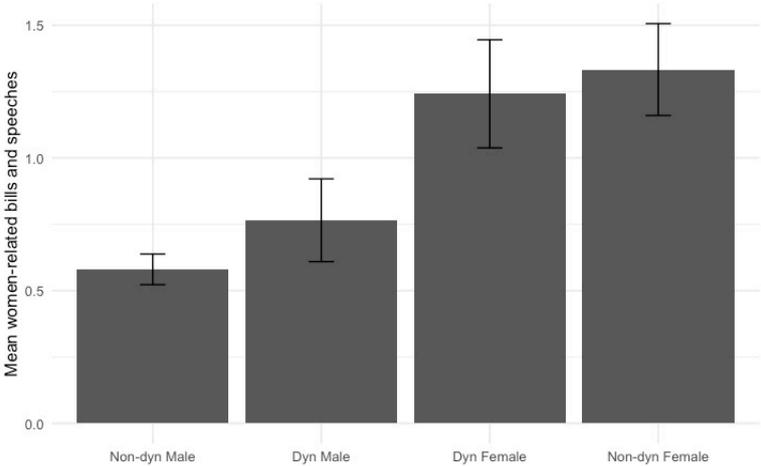


Figure 8: Women-Related Bills and Speeches by Gender and Dynastic Status

Consistent with the descriptive patterns, the regression results reported in Table 7 show that gender quotas are associated with a substantial increase in women-related bills and speeches, and that this effect is driven primarily by the direct participation of women councilors themselves. Consistent with the descriptive patterns, the regression results reported in Table 7 show that gender quotas are associated with a substantial increase in women-related bills and speeches, and that this effect is driven primarily by

the direct participation of women councilors themselves.¹⁷ Crucially, dynastic status does not attenuate this gender gap. The interaction between being female and having a dynastic background is statistically insignificant, indicating that women’s substantive representation is not conditional on family ties.

Further analyses clarify the role of institutional context and dynastic background. Although the interaction between gender and quota exposure is not statistically significant, the positive association between women councilors and women-related policy engagement remains robust, indicating that women’s substantive representation is not statistically confined to quota constituencies alone. Rather, quota institutions appear to primarily operate by increasing women’s presence in office, thereby amplifying women’s direct contribution to women-related policy activity. This pattern is consistent with existing work emphasizing the central role of descriptive representation in shaping substantive outcomes (Clayton et al., 2017). Subgroup analyses further illuminate the sources of heterogeneity underlying the quota-associated increase in women-related policy activity. Although earlier evidence shows that more dynastic politicians have entered local councils over time, the regression results reported in Table 7 provide no evidence that this compositional change is associated with a decline in substantive representation on women-related issues.

By contrast, among men councilors, quota exposure is associated with a significant increase in engagement with women-related issues, indicating a spillover effect whereby quotas reshape the legislative priorities of men councilors. Crucially, this spillover effect is heterogeneous across dynastic status. The interaction between dynastic background and quota exposure among men is negative and statistically significant, implying that

¹⁷ Full regression results are reported in Appendix Table A10. Because information on councilors’ educational background is incomplete, including education as a control variable results in a substantial reduction in sample size. For completeness, Appendix Table A11 reports specifications that additionally control for education. The main results remain robust.

the positive association between quota exposure and women-related policy engagement is significantly attenuated among dynastic men. In non-quota districts, dynastic men are on average more active on women-related issues, consistent with their inherited political resources and constituency service roles. These findings suggest that while gender quotas directly empower female councilors, they also indirectly influence male councilors' behavior, albeit in ways that are conditioned by dynastic background.

The interpretation of these patterns is that gender quotas operate through changes in issue salience and peer dynamics within legislative bodies. By altering the gender composition of legislatures, gender quotas increase the prominence of women-related issues and are associated with shifts in the content and tone of legislative discussion ([Karpowitz and Mendelberg, 2014](#)). In such settings, women's increased descriptive representation may enhance the visibility and perceived legitimacy of women-related concerns, making them more salient topics of legislative activity. As a result, men may face greater normative or strategic incentives to engage with women-related policy debates ([Bratton, 2005](#)). While the present analysis does not directly observe deliberative interactions or test these mechanisms, the observed spillover patterns among men are consistent with institutional accounts emphasizing how changes in gender composition reshape agenda-setting dynamics and peer influence within collective decision-making bodies.

