

## **Metamorphosis from Music to Politics: Study on Celebrity Giring Ganesha in Indonesian Legislative Election**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the metamorphosis of Giring Nidji from Music Stage to Politics Stage. Political dynamics in Indonesia are an attraction for all groups and levels of society, including musicians. This research begins by looking at the phenomenon of artists who have entered the world of politics, in this case Giring Ganesha, the vocalist of the band Nidji. He decided to leave the world of music that had raised his name to advance in the 2019 Legislative Candidate Election. After 15 years of working in the music world with his band Nidji, Giring Ganesha finally decided to resign and chose to enter politics. This study used the Symbolic Interaction Theory of George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer. This type of research is qualitative with a constructivist paradigm using a case study research method. The data collection techniques used interviews and observations. Four informants were selected as the main data and Giring himself was the key informant in this study. The results of this study indicate that in the metamorphosis process of Giring Ganesha from a musician to a politician, he has gone through several long stages such as preparation stage, play stage, game stage, generalizing stage, and becoming a legislative candidate. Eventually, he has formed his current self-concept and thoughts as a politician.



## INTRODUCTION

The political culture in Indonesia is increasingly crowded nowadays (Pratama, Jamil, & Briandana, 2021). One interesting phenomenon is the reality of political celebrities who often take part in the nomination market as legislative candidates (Ediraras, Rahayu, Natalina, & Widya, 2013). Professional backgrounds of the artists who served as members of the House of Representatives varied. These range from various professions as soap opera artists, commercials, musicians, and also comedians. This has become a phenomenon because the success of being a member of the DPR is very tempting. Independence and authority can be obtained simultaneously (Budianto & Erlita, 2020; Kartini & Sulaeman, 2018).

The relationship between celebrities and politics can be seen in several aspects (Tazri, Mairita, & Nurudin, 2020). The first aspect is the involvement of celebrities in politics. There are two types of celebrity involvement in politics (Jamil & Hesti, 2019). The first type is celebrity endorsers. Celebrity endorsers are "any individual who enjoys public recognition and who uses this recognition on behalf of a consumer good by appearing with it in an advertisement (Briandana, 2019)". In the context of elections, celebrities use the endorsement to attract potential voters. With its endorsement, celebrities shape how the public sees a candidate who participates in an election. Even though celebrity is not the one who decides, celebrity helps increase candidates' acceptance with their voters

(Haryono, 2019). The endorsement of celebrities is believed to influence the attitude of choosing candidates, perceptions of candidates' credibility, and the intensity of voting behavior (Kholisoh & Bylmoreno, 2020).

The phenomenon of political celebrities has happened in every country (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2019). The role of art workers gives another color to politics. The political stage is increasingly crowded and seems unstoppable (Wheeler, 2012). Most of the elections that have been held by the votes of emigrants (political celebrities) get the highest votes compared to other political figures who tend to have long experience in terms of the political stage (Muir, 2005). In fact, however, the world of artisans and the world of politics are indeed very different. Therefore, not a few people are worried that artists becoming politicians will impact the national scale of government. With a background of artistry without any political knowledge, it becomes a separate assessment for the community about whether an individual can lead. In addition, some others contradict those who agree on this phenomenon (Street, 2019).

Involvement in politics is a human right for every individual is a part of human rights for every individual (Tazri et al., 2020). Therefore, it is legitimate for anyone who works directly in the realm of Indonesian politics (Budianto & Yasak, 2015). It is undoubtedly a challenge for artists or celebrities who will go forward in the 2019 legislative elections (Putri, Andika, & Annisarizki, 2020). One of the celebrities who has gone through a morphosis into politics is



a musician named Giring Ganesha, the vocalist of one of Indonesia's popular bands, Nidji. His decision to leave Nidji and enter politics by joining the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) was quite surprising to many parties, especially his fellow musicians.

