

Original Article

The Dynamics of Celebrity Involvement in the Reform Period Legislative Elections 2004-2024)

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Abstract:

The conduct of legislative elections in Indonesia during the Reform Era (2004–2024) demonstrates a tendency among political parties to leverage celebrity popularity as a strategy to boost their vote acquisition. The shift to an open-list proportional electoral system, based on the highest number of individual votes, has driven parties to recruit celebrities as vote-getters to increase their electoral gains. This study aims to analyze party strategies in positioning celebrities as legislative candidates and to identify electoral districts (dapil) that are most favorable to their electability. Using historical research methods and analyzing data from the past five legislative elections, the study finds that West Java has emerged as the strongest electoral base for celebrity candidates. One key strategy employed is the Son of the Soil approach, which utilizes regional identity to foster emotional connections with voters. The findings highlight that local identity plays a significant role in celebrity electoral strategies, making cultural and emotional affiliations crucial factors in their electoral success.

Keywords: Electability; Political Parties; Elections; Celebrities; Political Strategy

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Introduction

The acquisition of votes in general elections is an important factor that drives political parties to gain power or at least maintain their position in the government of a democratic country. (Nwagwu et al. 2022) Therefore, political parties employ various strategies, starting with offering ideologies, visions and missions, cadre programs, and even involving widely recognized public figures such as celebrities to garner votes. These activities are carried out with the aim of producing cadres who possess political, organizational, leadership skills, and public support. (Liden, Wang, and Wang 2025)

Post-reform political parties use the involvement of celebrities to garner votes in elections and gain power in the government. (Nyarwi 2024) Celebrities are believed to have influence, power, and popularity that can affect and increase the party's electability. The popularity of celebrities is a political asset that political parties utilize to garner votes2c

The concept of celebrity politics itself began to emerge after the electoral democracy of 1999, which made public figures a vote-getting strategy through media exposure and appearances in public spaces. Since then, political parties in Indonesia have increasingly opened up space for celebrities to run as legislative candidates, with the main goal of increasing popularity and electability during the campaign period. ([Kristiyanto, Arinanto, and Ghafur 2023](#))

Manzilatul Ni'mah states that celebrities becoming politicians is also driven by the post-reformasi political trend due to the public's rejection of veteran politicians who are often embroiled in corruption cases.

"In this celebrity age, the phenomenon of celebrities transforming into politicians shows that the current political trend requires the popularity of its representatives to gain votes from the public because there is a possibility that the public no longer trusts veteran politicians who are often embroiled in corruption cases."

Therefore, top artists are recruited to become party representatives. Artists who enter the political world do not need to struggle to gain public sympathy because they already have the capital of popularity that can be converted into electability and attract public votes. In practice, this strategy is considered more financially efficient because the promotion costs are cheaper compared to conventional cadres. ([Maulid, Hurriyati, and Hendrayati 2022](#)) The popularity of artists is considered capable of facilitating image formation and garnering political support from the public. However, this approach often overlooks the quality and political competence of the cadres, positioning celebrities more as tools for mobilizing votes rather than representing political substance.

The entry of celebrities into the political arena is also considered to be driven more by their level of popularity than by their political capabilities. ([Theanachor, Umukoro, and David-West 2021](#)) The commodification of celebrity figures in the political world has proven not to always have a tangible impact on the improvement of constituents' welfare. This phenomenon is reflected in the recruitment strategies of political parties such as the NasDem Party in the 2019 elections, which actively recruited celebrities through personal approaches and an anti-mahar program as the main attraction. ([Jamin 2020](#)) Although they were expected to be vote getters, many of them failed to be elected due to a lack of substantive campaign activities.

Furthermore, the involvement of celebrities in politics also demonstrates a reciprocal relationship with the mass media. This practice shows how both parties exploit popularity for capitalistic gain, especially in the context of digital media. ([Elgammal, Ghanem, and Al-Modaf 2024](#)) Moreover, the involvement of female artists in elections often reflects gender stereotype practices that position them merely as vote collectors without considering their capabilities in the political field.

Based on various literature reviews, the involvement of celebrities in politics is referred to as celebrity politics. Celebrities, or more commonly known as "artists," are individuals widely recognized for their popularity in society. ([Singh et al. 2021](#)) Street explains that celebrities who enter the political world are divided into two categories: celebrity politicians and celebrity endorsers. Celebrity politicians are individuals who have a well-known background in certain fields (entertainment and sports) and then become active candidates in political parties, while celebrity endorsers are celebrities who use their popularity to discuss political views as popular opinion. ([Ferdinand and Ciptono 2022](#))

In the context of elections, celebrities use such endorsements with the aim of attracting potential voters. As a medium, celebrities enhance the appeal of candidates through their personal image and credibility. Grant McCracken refers to a celebrity endorser as "Any

individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement".

