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Unmasking Political Branding of Comedian Candidates in Indonesia: A Discourse Network Analysis

Isni Hindriaty Hindarto[1] and Eriyanto[2]
[1]Department of Communications, Universitas Indonesia
[2]Department of Communications, Universitas Indonesia
*Corresponding author, e-mail: isni.hindriaty@ui.ac.id;
eriyanto09@ui.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO	A B S T R A C T
	In Indonesia, the representation of comedians in the legislature remains limited, although the 2024 elections saw a notable increase in comedian candidates. They are, however, still under-represented. The recent increase in the number of comedians running for office reinforces the urgency of research on how this phenomenon is understood, negotiated, and debated in the public sphere. This research examines the construction of discourse in relation to the portrayal of comedians in Indonesian politics through online media coverage. Discourse Network Analysis (DNA) is employed to map discourse coalitions and the connections between actors that shape public perception. An analysis of 80 online news articles, published between January and October 2023, identified 548 statements from various actors, which were then categorised based on their roles and affiliations. Network metrics, specifically weighted density and degree centrality, confirm high coalition cohesion and the dominance of the popularity frame. This resulting network revealed two distinct actor groups of 44 each. One coalition comprising comedians and politicians leverages popularity as a form of political capital to secure public endorsement and media coverage. In contrast, a coalition of academics, politicians, and media commentators has condemned this approach as an unstable representation

that may erode democratic principles. This research supports the notion that comedians in politics have become an emerging topic of discussion, one that transcends traditional concerns with celebrity and public favourability. Further studies are recommended to longitudinally explore shifts in discourse coalitions, particularly within Indonesia's open, proportional electoral system, which encourages the personalisation of candidates.

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INTRODUCTION

The pros and cons of comedian involvement in politics remain a popular topic of debate in the digital public sphere. Numerous studies highlight that political humour has a considerable influence on public opinion, political participation, and the quality of democratic discourse in different national contexts (Baumgartner, 2024; Ryabinska, 2022; Webber et al., 2021).

Previous research has centred on late-night comedy series, chat shows, televised satire, and internet memes in Western and Eastern European cultures, but this investigation overlooks how mainstream media in Indonesia depict comedians as potential election candidates. The media has brought attention to concerns voiced by politicians, academics, and the general public regarding perceived

inadequacies in comedians' political capabilities (Arpan et al., 2011).

The primary criticism is that comedians prioritise entertainment over policy substance, potentially sensationalising and polarising political discourse (Chen, 2024). Critics contend that comedians prioritise comedy over ideology by using satire to portray politicians' actions in a ridiculous light, thus intensifying public disillusionment with politics (Vicenová & Trottier, 2020).

However, studies examining how Indonesian media portray fears, doubts, and hopes regarding comedian-politicians through news value choices and discourse strategies are still relatively scarce. This research aims to bridge a knowledge deficit by examining how Indonesian media portray comedians who have transitioned to politics to evaluate

public perceptions of these individuals as politicians, taking into account the perceived threat they pose to democratic values, their potential impact on political education, or their representation of public disillusionment with the current power structure within the context of discussions surrounding humour populism and the public trust crisis.

Numerous comedians have overcome scepticism and demonstrated their ability to hold public office. A notable example is Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a comedian who became President of Ukraine in 2019 (Nässén & Rambaree, 2021). Likewise, Jimmy Morales was elected President of Guatemala for the 2016-2020 term amidst widespread public distrust of political corruption (Mora-Ciangherotti, 2022). Al Franken served as a U.S. representative from 2009 to 2018. Senate position, while Marjan Šarec served as Slovenia's Prime Minister from 2018 to 2020, demonstrating that comedians can transform into politicians who gain electoral credibility (Kornbluth, 2012; Lange & Svetličič, 2024).

In Indonesia, comedians such as Eko Purnomo, Dedi Gumlar, Alfiansyah Komeng, Denny Cagur, Ramzy, Dicky Chandra, Surya Utama, Nurul Qomar, and Bobby Maulana have also held positions in regional legislative and executive bodies (Caroline et al., 2024; Jasmine et al., 2025; Nurmala, 2024; Rosadi Dian, 2024).

Most research on Indonesian comedian-politicians has focused on their election campaigns, widespread appeal, and their use of social media, while studies on how news outlets portray them in the context of the 2024 elections are relatively limited. The study of how media coverage of Indonesian comedian politicians constructs news values such as conflict, sensation, proximity, morality, and entertainment using Discursive Network Theory has been largely overlooked.

The connection between comedy and politics is multifaceted and captivating, with humour functioning as both amusement and a means for individuals to express their viewpoints and challenge prevailing social conventions (Ritmadhini & Eddyono, 2024; Zulhazmi et al., 2023; Shihombing, 2022; Gerlofs, 2022; Nieuwenhuis & Ziip, 2022; Classen, 2021; Brasset et al., 2021).