There are two exciting and unique issues from the nomination of Giring Ganesha as the DPR RI candidate in the 2019 Election. First, the case in this Giring Ganesha is considered rare because compared to other legislative candidates who are swerving because their careers in the entertainment world have begun to fade, Giring Ganesha is just the opposite. Nidji is still quite productive and is still at the peak of their career and has not dimmed, where there are still offers to perform both on-air and off-air. Instead of enjoying the golden period, Giring Ganesha instead chose to stop and enter the political stage. Therefore, many parties regretted the decision of Giring Ganesha to leave the entertainment world, which has raised his name. Of course, the second exciting thing is that Giring Ganesha's decision to stop the music and plunge into politics is surprising because Giring Ganesha is considered too bold. After all, he has neither background nor any political experience. Giring Ganesha is different from other politicians, such as Ahmad Basarah or Adian Napitupulu, who have been involved in politics since childhood and have now reaped the rewards of becoming a member of the DPR. Instead, Giring is a musician who has been in the music world for 15 years and has never been in politics before.

In this study, Giring Nidji's self-concept was seen from the point of view of symbolic interaction theory. Symbolic interaction theory is based on ideas about

individuals and their interactions with society (Siregar, 2012). The essence of symbolic interaction is an activity that is a characteristic of humans, i.e. communication or exchange of symbols that are given meaning (Tripambudi, 2014). These meanings are created in the language, which people use both to communicate with others and with themselves, or their personal thoughts (Ahmadi, 2008).

Language allows people to develop feelings about themselves to interact with others in an environment around them. Symbolic interaction theory is based on ideas about individuals and their interactions with society. The essence of symbolic interaction is an activity that is a characteristic of humans, namely communication or exchange of symbols that are given meaning. These meanings are created in the language, which people use both to communicate with others and with themselves, or their personal thoughts. Language allows people to develop feelings about themselves to interact with other people in an environment around them (Utami & Arifianto, 2019).

This research begins by looking at the phenomenon of artists who have entered the world of politics, in this case Giring Ganesha, the vocalist of the band Nidji. He decided to leave the world of music that had raised his name to advance in the 2019 Legislative Candidate Election.

Several previous studies of political communication that have been conducted in Indonesia have rarely examined celebrities who are members of parliament. Previous research conducted focused on the winning strategies of a candidate who was not a celebrity. Among the studies that have been carried out are Women in Politics (Case Study of



Participation of Women Celebrities in Political Communication in Islamic Parties in the 2014 Election in Indonesia) (Zamroni, 2016); Analysis of the Functions of Political Parties in the 2017 Musi Banyuasin Regional Head Election (Study of Political Parties Supporting the Pair of Dodi Reza and Beni Hernedi) (Darmawan & Septiana, 2019); Women's Political Communication Strategy in Achieving Regional Leadership (Hubeis & Susanto, 2019); (Safitri, 2019); Political Communications in the 2017 Bombana Election by H. Tafdil & Johan Salim H. (Safitri, 2019). Some of the above studies have limitations from the aspect of the study results which only focus on general matters and do not show changes from within the candidates before becoming a member of parliament. This research tries to fill the gap in the context of political communication that sees the changes of celebrities to become members of parliament. Based on the above explanation, this study aims to analyze the metamorphosis of Giring Ganesha from the music stage to the political stage.

This study explored what kind of preparations made by Giring to enter the world of politics. The study is based on George Herbert Mead's Symbolic Interaction Theory (Blumer, 2004), where in one of his notions, the Self consists of four stages. The first stage is the preparation (preparatory stage). Then, the second stage—play stage—reveals how Giring sees himself as being like other successful people in the world of politics, who are the main encouraging figures for him to enter politics.

