

The Phenomenon of Celebrity Recruitment as Legislative Members from the Perspective of Dramaturgy Theory

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of recruiting celebrities as legislative members has become a trend in various countries, including Indonesia. This phenomenon has sparked debates, particularly concerning the capabilities, credibility, and motivations of celebrities in politics. This theory likens social life to a stage performance, where individuals play specific roles to gain social recognition. This study employs a qualitative research method with a case study approach on several celebrities who have become legislative members. The findings indicate that many celebrities utilize their popularity as social capital to gain voter support but often face challenges in adapting to the complex legislative role. The study also reveals that the performance displayed in public often differs from the reality behind the scenes. In conclusion, the image-building strategies employed by celebrity politicians significantly determine their success in establishing political legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, Indonesian politics has undergone a significant shift in terms of legislative recruitment. One prominent phenomenon is the increasing number of artists who have entered politics and succeeded in occupying parliamentary seats. This phenomenon has raised various questions regarding the motivation behind recruiting artists as politicians and the extent to which they are able to carry out legislative duties well.

The dramaturgy theory developed by [1] is used in this study to analyze how artists as politicians build their image and play their roles on the political stage. According to [1],

individuals always try to control the impressions displayed in front of the public to match social expectations. In this context, artist-politicians can be analyzed as actors who display certain performances to attract voters' sympathy [2].

This study aims to understand how artists who become members of the legislature build their political image, how these image strategies contribute to their political success, and how the behind-the-scenes reality affects their performance as members of the legislature.

1.1. *Politics as a Performance in the Recruitment of Artist Legislative Candidates*

Politics can be likened to a theater stage where celebrity candidates play certain roles to attract voters. In this context, they must manage their image and credibility to match public expectations. In an effort to utilize the popularity of celebrities to boost vote acquisition, political parties make celebrities their vote getters. This arises from the public's boredom with old politicians and the desire for new faces. However, the question is: do celebrities have enough quality to become people's representatives? Popularity is often the only capital, while their capabilities and capacities are often questioned.

Political parties compete to recruit artists by considering their popularity which is considered "marketable". This often eliminates party cadres who have gone through a long cadre process. In the long term, this pragmatic approach can weaken the party internally, cause frustration among cadres, and reduce the quality of political leadership [3].

In addition, politics as a performance can be seen from how political parties and artists use certain moments to strengthen their image. For example, through the use of social media, artists who run for office often display a simple lifestyle or social activities that show their closeness to the people. These actions, although often deliberate and planned, aim to create a positive impression that is relevant to the public's desires.

Dramaturgy theory explains that political actors play roles on the "front stage" to attract the attention of the audience, in this case voters. The front stage includes campaigns,

public speeches, and ceremonial activities that are often full of symbolism. On the other hand, the "back stage" is the space where political strategies are designed, including negotiations with parties and interest groups. The alignment between what is presented in front and what is planned behind is the key to the success of this strategy [4].

A concrete example of this concept is the blusukan phenomenon carried out by several celebrity politicians. By visiting remote areas and interacting directly with the community, they build a narrative of closeness and concern that strengthens their image on the front stage. However, behind it all, there is a communication strategy and impression management designed to achieve certain political goals [5].

1.2. *Front Stage: Front Stage in the Image of Artist Legislative Candidates*

In politics, the front stage is a space where artists present themselves as credible leaders who care about social issues. Social media, political advertisements, and public debates are the main means of building this image. Artists use certain symbols such as formal attire, persuasive rhetoric, and campaign slogans to attract voters' sympathy. In politics, especially in the imaging of legislative candidates from among artists, the concept of the front stage refers to how they present themselves to the public to build a positive image. The front stage is part of [1] dramaturgy theory, which describes how a person behaves according to the expectations of their audience. Artist candidates often take advantage of the popularity they have built in the entertainment industry to create the impression of being close to the people, competent, and concerned about social issues. They are active on social media,

attend various public events, and display an attractive communication style in order to maintain their electoral appeal. This imaging strategy aims to convince voters that they are not just celebrities, but also figures who are worthy of trust in the world of politics. Thus, the front stage becomes an important element in shaping public opinion and increasing the electoral opportunities of celebrity legislative candidates.