Celebrities venturing into the political arena cannot be separated from the rapid development of the media industry and popular culture, including social media, which have significantly contributed to the increase in the number of celebrities. This phenomenon not only impacts the entertainment industry but also extends into the political realm. More and more celebrities are building their popularity through popular media, then getting involved in political activities either as supporters or as political candidates. According to Syabill, this dynamic shows a close relationship between the growth of the popular culture industry and the increasing involvement of artists in politics.

The electoral systems in the world can generally be categorized into three types: majority or pluralistic (district) systems, semi-proportional systems, and proportional systems. Indonesia is one of the countries that adopts a proportional electoral system. The proportional electoral system is characterized by the division of the country's regions into several electoral districts. The division generally follows the existing administrative regions such as provinces, districts, or cities. The proportional system has two variants, namely the closed list system and the open list system. In the closed-list system, voters only need to mark the party symbol without directly selecting the legislative candidates (caleg), and the winners depend on the order of the candidates arranged by the political party. ([Annizar, Fuad, and Nasution 2024](#))

In an open list system, voters have the freedom to directly choose the candidates they desire. Thus, individuals with the most votes have a great chance of obtaining a legislative seat. The process of counting votes in the proportional system is conducted nationally, meaning the number of seats obtained by each political party in each electoral district will be adjusted according to the percentage of votes received by that party overall. Therefore, political parties in the proportional electoral system are required to garner significant public support in order to obtain legislative seats. The electoral system in Indonesia post-reform began to shift from a closed-list system to an open-list system. The Indonesian government began implementing an open-list proportional system in the 2004 elections, allowing the public to choose their preferred candidates. The change in the electoral system encouraged the determination of candidate lists and their order, which were previously decided by political elites, to be open to the public. The impact is that political parties are competing to recruit celebrities to boost their electability in the elections. Political parties are also competing to use strategies so that these celebrities can secure legislative seats. Ritonga and Harahap noted that the involvement of celebrities became more apparent when the electoral threshold (PT) reached 4% or since the 2019 elections.

"This not only serves as a way to overcome the PT threshold, but it is also a highly relied-upon strategy to gain votes for political parties." The decision to nominate several prominent artists in the elections seems to be the only way for those parties to increase their vote count.

Research on the involvement of celebrities by political parties in elections began to emerge leading up to the 2004 elections and has continued to develop until the 2024 elections, both in the form of academic articles and media opinions. Darmawan, highlights the increasing number of celebrities in legislative elections post-New Order (1999–2019), which he links to the electoral system that opens up space for celebrities as vote getters. Lubis also concluded that the parliamentary threshold (PT) of 3.5 percent in the 2014 elections encouraged political parties to use celebrities as candidates to garner national

votes. Ritonga and Harahap reinforced this finding by noting a similar trend when the parliamentary threshold (PT) increased to 4 percent, with political parties more frequently promoting celebrities as candidates rather than just as endorsers. These studies show an increase in the number of celebrities in elections.

Another study that reviews the driving factors behind the involvement and success of celebrities in political parties is discussed by Azis and Deannova. Azis explains that "artists" are motivated to enter politics post-reform to prove to the public that they are sensitive, capable, and have a specific mission for society. Deannova argues that the success of celebrities in political parties is driven by political marketing and pop culture. Deannova explores elements of pop culture, such as celebrities, mass media, and cultural symbols, used to attract public attention and build the image of modern political parties in Indonesia. From the brief explanation above, there have been quite a few studies discussing celebrities and elections from various perspectives.

However, these studies have only captured and examined a single electoral moment. No research has yet been found that comprehensively explains the dynamics of celebrity involvement in five electoral contests during the Reformation era (2004-2024). This study seeks to answer two key questions that have not yet been addressed by previous research on celebrities and electoral contests. First, how has the involvement of celebrities in the contest of five legislative elections during the Reformation era developed? Second, which provincial electoral districts (Dapil) have been most frequently won by celebrities during the five legislative elections of the Reformasi era?

Method

This research uses a historical research method consisting of four main stages, namely: (1) heuristics (source collection), (2) source criticism, (3) interpretation, and (4) historiography. (Hariram et al. 2023) At the heuristic stage, the researcher collects various references relevant to the research focus, particularly regarding the involvement of celebrities in legislative election contests in Indonesia during the Reformation period (2004-2024). The sources used in this research can be divided into two main categories. The first category, namely primary sources, plays the most important role in supporting this research. The primary sources utilized are generally textual, especially the documents of the General Election Commission (KPU) Decisions regarding the Permanent Candidate List for DPR Members and the Determination of Elected DPR Members in the 2004 to 2024 Elections, obtained from the KPU Central Media Center in Jakarta.