The third is the game stage, which is the action stage that Giring Nidji performed. This study further elaborates on the strategy he took to win the public's

acceptance and to be seen as a trustworthy legislative candidate. The fourth or the last stage is the acceptance of collective norms (generalizing stage). In this stage, it can be seen how successful Giring Nidji can be accepted by the community, especially when he is campaigning or socializing. Then, this study elaborates on the next steps or approaches he took so that the community did not only accept him as a politician, but will also vote for him. From this point, it is hoped that researchers can find the Metamorphosis of Giring Nidji from the Music Stage to the Politics Stage.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a post-positivism paradigm with qualitative research design within a phenomenological approach—in which the data generated from the qualitative research method is descriptive (Jankowski & Jensen, 2002). The methodology used a case study by adopting the qualitative approach through an in-depth interview, observation and documentation.

The key informant is Giring Ganesha or popularly known as Giring Nidji. In addition to Giring Ganesha, the researchers also selected three other key informants; Dadang Kurniawan, Dimas Sucipto, and Muhamad Ridwan who were the initiators in the formation of Sobat Giring volunteers who became an important part of Giring's journey during his plunge into the electoral district (dapil).

Data analysis technique in this study refers to an interactive model that was coined by Miles and Huberman. Quoting Miles and Huberman, they explained that





data analysis technique has four steps: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and concluding (Zaidah Zainal, 2017).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### People Who Influence Leads Into Politics

In the preparation stage, Giring Ganesha tells of how he prepared himself before leaving music and entering politics. At that time, the Jakarta Pilkada where the winner was Joko Widodo and Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or Ahok, he and his band Nidji had just finished performing in several cities. Then Giring Ganesha woke up and asked himself how long his life would continue to be like music.

"To really feel it is time for me to enter politics after the DKI Pilkada, which Jokowi and Ahok have. I don't know why I feel it's time for me to enter (politics). Seeing Jokowi and Ahok like that, it's like I'm driven to be with them" (Personal Communication, Informant 1, 18 January 2019).

At the age of 33, he feels that he still has a lot of energy and thinks that if he just got into politics when he is 45 years old, his energy will likely run out. Therefore, Giring Ganesha felt it was right for him to take this step at his current age, an age where he believes he still has plenty of energy.

"At that time, I was 33 years old, I felt that I still had energy. Yes, I think if I did this (politics) when I was 45 years old, of course my energy would have run out of course and if I do this now I still have a lot of energy, so I still

have the energy to do it" (Personal Communication, Informant 1, 18 January 2019).

In the play stage or imitating stage, Giring Ganesha revealed that besides Sukarno and Suharto, Jokowi and Ahok are currently two political figures who motivate and play a significant role in pushing him into politics in the modern era. Jokowi and Ahok captivated Giring Ganesha ever since they were first inaugurated, where on the first day they went straight to work. One of them willingly entered the gutter without feeling discomfort, and another firmly scolded the civil servants who worked improperly. He then saw how Ahok opened the City Hall's doors every day for his citizens, and not only for chatting, but accepting and immediately showing that there is a follow-up action. Giring saw that they were decisive, and they could say something was wrong when it was wrong. They only serve their community. This is also the reason why many artists entered Jokowi's supporters' party. In the past, artists were only used to revitalize the campaign. Now, however, thanks to Jokowi, he is creating a Creative Economy Agency (Bekraf) for musicians, filmmakers, artisans, culinary, and others working in the creative industry.

Giring Ganesha also remembers very well when the Jokowi and Ahok era were still the same. Then, Jokowi became the President, and Ahok became the governor. This is also due to seeing how enthusiastic Jokowi's mother was. When he went to the field, she



helped Jokowi and Ahok even though she was already 70 years old. In addition, of course, Giring's friends at PSI such as Grace, Raja Juli, and Guntur Romli, who made Giring love politics even more. As for political figures abroad, Giring Ganesha admires Obama.

"If I look at Jokowi and Ahok, it is as if I see hope, and in my heart I must help them, I must be like those who work for the people. If we wake up, we feel this country is right and someone is taking care of it" (Personal Communication, Informant 1, 18 January 2019).

There are two senior and also well-known musicians who have first entered politics before Giring Ganesha. They are Ahmad Dhani and Anang Hermansyah. Giring Ganesha further prefers to imitate Anang's steps and attitudes. People are considered successful in gathering musicians and fighting for the Draft of Law (RUU) entered into the 2015-2019 national legislation program list. The agreement was taken in a coordination meeting of the Legislative Body of the DPR. It was taken with the DPD and the government represented by the Ministry of Law and Human Rights.