Traditionally, the two domains have been clearly separate, but the rising fame of comedians with a strong public presence has blurred the lines between entertainment and politics (López-García & Pavía, 2019). Through satire, irony, and symbolic play, comedians present alternative perspectives that resonate with audiences and influence how the public understands social and political issues (Weaver, 2019). In this context, comedy does not merely

provoke laughter but can serve to consolidate, construct, or challenge established social, cultural, and political identities (Southerton, 2021).

In many countries, comedians combine politics and entertainment in satirical news programmes that are broadcast on prominent media networks and digital platforms, incorporating political comedy into the modern political communication system (Leicht, 2023). These programmes offer entertainment breaks, subvert traditional journalistic standards by functioning as a means of political communication, foster civic engagement, and present a more approachable way to grasp intricate political matters (Leicht, 2023; Doona, 2021; Zirugo, 2021).

Comedy has now become an important element of modern public culture, present not only in politics but also in journalism and education (Becker, 2020). It is involved in both promoting and questioning social and political identities (Callaghan & Mitchell, 2023; Huber, 2022) and can substantially impact online political discourse on social media platforms (Anyaegbunam, 2023).

However, comedians' involvement in politics is often undervalued due to their perceived lack of expertise and educational credentials (Stonham, 2025). Danielson & Rolandsson (2020) often refer to them as instant politicians

who emerge without undergoing party cadre formation.

Numerous national online media outlets have published similar reports. This research, therefore, seeks to reveal the discourse that emerges in media discussions about comedians in Indonesian politics, particularly when they become legislative candidates in the 2024 elections. This research employs discourse network theory (DNT) due to its ability to reveal the complex interactions between actors and ideas, as demonstrated in research on the influence of business in politics (Rinscheid, 2020). The only potential limitation of DNT is the complex nature of discourse network analysis (Tantos & Kosmidis, 2023).

Nevertheless, DNT uses comprehensive discourse analysis by integrating qualitative content analysis and social network analysis. This integrated approach enables researchers to analyse both the discourse content and the structural relationships between actors and arguments (Ali, 2020). The framework views discourse as an entity that constitutively shapes social and political reality itself (Kratochwil, 2007). Kratochwil views discourse as a dynamic and evolving network of statements, ideas and beliefs.

Here, relationships and connections between elements are analysed not in a fixed, sequential

cause-and-effect framework but as products of shared practices and collective agreements within a community. This concept is relevant for explaining how discourse is socially used to convey broad meanings and how language actively shapes reality rather than merely reflecting it (Kratochwil & Friedrich, 2009).

Applying Kratochwil's approach to this research will strengthen the analysis in several ways. Indonesia's political celebrities' development heavily depends on the public sphere's discursive formation, especially through the media, as noted by Ahmad (2020). This method enables researchers to identify networks of concepts and associations and understand how they are formed, perceived, and reinterpreted by the involved parties across various contexts and languages (Kratochwil & Friedrich, 2021).

The framework will enable the study of changing stories surrounding comedians who are running for legislative roles and how they are reinterpreted by various media platforms, thereby demonstrating the dynamic evolution of discourse and its re-evaluation in different settings, as well as its impact on the dissemination of power and meaning. Social science is viewed by Kratochwil (2007) as a practice where findings are considered transitory,

and scientific discussion revolves around interpreting results and assigning proof rather than conducting experiments.

This perspective is particularly important in the context of Indonesian politics, where the media, comedians and society are the result of complex socially produced and interpreted interactions (Kratochwil, 2007; Ahmad, 2020). The relevant literature highlights several significant approaches to analysing the legislative candidacy of comedians in the 2024-2029 elections.

For example, Tantos and Kosmidis (2023) map discursive representation and explain comedians' candidacy in the political market using network analysis. Muhtadi (2019) highlights the strategies used by comedians to navigate the political landscape, while Nieuwenhuis and Zijp (2022) explore discourse content and the structural relationship between actors and arguments.

These approaches offer crucial insight into the discourse dynamic surrounding comedians who run for political office and the interactions that influence modern political reality, but there is still scope to understand how the advantages and disadvantages of comedians as legislative candidates are influenced by national online media. The primary objective of this study is to

comprehend how Indonesian national online news sources cover and depict the roles of celebrity comedians in relation to their candidatures for legislative positions.

The research question at hand is: how does the online media coverage of celebrity comedians in Indonesian politics shape the discourse surrounding them during the 2024 general election legislative candidacy process?
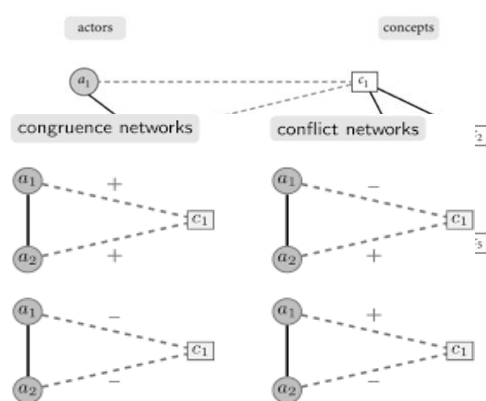
METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach that utilised the DNA method. This approach combines discourse content analysis with social network analysis to map the relationship among actors, concepts, and positions in public debates.