In addition to primary sources, secondary sources in the form of relevant historical research were also used to assist in the process of compiling this journal article. Secondary sources were obtained by studying and analyzing 20 articles discussing celebrities in the electoral contest in Indonesia available on Google Scholar within the period from 2011-2023. Various types of literature, such as books and other scholarly articles, are also used as secondary sources in this research.

After the data is collected, the next step is source criticism to assess the validity and credibility of the information. Source criticism in historical research includes two main aspects, namely external criticism and internal criticism. External criticism focuses on the authenticity of the source, which includes verifying physical aspects such as the integrity of the document, the identity of the publisher, the year of publication, and the clarity of the writing or printing format. In the context of official documents such as KPU Decisions, validation is carried out by ensuring the document originates from an official institution

(KPU Central) and is obtained directly from the KPU Media Center, thus guaranteeing the authenticity and authority of the source.

Internal criticism is conducted to assess the content and substance of the source. This includes intrinsic testing (examining the consistency of content, the accuracy of information, and the internal logic of the narrative) and corroboration, which involves comparing the source's content with other information to ensure consistency and strengthen data validity. In this case, for example, data from KPU documents is examined alongside information from academic literature related to trends in celebrity involvement in elections. The next stage is interpretation, which is the process of interpreting validated historical data. This research uses a political starting approach, where the phenomenon of celebrity involvement is analyzed in the context of political party electoral strategies, changes in the electoral system, and electoral political dynamics from 2004 to 2024. This approach helps understand the motivations of political parties in recruiting celebrities as legislative candidates, as well as examining the role of the open proportional system and parliamentary threshold in this practice.

The analysis techniques used are qualitative, including data reduction and data presentation. Data reduction is carried out by selecting relevant information, grouping data based on election periods or celebrity categories, and identifying patterns such as the increase in the number of celebrity candidates or changes in nomination strategies. Next, the data is presented in the form of a systematic narrative, which describes the dynamics of celebrity involvement in each election period, including their electability rates and placement strategies in electoral districts. With this method, the research not only reconstructs historical facts but also provides a critical interpretation of the relationship between political structure and celebrity popularity in the context of Indonesia's Reform Era legislative elections.

The final step is the compilation of research results into a coherent and comprehensive historical narrative. In this stage, the researcher develops the main themes based on the results of the literature analysis that has been conducted. Identifying patterns, relationships, and significant findings in the literature allows researchers to develop a more in-depth synthesis regarding celebrity involvement strategies in elections and their electability in constituencies.

Results and Discussion

Background Involvement of Celebrities in Elections

The general election for members of the House of Representatives or the legislative election during the Reformation era has always been marked by the increasing involvement of celebrities in the electoral contest. Political parties believe that celebrities can boost popularity while also attracting voters. Popularity becomes a social magnet. Based on that belief, political parties registered celebrities such as film and soap opera actors, presenters, models, singers, band players, comedians, national athletes, and social media celebrities with the KPU.

The recruitment of celebrities by political parties is not a new phenomenon in the history of politics and elections in Indonesia. During President Suharto's administration, many artists were involved in party activities. Even some became members of the legislature. Although their involvement in the 1955 elections was not as intense as in later eras, there were some artists who actively participated in politics. M. Subhan SD (2021) notes that one of the political parties participating in the 1955 elections, the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), placed 10 artists as candidates for parliament and the constituent assembly. Some of

them were the renowned painters Affandi Sudjojono, Basuki Resobowo, and Henk Ngantung, as well as the poets AS Dharta and Hr. Bandaharo. Even Affandi, Sudjojono, Henk Ngantung, and AS Dharta were elected as parliament members and represented the PKI in the Constituent Assembly. Although they were not film actors or singers, at that time they were well-known figures in society.

The strategy of involving celebrities by political parties in election campaigns continued to evolve during President Suharto's administration. Although media and campaign control were stricter, the presence of artists was still utilized to attract public attention, especially in Golkar's campaign as the "government party." Golkar leverages the popularity of artists to strengthen its influence among the public.

The involvement of celebrities was then followed by other political parties, but certainly not as massively as Golkar. Since the 1977 election campaign and thereafter, the United Development Party (PPP) began to strive to capture Golkar's voter base by recruiting the "King of Dangdut," Rhoma Irama, as a sympathizer and vote getter. This strategy was backed by the popularity of dangdut music, which at that time was reaching its peak as one of the most favored music genres in Indonesia, especially among the lower-middle-class society.

The PPP campaign featuring Rhoma Irama was always lively, making him the main attraction in boosting the party's electability. The impact is felt significantly, especially in DKI Jakarta. The Ka'bah Party managed to secure the most votes in the 1977 elections, defeating Golkar in Jakarta, which is the center of national political dynamics (Syamsuddin Haris, 1991). The involvement of celebrities in election campaigns during President Suharto's administration continued to evolve until the last election in 1997. The involvement of artists was more dominant as endorsers or as intermediaries or bridges of political communication between political parties and voters. The political system, which tends to be controlled and rigid, where the 'political space' can only be entered by certain groups, still considers it 'taboo' for artists or celebrities to be candidates or to play the role of celebrity politicians.