1.3. *Back Stage: Political Strategy Behind the Scenes*

Behind the scenes, there are strategies designed by campaign teams and political parties to direct artist campaigns. Communication training, designing political narratives, and compiling campaign agendas are part of efforts to increase the credibility of celebrity legislative candidates. In many cases, artists are guided to understand political issues so that they can appear more competent in front of the public. In the world of politics, especially in the campaigns of legislative candidates from among artists, the concept of back stage or "back stage" refers to strategies and maneuvers carried out behind the scenes to build an image and gain political support. Unlike the front stage which displays a controlled public impression, the back stage is a space where campaign teams, political consultants, and legislative candidates themselves design campaign strategies, compile narratives, and negotiate with various parties, including parties, donors, and interest groups. Here, all preparations are made, starting from compiling campaign materials, debate simulations, to analyzing public sentiment on social media. In addition, in the back stage there are often political compromises, lobbying, and issue management

strategies to face political opponents. In other words, back stage is a place where political strategies are polished so that they can be presented convincingly on the front stage, ensuring that every movement seen in front of the public has been carefully designed to support the achievement of electoral goals.

1.4. *Impression Management and Challenges for Artist Candidates*

Impression management is a crucial aspect for artists who enter the world of politics. They must be able to convince voters that they are not just public figures without political experience, but are also able to contribute substantively to policy making. However, the challenge faced is public skepticism towards their capabilities, especially if they do not have a strong track record in politics or social activism. Impression management is the main strategy for legislative candidates (caleg) from among artists to build a positive and convincing image in the eyes of voters. With a background as a public figure, they tend to get attention more easily, but the main challenge is how to turn popularity in the entertainment world into credibility in the world of politics. They must show that they do not only rely on fame, but also have competence, vision, and commitment to the interests of the community. To that end, they often use social media, interviews, and involvement in various social and political activities as a way to strengthen the impression as leaders who care and have integrity. However, the big challenge faced is the stigma that artists only rely on image without a deep understanding of politics, as well as public doubts about their capabilities in carrying out legislative duties. In addition, they also have to face competition from experienced politicians and

possible attacks from political opponents who question their credibility. Therefore, effective impression management is the main key for celebrity candidates to not only attract voters' attention, but also build trust and legitimacy in the world of politics.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *The Relevance of Dramaturgy Theory*

Dramaturgy theory introduced by [1] provides a framework for understanding how artists present themselves on the political stage. In this concept, social interaction is understood as a performance in which individuals play roles to influence the audience. The front stage is where artists show the image they want to project, while the back stage is the space where strategies are prepared.

[1] also discusses the concept of impression management, where politicians try to create a certain impression through their clothing, speech, and other actions. They manage their impressions so that the audience accepts the identity they present. In a political context, impression management allows politicians to change public perception through planned strategies.

The theory also highlights the difference between front-stage and backstage behavior. The front stage, such as a campaign, a rally, or a political debate, often projects a polished image to meet public expectations. Meanwhile, the back stage is where political strategy, negotiation, and compromise take place. This dynamic suggests that what appears on the surface is often at odds with the reality behind the scenes.

In the context of artists who enter politics, the relevance of dramaturgy theory is seen in the way they use their experience as actors to play roles on the political stage. They use their acting skills to show empathy, modesty, or concern for the community. For example, their

presence at social events or charity events can be seen as part of a front-stage strategy to build emotional connections with voters.

However, dramaturgy theory also reminds us of the risk of excessive manipulation. If the public begins to realize that there is a discrepancy between the image presented and the actions behind the scenes, trust in politicians can be eroded. Therefore, the success of implementing this theory depends heavily on consistency and honesty in building a political image.

Furthermore, the relevance of dramaturgical theory also helps us understand how social and cultural structures influence the dynamics of the political stage. For example, in societies with low levels of political literacy, strategies of manipulating symbols and representations tend to be more effective than in critical societies. This suggests that social context plays an important role in determining the success of dramaturgical strategies.

Thus, dramaturgical theory not only helps explain political phenomena as performances but also offers insights into how politicians can build relationships with the public through structured and strategic communication.

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3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Case studies are chosen because they allow researchers to explore in depth how artists who become members of the legislature play their roles in the political world.

3.1 *Types of Research*

This research is descriptive-qualitative with an interpretive approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, media analysis, and observation of artist-politician activities in various public forums.

3.2 *Research Subject*

The subjects of this study consisted of several artists who have become members of the legislature in Indonesia. The selection of subjects was done purposively based on their popularity, political track record, and involvement in policy making.

3.3 *Data collection technique*

a. In-depth Interviews

Interviews were conducted with artists who have served as legislators and political experts who understand this phenomenon.

b. Media Analysis

Studies were conducted on news coverage in print and online media to understand how artist-politicians build their image in front of the public.

c. Observation

Directly observing the behavior of artist-politicians in parliamentary sessions, campaigns, and their interactions with constituents.