Figure 1: Transformation of DNA

Source: Leifeld, 2017

The use of DNA methodology in studies has a considerable impact on Indonesian media research, establishing a strong link between these two approaches in the study of politics and celebrity culture following the Soeharto era (Ahmad, 2020; Leifeld & Haunss, 2012).

The DNA method enables the identification of discourse coalitions through the construction of actor congruence networks, revealing how various politicians and celebrities collaborate on particular storylines or ideological perspectives within the media. This method allows for the tracking of shifts in Indonesian election discussions over time, thus making it possible to evaluate current viewpoints, discrepancies, and the evolving connections between people and ideas that other methods typically miss (Leifeld, 2017; Leifeld & Haunss, 2012)

Selection of the Data Source

The data source was news articles from four national online media outlets: CNNIndonesia.com, part of the Trans Media news network with a CNN licence from from America; Tribunnews.com, a network of 28 digital regional newspapers under Kompas Gramedia; Kompas.com, an online version of the

newspaper that is known to be objective, independent, and not biased by apolitical interests or power; and Detik.com, a news website that has been committed to being an online media outlet since the start (Hindarto, 2022).

The 2024 Digital News Report stated that the four chosen media outlets were selected because of their extensive reach and varied composition, encompassing purely online news websites, regional networks, and national television-linked media The data were limited to the period from January 1, 2023, to October 31, 2023, from when the issue of comedians' involvement in the legislature first arose until the KPU approved the candidacy files.

Unit of Analysis

In a news article, a key statement or assertion is viewed as a unit of analysis encompassing an individual's or organisation's interpretation, argument or justification, rather than straightforward factual information. These statements were classified into four distinct categories: (1) the actor's occupation and the role they portrayed; (2) the subject matter, encompassing legitimacy; (3) the actor's stance, either in support or opposition; and (4) the date and time each statement was delivered.

Data Collection Technique Used

Articles were collected from the four media outlets by searching news archives using keywords related to comedians and legislative candidacy. The downloaded articles focused on two primary areas: the timeframe and the subject matter, incorporating perspectives from actors and comedians to assess their involvement in politics, rather than merely offering biographical or entertainment details.

Data Analysis (DNA Sequencing)

Researchers should begin by carefully reading each article, identifying ones that meet the substantial claims requirements, and excluding sections comprising only verifiable facts and no argumentation. In the second stage, coding of statements: each statement was entered into a DNA worksheet and coded for the variables of actor, concept, position (pro/con), and time.

The third stage involves reorganising coded data into various types of networks, including actor-concept networks, actor compatibility networks, and conflict networks. Networks are subsequently normalised and visualised to eliminate bias resulting from differing actor visibility and examined to pinpoint discourse coalitions, fault lines, and influential actors (Leifeld, 2017; Leifeld & Hauss, 2012).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
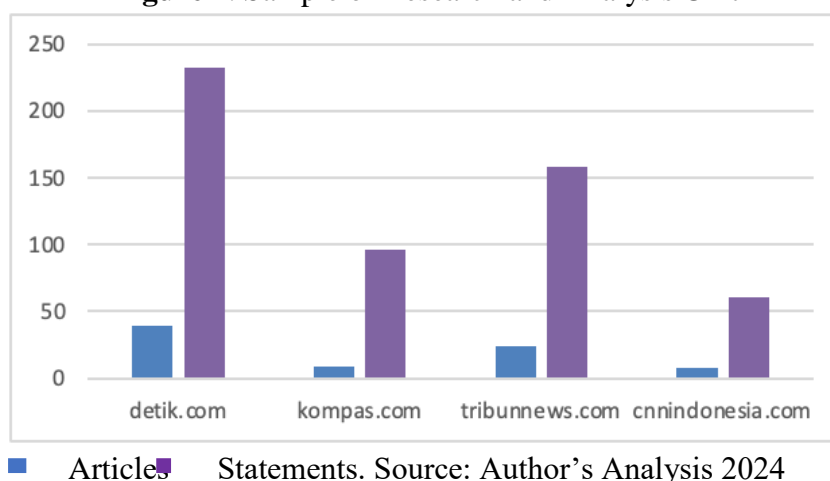### Media Discourse on Celebrity Comedians in Politics

A mapping of comedians in political discourse reveals the diversity of actors and issues discussed by four national online media outlets. Eighty articles have identified a total of 548 different issues (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 shows the association between this issue and 44 actors from seven organisations, as illustrated in Figure 3. Figure 2 shows the association between this issue and 44 actors from seven organisations, as illustrated in Figure 3.

The actors encompass ten comedians and politicians, representing 12 political parties, two journalists, and six academics from various universities, three political observers, five research institutions, and six individuals representing communities from Java, Sumatera, and NTT.