Entering the Reformasi era, the involvement of artists became one of the prominent campaign techniques, although it only became clearly visible in the 2004 elections. In the 1999 elections, the euphoria of societal openness in expressing political aspirations was reflected in the large number of political parties that registered and qualified as participants, with 48 parties competing on June 7, 1999. However, in its implementation, the electoral system used still referred to the closed-list proportional system. Voters only mark their ballots for political parties without directly choosing legislative candidates

The involvement of celebrities in the 1999 elections was still limited to campaigners or celebrity endorsers. One exception is Sophan Sophiaan, a senior actor who was elected as a member of the DPR from PDI Perjuangan. Sophan Sophiaan himself is an incumbent as he has been a member of the DPR for the 1992-1997 period from the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI).

Although it brought positive changes, the closed-list system in the 1999 elections was considered not fully participatory. Law Number 12 of 2003 on the Election of Members of the DPR, DPD, and DPRD in its considerations states that the 1999 election system is no longer in line with the demands and developments of societal dynamics, and therefore needs to be replaced to ensure higher quality with broader public participation. In terms of electing members of the DPR and DPRD, the electoral system must be able to guarantee the principles of representation, accountability, and legitimacy. Therefore, in the 2004 elections,

the closed-list system was replaced with an open-list system based on the sequential numbers of legislative candidates.

The 2004 election, which used an open-list proportional system, marked a new chapter in the involvement of celebrities in elections, namely as politicians. This system is much more flexible, encouraging political parties to maximize voter influence through individual candidates. Celebrities who were previously only endorsers in the Soeharto administration's election era are now being abandoned and starting to be promoted as legislative candidates. This transformation reflects a significant change in the party's political strategy, where individual popularity, in this case celebrities, becomes the main tool for attracting voters in a more competitive democratic era.

The Development of Celebrity Involvement in Elections (2004-2024)
Since the 2004 elections, Indonesia has begun implementing a proportional system with an open candidate list. This system gives voters the freedom to choose candidates according to the list provided by the participating political parties. The seats obtained by the political parties are based on the number of valid votes collected. The seats are given to candidates who meet or exceed the electoral quotient (BPP). The proportional system with an open candidate list has been used until now. However, only political parties whose national vote exceeds the PT are entitled to or involved in the distribution of seats in the DPR. In the 2004 and 2009 elections, the PT was only 2.5 percent. Increased to 3.5 percent in the 2014 elections and rose again to 4 percent in the 2019 and 2024 elections. The presence of PT and its increasing percentage certainly presents its own challenges for political parties, including making celebrities candidates as one of the strategies.

The change in the electoral system from closed proportional to open proportional since the 2004 elections has brought significant changes to the dynamics of electoral politics in Indonesia. In the closed proportional system that was in place during President Suharto's administration, political parties had full control over who would occupy legislative seats. In this context, celebrities involved in elections generally only serve as endorsers or campaigners to enhance the image of a particular party or candidate. The role of celebrities at that time tended to be symbolic and did not involve direct contestation as legislative candidates.

The shift towards an open proportional system that places the highest number of votes as the determinant for the election of legislative candidates has significantly changed the role of celebrities in elections. The popularity possessed by celebrities has become an important electoral asset for political parties, especially in the context of competition for votes among candidates in the same electoral district. Added to this, with the presence of PT, parties are increasingly encouraged to place public figures with high mass appeal to ensure sufficient votes to enter parliament. Celebrities are no longer just involved as campaign supporters, but are starting to be positioned as main legislative candidates or celebrity politicians who compete directly in elections.

The open proportional system also makes the competition among candidates within a single party increasingly tight and individualistic, so personal popularity becomes a crucial factor in determining electability. In this context, celebrities have an advantage because they already have a fan base and extensive media exposure. This causes parties to be more interested in nominating celebrities in strategic electoral districts to optimize vote acquisition. This phenomenon also reflects the increasing strength of popularity-based political logic and vote-getting strategies in Indonesia's Reform Era elections, which sometimes surpass considerations of ideology or the legislative capacity of candidates.