Table 7: Councilor Responses to Gender Quotas

Dependent Variable: Number of bills and speeches				
	Baseline	Interaction	Men Only	Women Only
Quota (0/1)	0.520*** (0.183)	0.564*** (0.186)	0.494*** (0.174)	1.039*** (0.342)
Dynastic (0/1)	-0.161* (0.083)	0.572* (0.303)	0.531 (0.368)	0.010 (0.371)
Women (0/1)	0.506*** (0.083)	0.106 (0.310)		
Dynastic × Quota		-0.762** (0.301)	-0.783** (0.367)	-0.217 (0.414)
Women × Dynastic		-0.103 (0.169)		
Women × Quota		0.473 (0.309)		
Controls	YES	YES	YES	YES
Constituency FE	YES	YES	YES	YES
Cycle FE	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	5,640	5,640	3,948	1,692
R^2	0.300	0.302	0.304	0.441

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The dependent variable is the count of women-related bills and speeches. All regressions control for age and major party affiliation. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity-robust and clustered at the constituency level. All specifications include constituency and election-cycle fixed effects.

While the preceding subgroup analyses show that dynastic women are not systematically less engaged with women-related issues than non-dynastic women, they do not directly address whether dynastic succession constrains women's ability to shift policy priorities relative to their own predecessors. To further assess whether dynastic women merely replicate their predecessors' behavior, I conduct within-family comparisons. While prior research suggests that kin successors often maintain the family brand to preserve

incumbency advantages and representational continuity (Smith, 2018), the observed patterns suggest a more heterogeneous reality. Figure 9 shows among female successors, 40 percent are more active than their dynasty seniors, 42 percent show similar levels of activity, and only 18 percent are less active. These findings challenge the strong version of the “placeholder” hypothesis, which assumes that female successors passively continue the political agenda of their predecessors. It is important to note that this analysis is limited to cases in which the senior relative also served as a city councilor. Female councilors whose predecessors held other positions, such as township heads or members of parliament, are not included in this comparison.

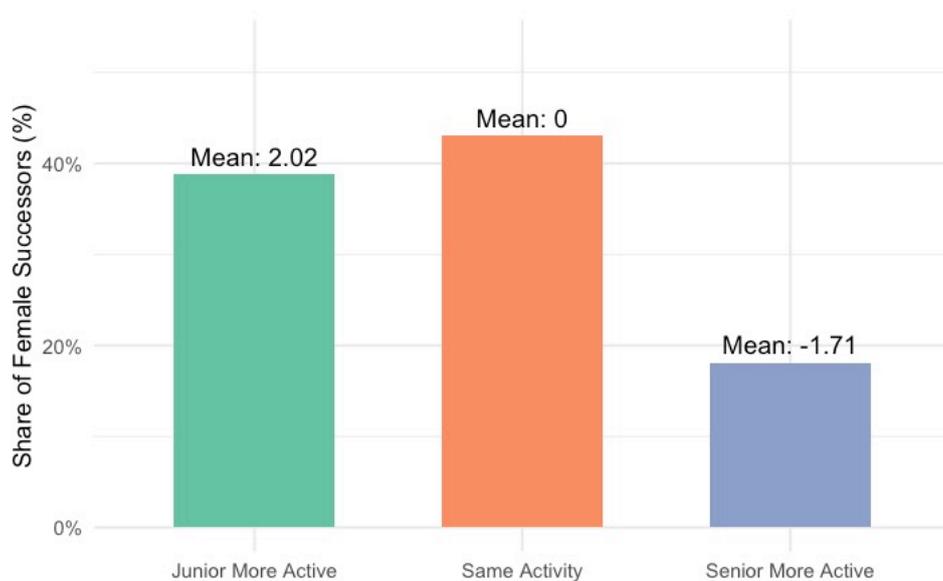


Figure 9: Engaging Women’s Issues: Dynastic Women vs. Their Predecessors

While institutional and familial constraints may shape women’s legislative behavior, the evidence provides limited support for the view that dynastic women are merely passive transmitters of their family seniors’ approaches. Regression results suggest that inheriting a seat from a male senior is not significantly associated with greater engagement on women-related issues. Moreover, within-family comparisons reveal substantial variation

in behavior: many dynastic women appear to pursue their own legislative priorities, with a considerable share more active than their predecessors.