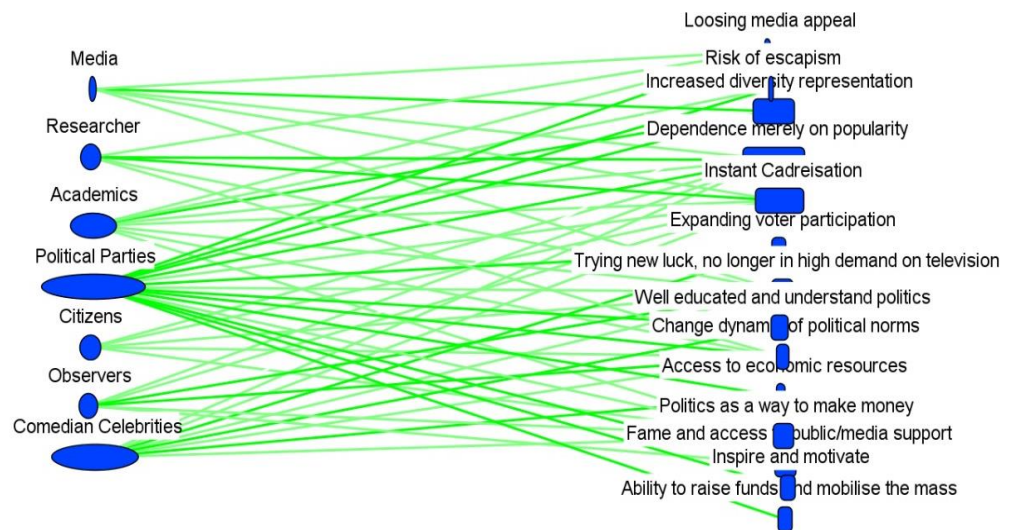**Figure 2**. Sample of Research and Analysis Unit

■ Articles ■ Statements. Source: Author's Analysis 2024

The two most prominent figures discussed by the media are the comedians and politicians. These two figures support the idea of two main participants in celebrity politics (Street, 2004) by focusing on their roles.

on politicians and celebrities. Regarding the discourse, matters involving the popularity and qualifications of comedians frequently constitute the primary focus of debate.

Figure 3. The most central relations between organisations in the discourse network.

The node's size and label indicate the node's centrality within the discourse network, as determined by the Girvan-Newman centrality measure.
Source: Author Analysis

The discourse of inclusivity or diversity regarding celebrity representation in the legislature becomes a positive discussion about comedians running in the 2024-2029 election. Not all comedians and politicians participate in the discourse surrounding research. Some things become their debates. Similarly, other groups of actors consistently oppose immediate changes to diversity representation. process of celebrity candidacy in the legislature. The researcher finds several debated discourses in the national online media during the period of the comedians' candidacy in the legislature, as follows:

Table 1. Discourses discussed by actors in the media

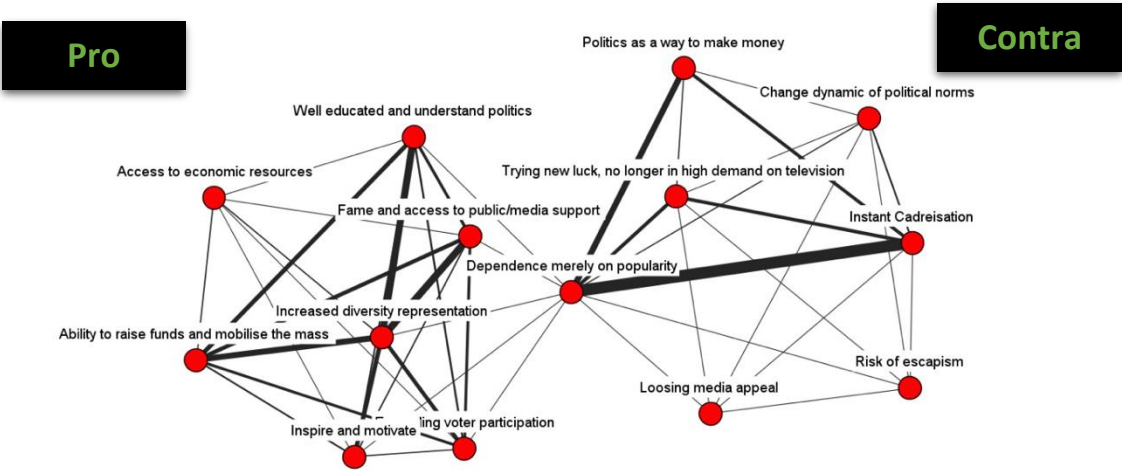| Discourse	Meaning	Concept (p) pro (c) contra
Popularity	Level of fame, recognition, and acceptance from individuals or groups, has appeal, a solid follower base, and is a potential vote-getter	(p) fame and access to public/media support (c) dependence merely on popularity
Electability	Level of electability according to the applicable criteria, as a	(p) expanding voter participation (c) losing media appeal

	shaper of political figures who have capabilities	
Competence	Skills, knowledge, experience in advocacy and ability to participate effectively in politics	(p) ability to raise funds and mobilise the mass (c) trying new luck, no longer in high demand on television
Qualification	Education pursued through formal/certified channels, understanding electoral and political ideologies	(p) well-educated and understand politics c) instant cadre
Inclusivity/ Diversity	The existence and representation of diversity and differences are important.	(P) increased diversity representation (c) risk of escapism
Integrity	High level of intelligence, positive energy, trustworthiness, and consistency in both word and deed	(p) inspire and motivate (c) change the dynamic of political norms
Political Capital	Financial capital ownership and campaign finance management capabilities	(p) access to economic resources (c) politics as a way to make money