Celebrities are considered to have a wide fan base and the ability to reach voter segments that are difficult to access through traditional campaign approaches. The involvement of celebrities in election campaigns can increase the exposure and popularity of political parties among the public. Therefore, since the 2004 elections until 2024, the involvement of celebrities has consistently been a strategy used by political parties, whether as endorsers, intermediaries, or candidates. Celebrities function as a bridge between political parties and voters, helping to enhance the party's appeal by leveraging their popularity and the loyalty of their fan base. They are often considered public figures who are "close" to the people, thus believed to be able to influence voters' perceptions of political parties. Although the number of celebrities involved in elections fluctuates, the overall trend shows an increase. In the 2004 elections, there were 38 celebrities who ran as legislative candidates. This number increased to 82 celebrities in the 2024 elections, indicating a growing interest among celebrities to enter the political arena, while also reflecting the political parties' strategy of relying on popular figures to garner votes. However, behind this phenomenon, several impacts worth noting have emerged. Not all celebrities sitting in legislative seats are able to perform

its function optimally. Several cases show that the performance of legislators from among the artists is unsatisfactory, especially regarding attendance in meetings, understanding of legislative issues, and contribution to policy formulation. In fact, some celebrity-politicians have been embroiled in legal cases, such as corruption or abuse of power, which have tarnished the image of the parliament. For example, Angelina Sondakh, a former artist who was elected as a member of the House of Representatives from the Democratic Party, was sentenced to prison for a bribery case related to the budget of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. This case has drawn significant public attention because it shows that popularity does not guarantee the integrity or capability of a legislator.

These impacts also influence public perception of celebrity involvement in politics. Public disappointment with the performance or integrity of celebrity-politicians can contribute to fluctuations in their electability in the next election. Some parties are even starting to be more selective in recruiting celebrities, paying attention to their track record, educational background, and readiness to perform legislative functions. The results of the Kumparan poll conducted from May 15-22, 2023, show that 96.56% of respondents are not interested in voting for candidates from the celebrity class in the 2024 elections (Kumparan, May 24, 2023).

This indicates a decline in public trust in the ability of celebrities to perform legislative duties, which may be influenced by unsatisfactory performance or legal cases involving previous artist-politicians. Therefore, the involvement of celebrities not only brings potential short-term electoral gains but also long-term risks to the quality of representative democracy. This strategy remains part of the political calculations of political parties, but ideally, it should be balanced with efforts to build the capacity and integrity of celebrity candidates so that they can perform their legislative roles to the fullest.

Table 1. The number of political parties involving celebrities as candidates in the Reform Era Elections

Election Year	Number of Political Parties Participating in the Election	Number of Political Parties Involving Celebrities in Elections
2004	24	13 Parpol

2009	38	11 Parpol
2014	12	10 Parpol
2019	16	9 Parpol
2024	24	10 Parpol

Sumber: KPU, https://infopemilu.kpu.go.id/Pemilu/Dct_dpr (data diolah).

On the other hand, the success rate of celebrities becoming members of the DPR also fluctuates quite a bit. In the 2004 elections, only 18 percent of celebrity candidates were successfully elected. This percentage significantly increased in the 2009 elections, reaching 31 percent, but then slightly decreased in the 2014 (29 percent) and 2019 (26 percent) elections. In the 2024 elections, the success rate returned to 29 percent. This fluctuation indicates that although the involvement of celebrities has quantitatively increased, not all of them can consistently win seats in the DPR.

Table 2. Percentage of celebrities who became candidates for the House of Representatives

Tahun Pemilu	Jumlah Selebriti Caleg	Jumlah Selebriti yang Menjadi Anggota DPR	Persentase
2004	38	7	18%
2009	61	19	31%
2014	77	18	23%
2019	54	14	26%
2024	82	24	29%

Sumber: Keputusan KPU tentang Penetapan Calon Terpilih Anggota DPR Pemilu 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019, 2024 (data diolah).

Data compiled from five periods of national legislative elections (2004–2024) shows that the involvement of celebrities in political contests is not only sporadic but has also become a relatively stable part of party strategies. Although there are fluctuations in the number of celebrities elected in each period, this phenomenon indicates that public figures from the entertainment world continue to be considered to have significant electoral value.

Several celebrities have been recorded as successfully elected for more than one term, such as Dede Yusuf (PAN then Democrat), Eko Hendro Purnomo or Eko Patrio (PAN), Desy Ratnasari (PAN), Rachel Maryam (Gerindra), Rieke Diah Pitaloka (PDIP), Junico B.P Siahaan or Nico Siahaan (PDIP), and Arzeti Bilbina (PKB). Their election shows the continuity of popularity that has successfully been converted into electoral success. This consistency also reflects their success in maintaining their public image and their ability to adapt to political dynamics and constituent demands. These figures ultimately underwent a transformation from entertainment celebrities to established and recognized political actors within the legislative representation system.

The number of elected celebrities saw a sharp increase in the 2024 elections, from 14 in the previous period to 24. This increase is the highest in the last two decades and can be interpreted as a sign of the strengthening of entertainment politics strategies amid an increasingly open and personality-based electoral competition. Amid the increasing PT and

the intensity of competition across electoral districts, political parties are increasingly relying on public figures with a wide fan base and high social reach. Celebrities are positioned not only as vote getters but also as representatives of the party's identity in the digital public space and mainstream media.

