

# Dramaturgy: Imaging Prabowo Subianto on Twitter as 2024 Presidential Candidate

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<p><b>Article History:</b> Received September 1<sup>st</sup> 2023  Revised September 20<sup>th</sup> 2023  Accepted September 29<sup>th</sup> 2023</p>	<p><b>ABSTRACT</b></p> <p>Along with its popularity, social media has become an effective tool in political campaigns in many countries. Presidential candidates and their campaign teams use social media to build a desirable image, expand the reach of political messages, rally support, and mobilize voters. There are many ways people can get political messages directly to potential voters on Twitter. This research was conducted using a type of qualitative research with content analysis methods in looking at tweet text related to Prabowo Subianto. And aims to examine the impression management made by Prabowo as a candidate for the 2024 Presidential candidate on the front stage and back stage. The theory used in this study is the Dramaturgy by Erving Goffman, where this article tries to analyze the narrative used in the social media campaign of presidential candidates will also be a key element in building political dramaturgy carried out by Prabowo Subianto as a candidate for the Indonesian presidential candidate through his Twitter account @Prabowo. From the results of the analysis, it can be seen that Prabowo carried out imaging with the aim of trying to convey a convincing, relevant, and interesting narrative for voters, in the hope of building trust and support.</p> <p>Keywords: <i>dramaturgy; Twitter; Prabowo; 2024 presidential candidate</i></p> <p><b>ABSTRAK</b></p> <p>Seiring dengan popularitasnya, media sosial telah menjadi alat yang efektif dalam kampanye politik di banyak negara. Kandidat calon presiden dan tim kampanye mereka menggunakan media sosial untuk membangun citra yang diinginkan, memperluas jangkauan pesan politik, menggalang dukungan, dan memobilisasi pemilih. Banyak cara yang dapat dilakukan orang untuk menyampaikan pesan politik secara langsung kepada pemilih potensial di Twitter. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan jenis penelitian kualitatif dengan metode analisis isi dalam melihat teks tweet yang berkaitan dengan Prabowo Subianto. Dan bertujuan untuk mengkaji penciptaan kesan (impression management) yang dibuat oleh Prabowo sebagai kandidat calon Presiden 2024 di panggung depan (front stage) dan di panggung belakang (back stage). Teori yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini yaitu Teori Dramaturgi oleh Erving Goffman, dimana artikel ini mencoba untuk menganalisis narasi yang digunakan dalam kampanye media sosial kandidat calon presiden juga akan menjadi elemen kunci dalam membangun dramaturgi politik yang dilakukan oleh Prabowo Subianto selaku kandidat calon presiden Indonesia melalui akunnya Twiternya @Prabowo. Dari hasil analisis dapat terlihat bahwa Prabowo melakukan pencitraan dengan tujuan berusaha untuk menyampaikan narasi yang meyakinkan, relevan, dan menarik bagi pemilih, dengan harapan dapat membangun kepercayaan dan dukungan.</p> <p>Kata Kunci: <i>dramaturgi; Twitter; Prabowo; kandidat presiden 2024</i></p>
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## INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of social media has changed the political landscape around the world, including in the context of presidential elections. In recent years, social media has experienced rapid growth and become a powerful platform for sharing

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information, interacting, and influencing public opinion. In the context of the presidential election of the Republic of Indonesia scheduled to take place in 2024, the role of social media becomes very important in shaping the image and narrative of presidential candidates.

Along with its popularity, social media has become an effective tool in political campaigns in many countries. Presidential candidates and their campaign teams use social media to build a desirable image, expand the reach of political messages, rally support, and mobilize voters. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are used to deliver political messages directly to potential voters.

The communication strategies that presidential candidates use on social media will play an important role in influencing public opinion. They will use various tactics such as the use of interesting keywords, the use of attention-grabbing images and videos, as well as direct interaction with their followers. By utilizing the features provided by social media platforms, presidential candidates will try to create an emotional connection with voters and strengthen their image.

Since the introduction of the direct election system in the 2004 elections, the term image has become familiar in the political universe in Indonesia. Parties and political figures are busy making imaging efforts to increase their popularity in order to win in the competition. This is also not something wrong. Because according to Fritz Plasser in one of his studies states that image or political image is the first factor that determines the victory of a candidate.