7 Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that gender quotas can generate a range of outcomes that extend beyond their intended effects on women's representation. While gender quotas are often framed as tools to empower women and reshape the political agenda, the case of Taiwan illustrates how quota reforms also interact with existing patterns of political selection. Quotas substantially enhanced the descriptive representation of women, but they also reshaped party nomination strategies in ways that increased the presence of dynastic politicians in local politics. In particular, dynastic women emerged as electorally viable candidates under quota constraints, reflecting parties' strategic responses to gender-based nomination requirements. More broadly, these dynamics highlight how quota institutions can have heterogeneous effects across parties, reinforcing the advantages of larger parties with deeper candidate pools while imposing greater constraints on smaller competitors.

More broadly, the findings indicate that the expansion of women's substantive representation associated with gender quotas operates primarily through the increased presence and activity of women legislators. Although a nontrivial share of these women enter office through political families, dynastic background does not systematically condition their engagement with women-related issues. Instead, the evidence points to substantial heterogeneity in how dynastic women approach legislative work, suggesting that dynastic entry does not entail a mechanical inheritance of policy priorities. In this sense, quota-induced changes in political selection alter who enters office without constraining how women legislators define and pursue their substantive agendas.

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this study, whether gender quotas represent a win for women or for political dynasties, the evidence suggests that the answer is likely both, albeit in different ways. The introduction of quotas has led to a measurable increase in the share of both female and dynastic councilors, confirming that dynasties have adapted to the institutional constraints by nominating women from within their families. However, inheriting a seat from a male relative does not appear to significantly increase women-related legislative activity, and dynastic women show substantial variation in their behavior. Some adopt priorities distinct from their predecessors, while others align more closely.

Constituencies exposed to gender quotas exhibit higher volumes of bills and speeches addressing women's concerns, and these efforts are disproportionately led by female councilors. While dynasties continue to play a prominent role in local politics, their influence does not translate into uniform patterns of representation. Rather than signaling a convergence of dynastic interests and gendered advocacy, these patterns point to a more complex negotiation between familial legacies and institutional demands. How political families navigate this tension, and whether female dynastic councilors can reshape their family's representational style over time, remains an important question for future research. Notably, these effects are not confined to women councilors alone. Although gender quotas directly regulate the nomination and election of women, the analysis indicates that male councilors in quota-exposed constituencies also become more engaged with women-related issues. This pattern points to a spillover effect within councils, whereby quota-induced changes in the composition and visibility of women councilors reshape the incentives and issue priorities of their male counterparts.

This paper also points to several directions for future research. One direction is to

examine how the spillover effects identified here develop over time, and whether sustained exposure to gender quotas leads to more durable changes in male councilors' issue priorities. Another important question relates to dynastic succession: under what conditions can women who enter office through political families reshape their family's representational style, rather than conform to existing patterns? More broadly, future work could investigate how gender quota institutions interact with entrenched elite structures across different institutional and electoral contexts, offering deeper insight into the long-term representational consequences of gender-based reforms.