This trend also shows how celebrities have become important actors in the mediation process between political parties and voter segments that have been difficult to reach with conventional approaches, such as young voters, first-time voters, and the urban middle class. The involvement of celebrities can be seen as a pragmatic institutional strategy, but it also presents serious challenges to the quality of representative democracy. On one hand, the presence of celebrities can encourage political participation. However, on the other hand, there remains room for critical questions regarding the quality of legislation, the capacity for representation, and the potential for abuse of power, as reflected in several cases of celebrities involved in ethical scandals or corruption.

Thus, the electability patterns of celebrities over five legislative election periods not only demonstrate the continuity of celebrities' roles as political actors but also reflect the changing landscape of electoral campaigns in Indonesia—from being ideologically and programmatically based to becoming increasingly personalistic and mediatic. (List of celebrity candidates elected as Members of the Indonesian House of Representatives 2004-2024 can be seen in Appendix 1).

West Java "Their Constituency" Celebrity Candidates

Another important variable in the party's efforts to make celebrities elected candidates while also receiving a surge of votes is the selection of electoral districts. Since the 2004 elections, political parties have tended to place their celebrity candidates in electoral districts that share ethnic, cultural, or personal historical ties with them, also known as "local sons." This means that popularity alone is not enough; it must be reinforced with identity capital. Paul R. Brass (1991) emphasizes the concept of Son of The Soil or "local son," which is often exploited by political elites to build loyalty among local voters. This concept is often used in political campaigns to emphasize the candidate's closeness to voters based on regional identity.

Son of the Soil in electoral politics refers to a legislative candidacy strategy where a candidate chooses an electoral district that aligns with their regional origins—whether it be their birthplace, upbringing, or cultural and ethnic ties—as the primary basis for building electability and garnering voter support. This strategy is rooted in the premise that voters are more likely to choose candidates who are considered part of their community due to stronger emotional, cultural, and representational perceptions.

In this context, celebrity candidates leverage their regional identity as a political strategy to build an image as a native son who is close to the community and deeply understands local issues. With a background that is already widely known to the public, celebrity candidates do not only rely on popularity but also emphasize their emotional and cultural ties to their electoral region. This narrative aims to convince voters that as figures who grew up and developed in the region, they have a better understanding of the needs, aspirations, and challenges faced by the local community compared to candidates from outside the area.

Celebrity candidates strive to build trust and loyalty among voters by presenting themselves as figures who not only carry a big name but are also committed to serving and advocating for the interests of their home regions. The Son of the Soil strategy has proven to be quite effective in increasing the electability of celebrity candidates in Indonesian elections.

The effectiveness of this strategy can be explained through four main factors, namely: (1) Emotional closeness with voters. Identity as a local son provides an electoral advantage for celebrity candidates because it creates an emotional bond with voters. Voters tend to trust and feel more comfortable voting for someone they know or consider part of their community.

Additionally, there is a sense of pride and local solidarity that grows among the community when a public figure comes from their area and runs to represent their aspirations in parliament. (2) Considered to have a better understanding of local issues. One of the factors that makes this strategy successful is the assumption that candidates from a particular area have a deeper understanding of local issues. Celebrity candidates who utilize this strategy often emphasize their connection to their electoral district, whether through childhood experiences, involvement in local social activities, or narratives about their concern for the development of the area. (3) Support from social and cultural networks. Another advantage of the Son of the Soil strategy is its ability to leverage the social and cultural networks that have already been established. Celebrity candidates usually have strong networks with large families, school alumni, and social communities in their electoral districts. With this support, the campaign becomes more effective because it relies on long-established personal relationships. (4) Word-of-mouth campaign. The word-of-mouth approach carried out by influential individuals in the community in campaigning for celebrity candidates is one of the factors that can organically increase electability. For example, singer and actress Desy Ratnasari (Member of the DPR for three terms: 2014-2018; 2019-2024; 2024-2029) and actress Rieke Diah Pitaloka (Member of the DPR for three terms: 2009-2014; 2019-2024; 2024-2029) chose their home provinces as their electoral districts. Although she is already nationally recognized, especially in Jakarta, Desy Ratnasari chose her hometown as the area to compete, namely the West Java IV electoral district (Sukabumi), where she was born and raised.