Source: Bjørnå, 2021; E. Smith, 2020; Han & Kim, 2024; Lamb, 2020; Llamazares de Prado, 2024; Nawaz et al., 2023; Ocasio et al., 2020

Two discourse coalitions are visible in the discourse network in Figure 4. The two coalitions form a pro and a con network. Actors create pro and contra networks that mutually represent discourses highlighting similarities in supporting or opposing the candidacy of comedian celebrities for legislative positions. The node and link widths represent the degree of support and opposition.

Figure 4. Discourse coalition network

Source: Author Analysis

The actors identify and elucidate five principal concepts of the phenomenon of comedians in politics. The identified discourses included the lack of political cadres resulting from candidates' instant candidacy, their reliance on celebrity popularity, and concerns about transforming the political arena into a profit-making venture. The actors, representing the perspectives of observers, researchers, academics, and community representatives, most frequently articulated the contra-discourse.

Additionally, the actors suggest that comedians who are no longer prominent on television are attempting to enter politics. Some actors express concern that the changes in political norms are influenced by the glamorous impression created when celebrities perform on entertainment stages or transform the political arena into an entertainment stage. Tables 2 and 3 include examples of statements in the media that represent this counter-discourse, while Figure 5 visualises the discourse network.

Table 2. Concept Stated by Opposition Actors

Concept	Example of Statement
Dependence merely on popularity	*"Popularity is essential in politics, even though it does not necessarily gain voices," said a political communication expert from Unair, Dr Suko Widodo. (Kompas.com, 25 May 2023).*
Instant cadre	*"Those who have not been involved in a mature cadre process suddenly enter the candidate market and succeed (become legislative members) without thinking about their real contribution." Executive Director of Voxpol Research and*

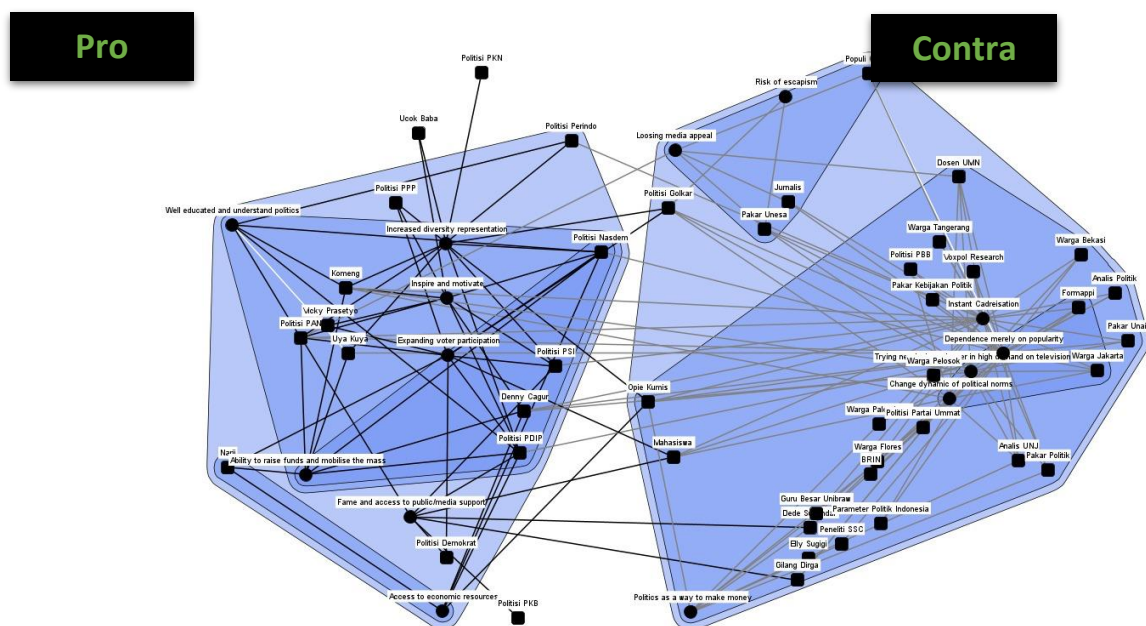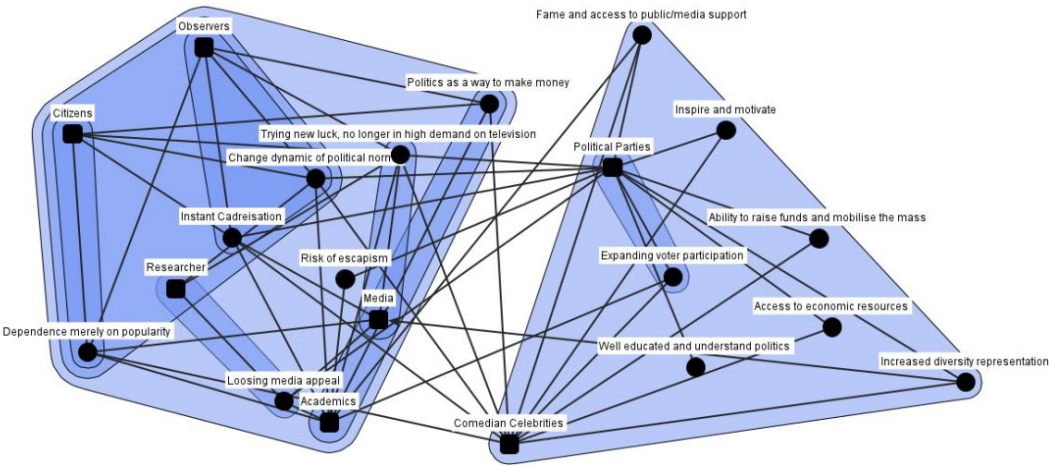|	*Consulting, Pangi Syarwi Chaniago (Tribunnews.com, 12 May 2023)*
Politics as a way to make money	*"The owner of the full name Surya Utama admits that he often gets questions about his purpose in running for legislative election. Not infrequently, they accuse him of just looking for money." (Detik.com, 17 August 2023)*
Try new luck; no longer in high demand on television	*"Well, there are always pros and cons to everything. There is also an assumption that no longer famous artists will run for legislative candidacy," comedian Deny Cagur (Detik.com, 27 August 2023)*
Change the dynamics of political norms	*"It is dangerous if an artist is selected as a legislative member but only sits, stays, and shows off his/her fashion. I believe the people have not expected that," said a socio-political analyst from UNJ, Ubedilah Badrun (kompas.com, 15 May 2023).*