### **Steps Taken when Entering into the World of Politics**

At the game stage, he also expressed his intention to enter politics and stop entirely from music career for his family, especially his mother and wife.

"For my wife, I cried so much when I said that I wanted to enter politics and leave music. Especially before I decided I

entered politics, I received death threats because, at that time, I was vocal in [opined.id](https://www.opined.id). My wife thinks for sure. It has not yet begun, wants to square off, already threatened to be killed, what if later I have entered" (Personal Communication, Informant 1, 9 December 2019).

Giring's wife's reaction is in contrast to her mother's response. Mrs. Giring Ganesha did not make it a problem. Instead, she tended to support her child's decision and prayed for the best steps taken by Giring Ganesha. Furthermore, according to Giring, when the mother's prayer is accompanied by sincerity, he will be more confident. His mother only advised, if Giring enters politics and will someday become somebody in this country, he must never do corrupt acts and have to follow the attitude and steps of Jokowi and Ahok, who are pro to the common people.

"Listen, there are threats like that, I'm not loose, because the most important thing is my mother's prayer. When the mother's prayer is accompanied sincerely, it's not lose anymore. The point is my mother says, first you can't be corrupt, you have to be like Mr. Jokowi, like Mr Ahok, you have to defend the little people" (Personal Communication, Informant 1, 9 December 2019).

After the internal affairs of the family were clear, then he took the next step, namely to find information



on what party he thought was suitable for him. He then took the next step to find out what party information he felt suited him. At that time, he happened to participate in the efforts of PSI's friends for Ahok. Because of his frequent meetings with them, Giring Ganesha finally found out what PSI was like. Finally, he decided to join PSI.

The reason why Giring Ganesha chose PSI as his political vehicle is interesting. PSI was not an old party that already had a name, but they did not rule out the possibility of being interested in recruiting him. The intention is that there is no "politics" in it and that there is also no block or barrier between its members. He could not imagine what would happen if he joined an old party. There would be a general chairperson block and a secretary-general block. Of course, this kind of situation was not ideal, especially for him, who had joined a political party just recently.

"At that time I thought, when I entered a political party, I didn't want anyone to "play politics" in it. I mean, I don't have a "politician" in it. I'm going to find this block, that block, this block, that block. Just imagine if I entered an old party, there would be a *ketum* block, a secretary general block. Mega's camp or Hasto's camp" (Personal Communication, Informant 1, 9 December 2019).

### **Community Acceptance of Leads as Politicians**

At the Generalizing Stage or the acceptance of collective norms, it can be seen how the community accepts

Giring Ganesha, who is now a politician, not a musician. Nevertheless, Giring Ganesha himself did not try to leave his artistic side when descending to the community. According to him, capital is good enough, so he thinks why not if he can use it optimally.

He also did not mind being called Giring Nidji or Giring Ganesha. However, sometimes on several occasions, people have to be reminded when they called him *Bang Nidji*. Apart from that, Giring has never specifically introduced himself formally as a former vocalist of the band Nidji. Usually, this fact is implied. For example, it happened when he was telling a story of the time when he had a gig with Nidji. It usually only occurred in this kind of situation and he believed that many people already knew that he was the vocalist of Nidji.

"I never said when I was introduced that I was a former vocalist of Nidji. Usually people also already and even if they had introduced themselves, I mean to mention that I was a former vocalist of Nidji, just like I told him when I was still on stage with my friends in Nidji" (Personal Communication, Informant 1, 11 December 2019).

Speaking in front of people feels very different when an individual is still a celebrity or a politician. Therefore, PSI provides public speaking training for its candidates. According to Giring Ganesha, when he is on the music stage, if he wants to talk about anything, if he wants to joke, people or spectators will be



happy. And However, now, on the political scene, there are demands to discuss issues that have to make people understand, and that he admits is not easy.