Rieke Diah Pitaloka also chose her home province as her electoral district. In the 2009 elections, Rieke, who is of Sundanese descent, was in the West Java II electoral district (Bandung Regency and West Bandung Regency). In the 2019 and 2024 elections, she competed in the West Java VII electoral district (Bekasi Regency; Karawang Regency; Purwakarta Regency). Although he is not of Sundanese descent, presenter Junico Bisuk Partahi Siahaan, or Nico Siahaan, has been elected three times from the West Java I electoral district (Bandung City and Cimahi City). Nico, who is of Batak descent, chose the electoral district according to with the origin of the place where he was born and raised, namely the city of Bandung, as the main base to build electability and gain voter support. Another example is the musician Ahmad Dhani Prasetyo, who is running from East Java I electoral district (Sidoarjo Regency and Surabaya City). Just like Desy Ratnasari, who is already nationally known and resides in Jakarta, this Gerindra Party cadre chose Surabaya, the city where he was born and raised, to secure a seat in the DPR. Since the Reform Era elections (2004-2024), the pattern of celebrity candidate nominations has been concentrated in only four provinces: DKI Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, and East Java.

Data shows that in the last five elections, the proportion of celebrities elected from the West Java electoral district has always dominated, surpassing DKI Jakarta, Central Java, and East Java. This phenomenon at least shows two things: first, the number of celebrity candidates from West Java is greater than from other electoral districts. Second, West Java has a strong electoral appeal for candidates from the celebrity circle, making it a strategic

constituency to win seats in parliament. However, of course, more in-depth research is needed to explore this matter.

Table 3. Number of selected celebrities in four electoral districts of Java Island

Pemilu	Selebriti Terpilih	Selebriti Terpilih Dapil DKI Jakarta	Jumlah Selebriti Terpilih Dapil Jawa Barat	Jumlah Selebriti Terpilih Dapil Jawa Tengah	Jumlah Selebriti Terpilih Dapil Jawa Timur
2004	8	0 (0%)	4 (50,00%)	2 (25, 00%)	2 (25,00%)
2009	19	1 (5,26%)	8 (42,11%)	3 (15,79%)	4 (21,05%)
2014	15	3 (20,00%)	8 (40,00%)	1 (6,67%)	3 (20,00%)
2019	14	1 (7,14%)	10 (71,43%)	0 (0%)	2 (14,29%)
2024	24	4 (16,67%)	12 (50,00%)	2 (8,33%)	4 (16,67%)

Source: KPU Decision on the Determination of Elected Candidates for DPR Members in the 2004, 2009, 2014, 2019, 2024 Elections (processed data).

Based on the data of celebrity electability in the 2004 to 2024 elections, it is evident that the number of elected celebrity candidates from the West Java electoral district has significantly increased compared to other districts. In the 2004 elections, out of a total of 8 elected celebrities, 4 came from West Java (50 percent), while DKI Jakarta had no celebrity representatives at all. From a total of 19 celebrities who successfully entered parliament In the 2009 elections, out of 19 elected celebrity candidates, 8 of them came from West Java (42.11%), far surpassing other electoral districts. In the 2014 elections, West Java continued to dominate with 8 elected celebrity candidates (40 percent), compared to DKI Jakarta (20 percent), Central Java (6.67 percent), and East Java (20 percent). In the next election (2019), the proportion of celebrity candidates from the West Java electoral district reached its highest point at 71.43 percent, surpassing other districts by a significant margin. In the 2024 elections, out of a total of 24 celebrities who successfully became legislative members, 12 of them came from the West Java electoral district (50 percent), further solidifying the dominance of this region.

The success of celebrities in winning seats in the Indonesian House of Representatives from this electoral district is largely supported by the Son of the Soil strategy, which relies on regional identity as the main factor in attracting voter support. (List of Elected Celebrities in the Indonesian House of Representatives for the 2004-2024 Elections in West Java can be seen in Appendix 2).

The Son of the Soil strategy, which relies on regional ties, has proven to be one of the key factors in the success of celebrities in the West Java electoral district. Data shows that the majority of celebrity candidates elected from this electoral district have strong cultural or geographical roots with the local community, whether through birth, lineage, or ethnic identity recognition. For example, names like Rieke Diah Pitaloka, Dede Yusuf, Desy Ratnasari, and Mulan Jameela are all known to have strong ties to Sundanese culture—both in their family origins and in their political communication. In the electoral context, this local identity is used to build trust and closeness with voters who prefer representatives from the "local residents," who are considered to better understand the aspirations and cultural values of the West Java community.

This strategy is very effective in the context of regions with strong ethnic and cultural identities like West Java, where local sentiment remains an important factor in determining

political choices. Celebrities from West Java or those with "Sundanese blood," for example, can more easily build a narrative that they are part of the community they represent. They can use the Sundanese language in their campaigns, raise region-specific issues, and demonstrate an understanding of local traditions and values. Thus, they are able to create an emotional bond with voters who feel a shared identity with the candidate. Interestingly, the Son of the Soil strategy in the context of West Java does not solely rely on ethnic or tribal lines, but also encompasses broader cultural dimensions and geographical affiliations. The cases of Nico Siahaan and Melly Goeslaw, celebrities of Batak and Ambon descent but born and raised in Bandung, illustrate how emotional attachment and long-term social engagement with the local community can replace ethnic limitations in the context of electoral politics.