Source: Author's Analysis

Figure 5. Discourse Network of Comedian Celebrities in Politics

Source: Author's Analysis

Figure 6. Discourse Networkd between Organisations and Concepts

Source: Author's Analysis

Meanwhile, politicians and comedians predominantly articulate the concept of comedians' candidacy in the legislature. The discourse consists of politicians' statements about how popularity and access to public and media support affect the electability of political parties, how comedians can raise funds and mobilise the masses, and how voter participation can be expanded.

This study identifies a novel discourse related to the representation of diversity. The issue of diversity also leads to a discussion of the vision and mission of comedians who may be elected and their potential to inspire or motivate the public. Discourse about education and the comedians' grasp of politics has emerged as a critical focus Discourse about education and the comedians' grasp of politics has emerged as a critical focus area in the 2024-2029 election period, particularly concerning the argument that a diploma from a state university disqualifies a candidate.

The actors were unequivocal in rejecting the assumption that a lack of formal education is a prerequisite for candidacy and that popularity alone is a sufficient qualification. However, the fame of these individuals may cause problems for those who have not appeared on television recently. Actors who oppose the candidacy contend that the threat posed by comedians' fame serves as the primary driving force behind their decision to enter politics These two discourses help reconcile the opposing sides of the candidacy (Figure 4).

Table 3. Concepts Raised by Affiliation Actor

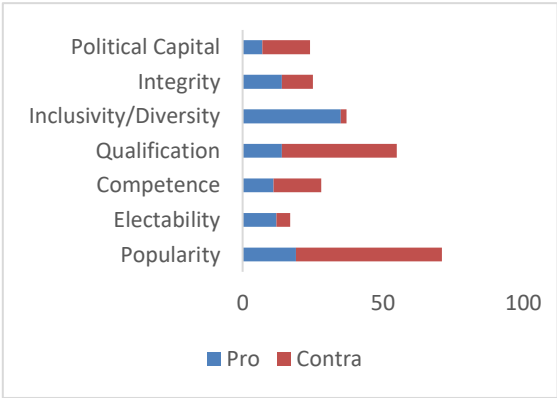| Concept	Example of Statement
Fame and access to public/media support	*"The popularity of candidates as public figures can indeed be beneficial for the introduction process to the public," said PDIP politician Deni Wicaksono (Tribunnews.com, 22 August 2023).*

Increased diversity representation	*"I want to represent friends with special needs who have not been reached," comedian Ucok Baba said. (cnnindonesia.com, 15 March 2023).*
Well-educated and understand politics	*"There are around 14 candidates from artists and celebrities who are proven to have extreme competence," PDIP politician Hasto said. (cnnindonesia.com, 11 May 2023).*
Inspire and motivate	*"In many cases, artists can be the bridge between politics and young people who are often less interested in the political process. They can bring issues relevant to the younger generation and inspire participation in the democratic process." citizen journalist (kompas.com, 26 June 2023).*
Expand voter participation	*"Thus, I need to know how to get close to the people in my constituency, not only during the campaign. So far, I often go to my electoral district to hear my voters' aspirations," Arzeti Bilbina, PKB politician (tribunnews.com, 12 June 2023).*