"In the past it was certain that after a gig, people would definitely ask for photos. But now if people feel that the candidate does not understand what he is talking about, what he is talking about and does not understand what the community's problems are, he will definitely be left behind " (Personal Communication, Informant 1, 11 December 2019).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

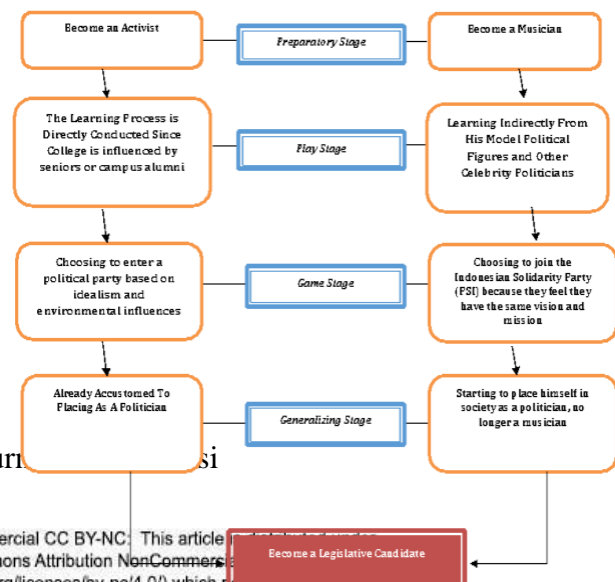
The results show the changes that have been experienced by Giring Ganesha from a musician to a politician. It is not completely changing, since Giring feels that his figure as a musician will continue to stick and he does not feel the need to let go of all the appendages of being a musician. This is because so far this has really helped him and society's acceptance of him has become easier. However, the most visible change is about how he is now in the political environment (Kholisoh & Bylmoreno, 2020). When he was a musician, when he met fellow musicians there was a feeling of being awkward and meeting ordinary politicians. However, now what he feels is precisely reversed. Meeting fellow musicians is normal, but it feels awkward when meeting politicians, especially opposition politicians (Wheeler, 2012).

Referring to previous research conducted by Burke (2004), this study aims to examine two mechanisms by which people change their identity over time based on Identity Control Theory (ICT), i.e. identity influences the way in which roles are played. The difference between standard identity meaning and role meaning will result in change. This is due to the hierarchical structure of the identity system. Changes will occur not only for overcoming differences, but also for the meaning of standard identities from time to time.

It seems that Giring has undergone a change in identity from a musician to a politician. His attitude that understands the differences in his environment makes him have to learn more how to behave when he is at a moment where he meets his political opponents before the election and after. This is because in politics there is no eternal friend and enemy, but it is all about interests.

The following is a comparison chart of Giring Ganesha's journey from the music stage to the politics stage:

Figure 1: Giring Ganesha's Political Stage





Source: Processing by the author

Figure 1 explains about Giring Ganesha's political journey as a member of the legislative. In the preparation stage, the Giring Ganesha has really resolved in his decision to leave the world of music that raised his name to go into politics. This decision cannot be called a step of swerving but rather his own purpose since long ago. Getting to know and loving politics has been inside him since childhood, where his father—who was none other than those who introduced him to politics—gave birth to his love and interest in politics. Meanwhile, music is a step he took to further strengthen his position when he plunged into politics. He thought his 15 years of music career was enough as a provision.

At the stage of imitation (play stage), there are a number of political figures who Giring Ganesha has referred to both at home and abroad. However, Jokowi and Ahok are the two figures who really make Giring Ganesha decide that it is time to go into politics and become like those two figures whom he considers to be sincere in serving the community. For artists and musicians who plunged into politics, Giring Ganesha preferred to see and choose the methods employed by Anang Hermasnyah. He thinks that Anang is a typical member of the council who

does not say much, but works a lot. In the game stage, Giring chose his political vehicle in accordance with his criteria. As a new person in the political world, he does not want to join the political parties where within the party there are gaps between the higher-ups or their leaders. In addition, in carrying out his role as a politician, Giring truly avoided his family from political matters. He does not want his family to be involved in the political affairs he is currently doing. One of the anticipatory steps was not to post politics-related content on his personal social media account.