The identity of "local son" in this case is no longer defined exclusively by ethnicity, but rather by the extent to which a candidate demonstrates genuine integration and closeness with the local community. In their political campaigns, both Nico Siahaan and Melly Goeslaw often emphasize their closeness to Bandung and West Java as their home, effectively instilling the public perception that they are part of the Sundanese community despite coming from different ethnic backgrounds. This shows that in the electoral political practices in West Java, the concept of Son of the Soil can be inclusive and flexible, as long as the candidate can prove their social and emotional involvement with the local voters.

Celebrities who grew up and built their careers in West Java generally also have close ties with various local communities, whether through family connections, school alumni, or involvement in social and cultural activities in the area. Those. Support from community leaders, traditional leaders, and religious groups further strengthens their electoral position, as voters tend to heed recommendations from figures they trust.

Based on data on the electability of celebrities in five legislative election periods (2004–2024) in the West Java electoral district, it is evident that the most elected category of celebrities comes from the background of film and soap opera actors. Figures like Rieke Diah Pitaloka, Primus Yustisio, Rachel Maryam, and Desy Ratnasari reflect the dominance of visual entertainment figures who have a strong appeal to voters. Their presence has been consistent over several periods, showing that high public exposure has become an electoral asset optimized by political parties. Besides actors, the categories of singers, comedians, presenters, and models also adorn the list of selected celebrities, albeit in smaller numbers.

This indicates that political parties strategically recruit figures who are not only popular but also have emotional closeness and symbolic connections with constituents. In the context of an open proportional electoral system, the presence of celebrities is used as effective vote getters in garnering support through image and media proximity. The gender composition shows a notable trend in the representation of female celebrities. Out of a total of 42 selected celebrities over five election periods, 22 of them are women and 20 are men. This composition reflects that political parties not only exploit the popularity of male celebrities but also actively recruit female celebrities who have a wide fan base and a positive public image. The representation of female celebrities has continued to increase, especially since the 2009 elections, in line with the growing awareness of gender representation and the political appeal of female public figures.

The origins of birth and ethnicity show the dominance of celebrities with Sundanese backgrounds, both ethnically and symbolically. Many of them were born in West Java or have a strong Sundanese cultural identity, supporting the Son of the Soil strategy used by political parties to build an emotional connection with local voters. Figures like Desy Ratnasari, Dede Yusuf, and Nurul Arifin represent this identity-based strategy. The trend

from year to year shows an increase in the number of celebrities who have successfully won legislative seats in West Java, from four people in 2004–2009 to twelve people in 2024–2029. This fact confirms that celebrities remain a relevant political commodity in the post-reform electoral landscape, especially in strategic electoral districts like West Java, which have broad, heterogeneous demographic characteristics and are strongly influenced by popular culture.

Conclusion

The involvement of celebrities in Indonesia's legislative elections over five legislative elections of the Reform Era (2004–2024), which use an open proportional system based on the most votes, is increasingly being utilized by political parties. This strategy has undergone significant development, from the role of campaign supporters to becoming candidates who actively compete for parliamentary seats. This research found that the selection of electoral districts plays a significant role in determining the electability of celebrities. The Son of the Soil strategy or the local identity-based approach has proven effective in creating an emotional connection with voters. Research also shows that in five instances of legislative elections during the Reformasi era, celebrities contesting in the West Java electoral district were more frequently and more often elected compared to those placed in other provincial electoral districts.

These findings highlight the importance of identity management, local proximity, and nomination strategies in the Indonesian political and electoral landscape. However, this research has limitations as it has not explored the aspects that make celebrities contesting in the West Java provincial electoral district more frequently elected as members of the Indonesian House of Representatives compared to other provincial electoral districts. Therefore, further research is recommended to explore voter behavior aspects in West Java, particularly regarding their perceptions of celebrities and their involvement in the electoral world because obtaining a Dutch school diploma opened up more job opportunities.

Despite the establishment of several Dutch schools by the mid- 1920s, the education level in Palembang remained lower than in other parts of Indonesia. One reason for this was the limited public awareness of the importance of education for children, as evidenced by the high number of children not attending Dutch schools. Furthermore, the colonial government's failure to meet the educational needs of the Palembang people contributed to this issue. Before the rise of formal Islamic education, traditional Islamic learning was a key feature of Palembang's culture. This system included practices similar to pesantren in Java, surau in Minangkabau, and rangkang, dayah, and meunasah in Aceh. In Palembang, Islamic education typically took place in homes, langgar (small prayer halls), and mosques. Over time, it is believed that these traditional institutions would evolve and modernize, adopting Western educational methods and structures.

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