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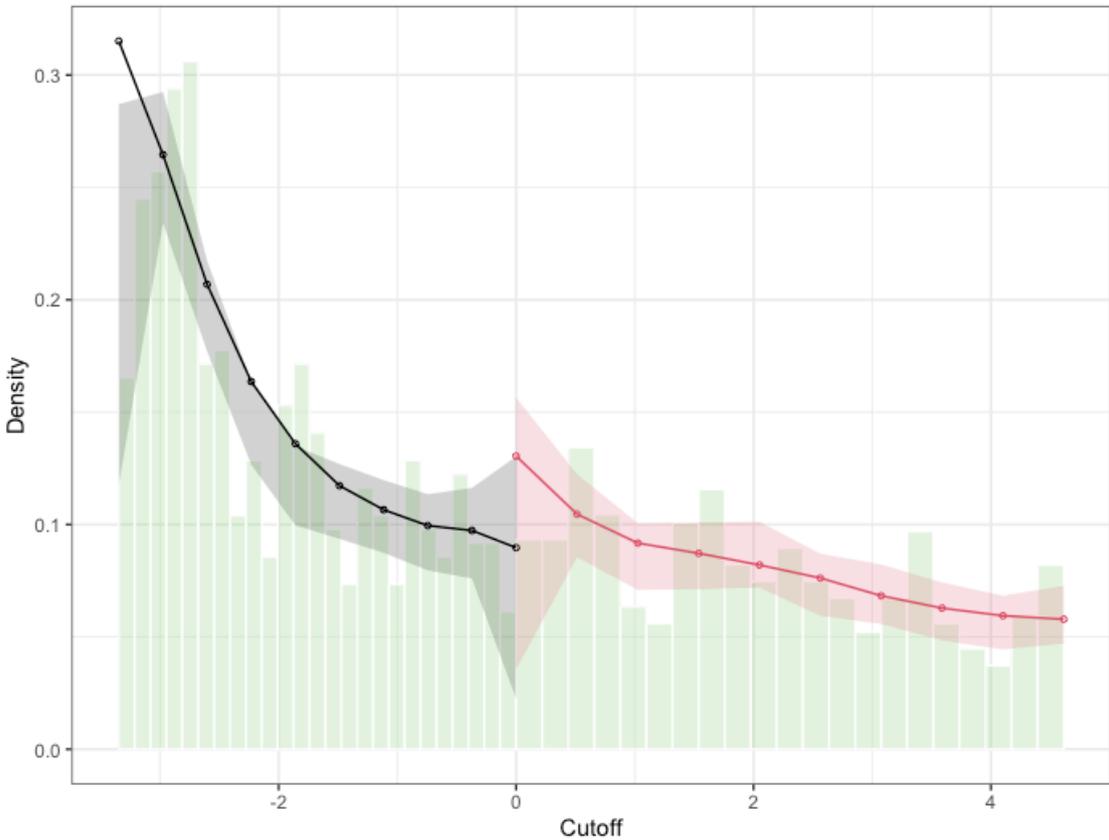
Appendix

Descriptive Statistics of the Original Dataset

Table A1: Summary Statistics

	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
# of All Candidates	1,220	8.470	6.438	1	34
# of All Female Candidates	1,220	2.304	2.117	0	10
# of All Elected Candidates	1,220	4.430	3.249	1	14
# of All Elected Female Candidates	1,220	1.343	1.322	0	7
# of Dyn Female Candidates	1,220	0.719	0.969	0	6
# of Elected Dyn Female Candidates	1,220	0.523	0.795	0	6
Constituency w/ Quota	1,220	0.525	0.500	0	1
Distance From the Cutoff	1,220	0.859	3.327	-3.347	10.121
Voter Turnout	1,220	0.660	0.084	0.363	0.925
# of Parties	1,220	3.250	1.540	1	12

Robustness Checks



The confidence intervals overlap and the p-value for the overlap size is 0.6381, which means no manipulation around the cutoff.

Figure A1: McCrary Density Test

Table A2: Placebo Test (Discontinuity Moved to 5.5)

	Women / All Candidates	Elected Women/ All Elected	Dyn/ All Candidates	Elected Dyn/ All Elected
RD Effect	-0.051** (0.025)	-0.127*** (0.038)	-0.084 (0.054)	-0.169** (0.071)
Control Mean	0.24	0.26	0.13	0.16
Observations	216	200	330	325
Bandwidth	1.13	1.05	1.63	1.58
	Dyn Women/ All Candidates	Elected Dyn Women/ All Elected	Dyn Women/ All Dyn	Elected Dyn Women/ All Elected Dyn
RD Effect	-0.023 (0.040)	-0.037 (0.062)	-0.024 (0.220)	-0.069 (0.223)
Control Mean	0.067	0.089	0.268	0.248
Observations	263	242	303	247
Bandwidth	1.35	1.24	1.50	1.27
Bandwidth rule	optimal	optimal	optimal	optimal
Covariates	Y	Y	Y	Y
Polynomial	linear	linear	linear	linear

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Dyn refers to dynastic candidates, Elected Dyn refers to elected dynastic candidates, Dyn Women refers to female dynastic candidates, and Elected Dyn Women refers to elected female dynastic candidates. Standard errors are cluster-robust at the constituency (district) level and reported in parentheses. All regressions include constituency and year fixed effects. Covariates include voter turnout and the number of parties. Observations are weighted using the triangular kernel.