According to him, he did not want his family to be affected by his current and future political steps. Therefore, for political matters, he only involved Sobat Giring volunteers whom he already called his new family. At the stage of accepting the collective norm (generalizing stage), Giring Ganesha is getting used to and realizing that he is currently a politician, not a celebrity or a musician. The demand that the public accept this fact is not only because he is popular, but ensures that people choose him in the election. Furthermore, Giring's political instincts have begun to build, where at this time if he meets people or candidates from other parties let alone the opposition, awkwardness often arises.

Referring to the theoretical basis, the Collective Norms Acceptance Stage (Generalizing Stage) states that he has been able to place himself in the position of society at large. In other words, he can be tolerant not only of the people he



interacts with, but also with the society at large.

The transition of Giring Ganesha from a musician to a politician can be said to be a change or development of self-identity from being a musician or artist to becoming a politician. Personal development includes all activities that increase self-awareness and identity, develop talents and potentials, build human resources and facilitate performance, improve the quality of life, and contribute to realizing dreams and ideals (Lewis, 2020). There are no limits to self-development, the concept involves both formal and non-formal activities to develop others in roles as teachers, mentors, consultants, managers, coaches or mentors (Labolo, Rohmansyah, & Rumbekwan, 2020). When self-development involves institutions, it means referring to methods, programs, tools, techniques, and assessment systems that support human development at the individual level in an organization (Kusnanto & Daud, 2019).

Various forms of development whether economic, political, biological, organizational or individual need a framework to know whether a change is really happening (Mensah, 2016). In the case of self-development, an individual often acts as a judge of whether there has been an increase or a decline, but validation of improvement requires an assessment using standard criteria (Fadillah, Zhenglin, & Hao, 2019). The self-development framework may include goals or benchmarks that define the end point, strategies or plans for achieving goals,

measurement and assessment of progress, stages that indicate leaps / progress during the development process, and a feedback system that provides information on changes (Taufik, Tarjana, & Nurkamto, 2014).

Both Giring and also the volunteers of Sobat Giring feel that the community's acceptance is very good and Giring is aware that he came not as a musician but as a politician who fights for what society hopes. His attitude, however, had completely changed. He can no longer only come to bring himself and then entertain the public by singing, but there must be something that makes the people believe that Giring is the right person to represent them in parliament.

This is certainly very positive as the first step for Giring to form and show his identity as a politician, not a musician. However, Giring needs to realize that his main goal is not only that he is accepted in society, can mingle with the society, and be able to show that he is currently a politician, but how the society can vote for him. This is more important because during a campaign, the number of people who come to the campaign is not always the same as the number of votes the electorate candidate will get.

Especially during the campaign, Giring's communication tended to be one-way. He never opened a discussion session but only explained what he would do if he was elected as the people's representative. Of course this can be a blunder. It could be that the arrival of people when he is campaigning is only euphoric because he is an artist/celebrity candidate. More than



that, they might think that Giring is the same as the other artist candidates who only capitalize on popularity.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the political communication carried out by Giring Ganesha is a representation of celebrities who are involved in politics—where this phenomenon occurs frequently in several countries—especially in Indonesia. The metamorphosis stages that occur for Giring Ganesha are the process of political communication through the preparation stage, play stage, game stage, generalizing stage, and becoming a legislative candidate. Giring Ganesha goes through these stages and certainly becomes a model for other celebrities who get into politics. Through his popularity as a musician, Giring Ganesha tried to get the votes of young voters. This is also a strategy for new political parties such as the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) to take advantage of the popularity of an artist to get votes in elections. The results of this study are also criticized by political stakeholders in Indonesia, especially politics are not solely for the interests of certain groups.

## DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organizations related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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