Source: Author's Analysis

The discourse analysis results presented in the media appear to be predominantly aligned with discourse networks that reflect a stance of open opposition to the issue of comedians in politics. Some media outlets have been observed to reiterate the same issues on multiple occasions, with the same actors and discourse, but employ different narrative packaging to maintain impartiality while focusing on the matter in question. This phenomenon is illustrated in the following table:

Figure 7. Pro and Contra Discourse on Comedian Candidates' Political Identity

Source: Author's Analysis

The mapping of discursive interactions between actors on a given topic entails the examination of statements or arguments that elucidate how these actors engage with one another. The result demonstrates the existence of two principal discourse groups comprising politicians and

celebrities. This result indicates that political analysts, researchers, and media outlets play a crucial role in identifying inconsistencies in the presented ideas, which assists political parties in their efforts to secure electoral victories. Those belonging to the group of observers and researchers argue that popularity cannot automatically be used as a benchmark for parties to gain high votes

Meanwhile, those belonging to the academic and community groups tend to discuss the discourse of comedian actors more on cadre and competence. In contrast, the discourse of inclusivity and diversity is specifically discussed among politicians and comedians. In addition to the issue of representation, these two actors organisations are connected by a discussion over political capital in the form of finance. There is no further discussion among them; the discussion stops at the agreement that popularity capital is inadequate to lead a candidate to win legislative seats.

The Centralisation of Issues within the Discourse of Comedians in Politics

The centralisation of issues within the discourse of comedians in politics allows for examining the role played by an issue within a discourse network. The centralisation of an issue within a discourse network can be used to determine its relative importance in the formation of discourse and interactions between actors (organisations). The following table clearly illustrates this centralisation:

Table 4. Discursive interaction between Actors (Organisation) and Concept

Discursive Interaction	Variable	Freq	Degree (%)	Closeness (%)	Betweenness (%)
Access to economic resources	*concept*	7	1.85	4.96	0.13
Well-educated and understand politics	*concept*	14	0.92	4.79	0.00
Politics as a way to make money	*concept*	17	4.63	4.26	3.05
Instant cadre	*concept*	41	6.48	4.63	7.47
Loss of media appeal	*concept*	5	3.70	4.01	2.45
Ability to raise funds and mobilise mass	*concept*	11	1.85	4.96	0.14
Dependence merely on the popularity	*concept*	52	5.55	4.33	5.39
Fame and access to public/media support	*concept*	19	3.70	5.35	1.63
Expanding voter participation	*concept*	12	2.78	5.15	0.51

Trying new luck, no longer in high demand on television	*concept*	17	5.55	4.47	4.62
Inspire and motivate	*concept*	14	1.85	4.96	0.13
Change the dynamic of political norms	*concept*	11	5.55	4.47	4.62
Increased diversity representation	*concept*	35	3.70	5.15	2.15
Risk of Escapism	*concept*	2	1.85	3.69	0.18
Academics	*organisation*	38	9.25	5.93	11.27
Comedians	*organisation*	73	10.18	6.20	15.81
Society	*organisation*	18	4.63	3.37	1.32
Media	*organisation*	5	3.70	4.63	1.20
Political Party	*organisation*	90	12.96	7.18	34.68
Researchers	*organisation*	18	4.63	3.37	1.73
Observers	*organisation*	15	4.63	3.90	2.15

(Source: Author's Analysis)

The frequencies of varying degrees of closeness and betweenness centrality identify the network's relative prominence of specific actors and concepts. Factors like popularity and access to media support often take precedence in rankings, serving as important benchmarks for integrating comedians into political roles, along with ideals like instant cadre, which have high centrality scores. These latter frames function as critical structural links or discursive bridges that connect opposing coalitions within a polarised landscape.

The actor congruence network reveals a highly stratified discursive landscape, where political parties (12.96%) and comedians (10.18%) are the top actors by degree centrality. The high regard in which these actors are held suggests they are the primary claim-makers, consistent with the trend of celebritisation in post-Soeharto Indonesia, where parties actively transform popular figures into commodities to gain voter support. The integration of concepts like instant cadre and the focus on popularity within top 10 ranking criteria indicate that these ideas have become crucial to the discussion, thereby setting a standard for the debate on the legitimacy of celebrity-politician migration.

Political parties and comedians, with percentages of 34.68% and 15.81%, respectively, serve as the primary intermediaries in a network through their centrality. The high betweenness of parties underscores their role in discursive broking, connecting disparate storylines across the media landscape. The high ranking of comedians in these lists serves to illustrate that celebrity candidates act as active intermediaries, bridging the gap between entertainment-based popularity and institutional political discourse.