Table A3: RD Effects for Main Results with Varying Bandwidths

Women / All Candidates			
RD Effect	0.131*	0.159***	0.107*
	(0.068)	(0.053)	(0.063)
Observations	146	276	433
Bandwidth	0.60	1.20	1.79
Elected Women / All Elected			
RD Effect	0.229***	0.269***	0.196***
	(0.049)	(0.071)	(0.066)
Observations	146	276	429
Bandwidth	0.60	1.19	1.79
Bandwidth rule	optimal	manual	manual
Dyn / All Candidates			
RD Effect	0.120**	0.068	0.065
	(0.048)	(0.043)	(0.045)
Observations	168	327	516
Bandwidth	0.71	1.42	2.13
Elected Dyn / All Elected			
RD Effect	0.152**	0.067	0.092
	(0.074)	(0.065)	(0.069)
Observations	169	329	522
Bandwidth	0.72	1.44	2.15
Bandwidth rule	optimal	manual	manual

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Women refers to female candidates and Elected Women refers to elected female candidates. Dyn refers to dynastic candidates and Elected Dyn refers to elected dynastic candidates. Standard errors are cluster-robust at the constituency level and reported in parentheses. All regressions include constituency and year fixed effects. Covariates include voter turnout and the number of parties. Observations are weighted using the triangular kernel.

Table A4: RD Effects for Main Results with Varying Bandwidths

Dyn Women / All Candidates			
RD Effect	0.073*** (0.027)	0.047 (0.036)	0.041 (0.032)
Observations	200	390	610
Bandwidth	0.83	1.66	2.49
Elected Dyn Women / All Elected			
RD Effect	0.135*** (0.049)	0.102* (0.053)	0.014 (0.078)
Observations	234	474	769
Bandwidth	0.97	1.94	2.91
Bandwidth rule	optimal	manual	manual
Dyn Women / All Dyn			
RD Effect	0.373*** (0.117)	0.344*** (0.125)	0.237** (0.107)
Observations	263	555	935
Bandwidth	1.14	2.29	3.43
Bandwidth rule	optimal	manual	manual
Elected Dyn Women / All Elected Dyn			
RD Effect	0.294* (0.153)	0.252* (0.131)	0.218 (0.152)
Observations	308	667	977
Bandwidth	1.34	2.68	4.02
Bandwidth rule	optimal	manual	manual

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Dyn Women refers to female dynastic candidates, and Elected Dyn Women refers to elected female dynastic candidates. Standard errors are cluster-robust at the constituency level and reported in parentheses. All regressions include constituency and year fixed effects. Covariates include voter turnout and the number of parties. Observations are weighted using the triangular kernel.

Supplementary Results

Table A5: Dynastic Background and Candidate Vote Share

	Pooled (1)	Pooled (2)	Women (1)	Women (2)	Men (1)	Men (2)
Dynastic (0/1)	0.0155*** (0.0033)	0.0159*** (0.0041)	0.0170*** (0.0039)	0.0165*** (0.0054)	0.0216*** (0.0032)	0.0166*** (0.0040)
Women (0/1)	-0.0065*** (0.0020)	-0.0040 (0.0028)				
Age (years)	-0.0002* (0.0001)	-0.0002 (0.0002)	-0.0004 (0.0002)	-0.0004 (0.0003)	0.0005*** (0.0001)	-0.000032 (0.0002)
Major Party (0/1)	0.0341*** (0.0020)	0.0400*** (0.0030)	0.0317*** (0.0036)	0.0381*** (0.0054)	0.0472*** (0.0025)	0.0396*** (0.0032)
Incumbent (0/1)	0.0481*** (0.0026)	0.0516*** (0.0039)	0.0334*** (0.0047)	0.0352*** (0.0066)		0.0549*** (0.0039)
Dynastic × Women	0.0000408 (0.0050)	-0.0019 (0.0065)				
Education		-0.0002 (0.0006)		-0.0002 (0.0009)		0.0001 (0.0006)
Constituency FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	10,758	6,464	2,919	1,932	7,839	4,532
R ²	0.638	0.580	0.642	0.582	0.644	0.620

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The dependent variable is candidate vote share. Standard errors are clustered at the constituency level and reported in parentheses. All regressions include constituency and year fixed effects. *Dynastic* indicates whether a candidate has a dynastic political background. *Female* is a binary indicator equal to one for female candidates. *Age* is measured in years. *Major Party* indicates affiliation with a major political party. *Incumbent* equals one if the candidate is an incumbent. *Education* is measured as years of schooling.