3.4 *Data Analysis Techniques*

The data that has been collected was analyzed using Goffman's dramaturgical theory approach, by comparing the image displayed in front of

the public and the reality that occurs behind the scenes.

3.5 Data Management

a. Interview Transcription

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy.

b. Data Coding

Data from interviews, observations, and media analysis were categorized based on key themes relevant to dramaturgical theory.

c. Thematic Analysis

Identify key patterns in respondents' responses to understand image strategies and behind-the-scenes realities.

d. Data Triangulation

Data were compared across sources (interviews, media, and observations) to increase the validity of the research results.

e. Data Interpretation

The analyzed data were interpreted in the context of dramaturgical theory to understand the dynamics of the artist's role in politics.

3.6 Deep Interview Questions and Answers

1. What is your main motivation for entering politics?

Answer: "I want to bring positive change and use my popularity to fight for people's aspirations."

2. How did you adjust from the entertainment world to the world of politics?

Answer: "This change was quite difficult, but I learned from experience, taking training, and discussing with more senior colleagues."

3. Is there a significant difference between the image you portray in the media and the reality of day-to-day legislative work?

Answer: "Sure, in front of the camera I have to maintain a good image and

communication, but behind the scenes there are many technical challenges I have to learn."

4. What is the biggest challenge you face as an artist turned legislator?

Answer: "The main challenge is to build credibility and show that I can work seriously, not just rely on popularity."

5. What is your strategy in building public trust in your role as a member of the legislature?

Answer: "I continue to interact with the community, listen to their aspirations, and demonstrate real work in the policies I support."

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 The Role of Artists in Politics: Between Popularity and Competence

Many artists who enter politics use social capital in the form of their popularity. However, this study found that popularity alone is not enough to carry out legislative duties well. The challenges faced include a lack of understanding of political and legislative mechanisms, as well as difficulties in adapting to a complex work environment. First, this study shows that artists who enter politics often use strong image strategies in their campaigns. They build an image as individuals who care about society and have a vision for change, even though in reality they face challenges in adjusting to complex legislative duties. The front stage they present through the media and campaigns is often at odds with the reality of the back stage which is full of political dynamics, negotiation of interests, and limitations in understanding the legislative process.

4.2 Image Strategy: Building Political Identity

Using dramaturgy theory, it was found that many artist-politicians use image strategies such as:

a. Frontstage Performance

When appearing in the media, they try to show concern for social issues, express their vision and mission, and build closeness with the community.

b. Backstage Reality

Behind the scenes, they face political pressure, difficulty in understanding policies, and demands from the political parties that support them.

The main challenge faced by artists who become members of the legislature is building credibility amid public doubts about their capabilities. Popularity does provide an advantage in gaining votes, but it does not guarantee the ability to carry out legislative duties effectively. Many artists have difficulty understanding the policy-making process, the dynamics of political parties, and governance. However, some artists have managed to adapt to their new roles through a learning process, consultation with experts, and active involvement in legislative commissions that suit their interests and capacities.

4.3 Impact on Democracy

This phenomenon has a dual impact on democracy. On the one hand, the involvement of artists can increase public political participation. However, on the other hand, if not accompanied by adequate competence, it can reduce the quality of legislation and the effectiveness of parliament in carrying out its functions. This study also found that there is a gap between public expectations of artist-politicians and the reality of their work as members of the legislature [10]. The public often expects artists to continue to

act as charismatic and entertaining public figures, while the world of politics requires them to be serious, critical, and have a deep understanding of policy issues. In many cases, artist-politicians try to balance these two aspects by maintaining their popularity on social media and showing their involvement in legislative tasks. The image strategy used by artists in politics not only affects their success in elections, but also determines how they maintain their position in the political world. Some artists choose to maintain their image as popular figures by relying on media and personal branding-based campaigns, while others begin to build competence in the field of legislation in order to survive in the long term in the world of politics.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of artist recruitment as legislative members is closely related to the image strategy played in the political arena. Erving Goffman's dramaturgy theory helps in understanding how artists who enter the world of politics utilize their popularity as social capital to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

Thus, this study concludes that the phenomenon of artists becoming members of the legislature is a form of image politics that is greatly influenced by role-playing in the political arena. The success of artists in politics depends not only on their initial popularity, but also on their ability to adapt, build credibility, and manage public expectations and the reality of legislative work faced. Therefore, it is important for the public to be more critical in choosing political leaders and not only focus on the image built through the media

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