A modularity score of 0.42% confirms that the actor congruence network is segmented into four distinct subsets, with one being a coalition that prioritises resource mobilisation and institutional preservation and another being an entertainment/media group focused on the process of celebrification.

A critical discussion forum is comprised of scholars and observers, focusing on rigorous analysis to mitigate threats to democratic principles, and a group promoting norms for cosmopolitan rights and representation. Such a configuration suggests that these cohesive thematic groupings provide the necessary structure for targeted political negotiations and the potential for cross-community influence while the discourse remains polarised.

The Dilemma of Representation: Supporting and Refining Ahmad and Street's Conceptual Framework

This study indicates that celebrity comedians face a conflict between being valued for their popularity as a voting asset and being regarded as genuine voices of the public. The pro-coalition faction views comedians as a means; the anti-coalition faction is concerned about the potential risk associated with instant celebrity groups, volatile policy-making, and the erosion of effective representation. This pattern generally supports Ahmad's (2020) thesis that parties mobilise celebrity popularity as an electoral strategy and that fame does indeed facilitate entry into parliament.

Comedians are at the centre of a significant debate, with media and public figures openly discussing the trade-off between fame and credibility, as professional achievements underscore fame as both a valuable resource and a source of diminished respect. Thus, this study expands on Ahmad's work by empirically demonstrating how the popular debate is produced and negotiated in media space, not just visible at the level of election results.

Research into celebrity politics, as identified by Street (2004), suggests that celebrities and professional politicians can be viewed as separate entities, largely due to the importance of the celebrity phenomenon and the differing levels of reliance on mass popularity. In the Indonesian context, a more sceptical view emerges: comedians are not merely viewed as a bridge between politics and popular culture but also as a threat to representative institutions when party recruitment becomes overly pragmatic.

This research, therefore, not only reinforces Street's framework but also sharpens it by adding the dimension of 'fragile recognition' that arises from media discourse about instant cadres and entertainment politicians. Celebrity politics in Indonesia is not merely a shift in style but a normative field of conflict about who is worthy of representation and under what conditions.

Kratochwil and DNA: From Pragmatic Theory to Discourse Practice

Mapping coalition networks through DNA directly embodies Kratochwil's view that political reality is shaped by practices of reasoning and the exchange of claims, rather than by the 'natural' properties of political objects. This research demonstrates that the interpretation of comedians as politicians—whether viewed as a threat, a chance for renewal, or merely a campaign asset—are influenced by a process of public assertion, counterclaim, and validation. DNA serves as a practical application of Kratochwil's pragmatic epistemology, validating claims about comedian politicians through observable patterns of support and opposition within networks rather than isolated statements.

Kratochwil's court metaphor is also evident in the digital public sphere, where online media functions as a platform for a coalition of supporters and detractors to submit evidence, narratives, and evaluation criteria in an attempt to shape the public's perception of a comedian's credentials as a representative of the people.

This research validates the framework but expands upon it by integrating it into the context of celebrity politics: what is disputed is not only policy but also reputation, style, and fame as forms of evidence and capital that may be either genuine or questionable. This research's key contribution stems from combining Street's concept of celebrity politics with research on Indonesian celebrity politics

(e.g., Ahmad) and Kratochwil's pragmatic epistemology to show that comedians' participation in politics during the 2024 elections is made possible by specific networks of discourse, rather than solely depending on assumptions about celebrities' influence or the logic of entertainment in politics.

CONCLUSION

The research shows that discussions about celebrity comedians running for legislative office in the 2024 elections are shifting Indonesia's political landscape towards one increasingly influenced by entertainment logic. Online media depict them as politicians introducing a new style to politics by using a communicative approach that is accessible, emotionally engaging, and easily consumable by a digital audiences, but also raises concerns about their capabilities, dependability, and preparedness as leaders. These findings confirm that popularity acts as a gateway to the political sphere but can also be a source of discredit if not combined with policy skills, underscoring the need for substantial political reform and capacity development to prevent proximity to the public from becoming the sole justification for representation.

This research successfully maps opposing discourse coalitions when assessing the politicisation of comedians and uses discourse network analysis to explain how networks of actors and ideas influence the public's

understanding of their roles. This study theoretically underpins and reinforces the assertions of Ahmad and Street, demonstrating that in Indonesia, celebrity politics is not only about the success of electoral strategies but also about the susceptibility of the recognition of elected officials' legitimacy to challenge. At the same time, the application of DNA embodies Kratochwil's pragmatic framework at the empirical level, showing how pro and con claims against comedian politicians are tested and negotiated in the media space It is recommended that further research studies utilise a cross-cycle longitudinal design, incorporating additional social media data to track long-term changes in the configuration of discourse coalitions and to examine how discourse can be adapted to promote enhanced political literacy and a more informed public's understanding of celebrity involvement in politics.

CREDIT AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

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Name: Eriyanto; The Second Author; Supervision and Reviewing.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

We certify that there is no conflict of interest stemming from any financial, personal, or affiliations with individuals or organisations pertinent to the research content.

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