Table A6: RD Effects of the Gender Quota on Parties' Nomination Strategy

	KMT Women/ KMT	DPP Women/ DPP	KMT E Women/ KMT Elected	DPP E Women/ DPP Elected
RD Effect	0.099 (0.094)	0.239*** (0.076)	0.076 (0.096)	0.331** (0.154)
Control Mean	0.276	0.200	0.264	0.193
Observations	164	232	184	223
Bandwidth	0.68	0.97	0.78	0.91
	KMT Dyn/ KMT	DPP Dyn/ DPP	KMT E Dyn/ KMT Elected	DPP E Dyn/ DPP Elected
RD Effect	0.195 (0.121)	0.153* (0.084)	0.155* (0.089)	0.142* (0.074)
Control Mean	0.171	0.120	0.170	0.115
Observations	170	276	221	355
Bandwidth	0.73	1.21	0.90	1.57
	KMT Dyn Women/ KMT Female	DPP Dyn Women/ DPP Female	KMT E Dyn Women/ KMT E Female	DPP E Dyn Women/ DPP E Female
RD Effect	0.326** (0.145)	0.192 (0.125)	0.354*** (0.132)	0.182* (0.097)
Control Mean	0.181	0.147	0.174	0.125
Observations	255	364	304	308
Bandwidth	1.11	1.59	1.33	1.35
Bandwidth rule	optimal	optimal	optimal	optimal
Covariates	Y	Y	Y	Y
Polynomial	linear	linear	linear	linear

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust and clustered at the constituency level. All regressions include constituency and year fixed effects. Covariates are voter turnout and the number of parties. Observations are weighted by the triangular kernel.

Table A7: Vote Share Difference Between Major and All Small Parties

All Candidates	Major–All Small	KMT–All Small	DPP–All Small
RD Effect	0.087 (0.054)	0.045 (0.052)	0.079 (0.061)
Control Mean	0.56	0.38	0.13
Observations	276	255	235
Bandwidth	1.19	1.09	0.98
Women	Major–All Small	KMT–All Small	DPP–All Small
RD Effect	0.169*** (0.042)	0.051 (0.035)	0.071* (0.036)
Control Mean	0.161	0.105	0.042
Observations	170	211	278
Bandwidth	0.73	0.85	1.20
Bandwidth rule	optimal	optimal	optimal
Covariates	Y	Y	Y
Polynomial	linear	linear	linear

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The dependent variables are the vote share difference between the two major parties (KMT and DPP) and the aggregated vote share of all small parties. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity robust cluster at constituency level and presented in parentheses. All regressions include fixed effects for the constituency and year. The covariates are voter turnout and the number of parties. Observations are weighted by the triangular kernel.

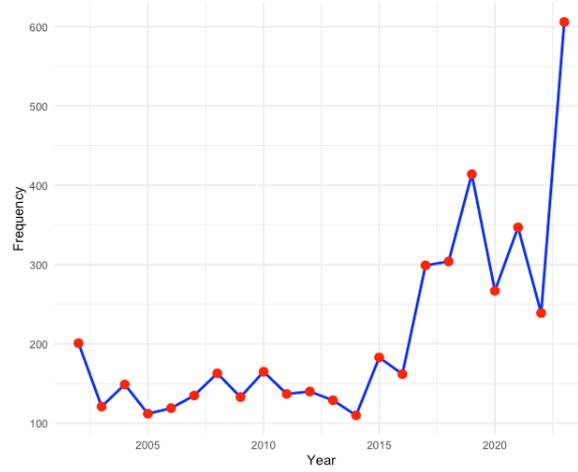


Figure A2: Yearly Trend of Women Related Issue Bills and Speeches

Table A8: Keyword and Chinese Translation

Keyword	Chinese	Keyword	Chinese	Keyword	Chinese
abortion	墮胎	marriage	婚姻/結婚	rape	強姦/性侵害
at home with children	在家顧孩子	parental leave	育嬰假	respect women	尊重女性
baby	嬰兒	parenting	育兒	second shift	第二輪班
babysitting	保母	pater est	婚生子女	sex worker	性工作者
birth	出生	pornography	色情/情色	sexual harassment	性騷擾
birth benefit	生育津貼	postnatal	產後	single parent	單親
birth subsidy	生育補助	pregnant	懷孕	stalking	跟蹤
prenatal	產前	subsidy	補助	breast cancer	乳癌
preschool	學前教育	violence	暴力	breastfeeding	哺乳
prostitute	妓女	women	女性/婦女	carer	照顧者
protect women	保護婦女	women victims	女性受害者	childcare	托兒
daycare	日間照顧	double income	雙薪	children	幼兒
compulsory education	義務教育	family allowance	家庭津貼	divorce	離婚
domestic violence	家暴/家庭暴力	family and work	家庭工作	equal pay	同工同酬
family benefit	家庭福利	family subsidy	家庭補助	foreign bride	外籍新娘
foster parent	繼父母	gender	性別	gender-based violence	性別暴力
gender quota	性別配額	human trafficking	人口販運	kindergarten	托兒所/幼兒園
oppress women	受害女性	vaccine	疫苗		

Table A9: Keyword Lists

Keyword	Count	Keyword	Count	Keyword	Count
Kindergarten	1197	Respect women	58	Equal pay	10
Children	1082	Rape	48	Family benefit	9
Women	628	Postnatal	53	Protect women	7
Parenting	312	Birth benefit	37	Family and work	5
Single parent	290	Divorce	35	At home with children	5
Gender	279	Family subsidy	34	Parental leave	4
Childcare	268	Breastfeeding	31	Gender-based violence	3
Pregnant	212	Vaccine	28	Carer	3
Marriage	204	Abortion	27	Oppress women	3
Subsidy	197	Pater est	38	Women victims	3
Daycare	187	Birth	22	Family allowance	2
Domestic violence	164	Prostitute	22	Violence	2
Sexual harassment	164	Stalking	22	Foster parent	1
Babysitting	153	Discrimination	21	Second shift	1
Pornography	126	Foreign bride	15		
Baby	119	Human trafficking	16		
Compulsory education	107	Sex worker	13		
Preschool	63	Birth subsidy	12		

Table A10: Councilor Responses to Gender Quotas: Full Results

Dependent Variable: Number of Bills and Speeches				
	Baseline	Interaction	Men Only	Women Only
Dynastic (0/1)	-0.161*	0.572*	0.531	0.010
	(0.083)	(0.303)	(0.368)	(0.371)
Quota (0/1)	0.520***	0.564***	0.494***	1.039***
	(0.183)	(0.186)	(0.174)	(0.342)
Age (years)	-0.028***	-0.027***	-0.025***	-0.040***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.009)
Major Party(0/1)	0.020	0.020	0.029	0.072
	(0.062)	(0.062)	(0.065)	(0.143)
Women (0/1)	0.506***	0.106		
	(0.083)	(0.310)		
Dynastic \times Quota		-0.762**	-0.783**	-0.217
		(0.301)	(0.367)	(0.414)
Women \times Dynastic		-0.103		
		(0.169)		
Women \times Quota		0.473		
		(0.309)		
Constituency FE	YES	YES	YES	YES
Cycle FE	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	5,640	5,640	3,948	1,692
R^2	0.300	0.302	0.304	0.441

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The dependent variable is the count of women-related bills and speeches. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity-robust and clustered at the constituency level. All specifications include constituency and election-cycle fixed effects.

Table A11: Councilor Responses to Gender Quotas w/ Education

Dependent Variable: Number of Bills and Speeches				
	Baseline	Interaction	Men Only	Women Only
Dynastic (0/1)	-0.166 (0.101)	0.603 (0.378)	0.421 (0.485)	0.129 (0.375)
Quota (0/1)	0.395** (0.193)	0.451** (0.202)	0.331* (0.197)	1.093*** (0.378)
Education (years)	0.029** (0.014)	0.027* (0.014)	0.025* (0.014)	0.064** (0.029)
Age (years)	-0.034*** (0.005)	-0.034*** (0.005)	-0.033*** (0.006)	-0.042*** (0.011)
Major Party (0/1)	0.009 (0.091)	0.009 (0.091)	0.036 (0.099)	-0.072 (0.196)
Women (0/1)	0.475*** (0.104)	-0.003 (0.376)		
Dynastic × Quota		-0.840** (0.370)	-0.724 (0.480)	-0.297 (0.438)
Women × Dynastic		-0.045 (0.214)		
Women × Quota		0.551 (0.372)		
Constituency FE	YES	YES	YES	YES
Cycle FE	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	3,566	3,566	2,386	1,180
R^2	0.269	0.271	0.297	0.378

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$. The dependent variable is the count of women-related bills and speeches. Standard errors are heteroskedasticity-robust and clustered at the constituency level. All specifications include constituency and election-cycle fixed effects.