Political dramaturgy is becoming an important aspect of presidential campaigns on social media. Dramaturgy refers to the process of setting up and forming a desired story or narrative. In a political context, dramaturgy involves the efforts of candidates or their campaign teams to build a positive image and set up a favorable narrative. Social media provides an effective platform to present oneself, direct attention, and manipulate public perception of candidates. Dramaturgy by Erving Goffman can be said to be a stage play, where individuals differ in character when on the front stage and back stage.

Erving Goffman in his book *The Presentation of Everyday Life* (Goffman, 1959) said that dramaturgy is a basic theory of how individuals perform in the social world. Goffman focuses his attention on face-to-face interaction or co-presence. Individuals can present any "show" to others, but the impression that many people get of the show can vary.

In an exclusive interview on the Mata Najwa Program recently, Prabowo admitted that not much has changed. He said it was only the perception of the media that framed him too explosively when he was talking passionately. The General Chairman of the Gerindra Party said that he must be able to position himself. He gave an example of himself when meeting people while on a political safari. According to him, he could not have spoken in front of the people waiting for him in the hot sun. Prabowo said it was not nice if he only spoke casually, but had to be loud when speaking out of respect for the people. Prabowo's emotional character faded when he served as Defense Minister in President Jokowi's cabinet. Prabowo's calm attitude about his leadership carries the message that a leader must be able to play a role in the play of circumstances. Currently, Prabowo often posts, provides information to the public through social media. This is something Prabowo has only done because it has never been done before, this is a form of political transformation.

Prabowo's calm attitude at this time because he is doing drama in order to gain public sympathy. The political communication strategy that seems to be played by Prabowo Subianto to get public response and sympathy and electability, close to mass media and social media is one of the key variables of elections in the midst of public looking for sources of information related to candidates.

It would be counterproductive if Prabowo still chooses a character like in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections which tend to be emotional. The positive implication is that Prabowo is more flexible to interact. Prabowo is considered not to make a change in character, but it is a consequence of a different political position.

The same thing was also done by Prabowo through his Twitter account, namely @Prabowo related to the image carried out by Prabowo as a presidential candidate can be said by making changes in strategy. Prabowo's arrogance will never be found again now that he is now calm. This is considering that Prabowo's background as a soldier previously caused a perception in the public's mind that Prabowo was someone with an unstable temperament and emotional level. As reported by Kompas.com (May 31, 2023).

But there are still many who doubt Prabowo's emotional changes. Even a writer as well as CNBC Indonesia Head of Research Muhammad Maruf assessed that Prabowo has not changed, remains emotional and temperamental, despite his age. The levels alone are reduced. Prabowo's arrogance will never be found again now, not because he has changed, but because he has changed, but part of a political branding strategy to attract voters, especially young voters, some millennials and Gen Z who do not feel and do not know about Prabowo's dark history. This is a good strategy, because data from the General Elections Commission (KPU) records that as many as 55% of voters in the 2024 presidential election will be aged 15 to 40 years. As reported by cnbcindonesia.com (June 05, 2023).

From the two types of writing, the author sees that what is displayed by Prabowo as an actor in the real world and in cyberspace in this case Twitter is very different. On Twitter, Prabowo as an actor looks more stable and not easily emotional. Even in some of his tweets, Prabowo responded casually and calmly to some oblique comments against him. From these differences, the author sees that there is a tendency for Prabowo to do imaging through Twitter, this is with the aim of breaking the negative stigma that has been attached to him before. Then the big question is, how is the drama shown through the front stage, and how exactly to examine the impression management made by Prabowo as a candidate for the 2024 Presidential candidate on the front stage and back stage on Twitter?

## **METHODS**

This research was conducted using a type of qualitative research with the analysis method in looking at tweet text related to Prabowo Subianto. The texts studied are then interpreted based on the concept of imagery, reading opinion tendencies and looking at the type of Twitter account that uploads tweets. This study looks at public opinion towards political figures seen from positive, neutral, and negative sentiments(Çelikutğ, 2019).

Content analysis in research is actually a qualitatively oriented technique (Denzin & Giardina, 2009). This article will apply qualitative content analysis methods on Social Media on Twitter. Specifically, the content to be analyzed is Tweets and Photos uploaded on Twitter social media which is the focus of research on Prabowo Subianto's account (@prabowo) with the purpose of this article, namely how exactly the *back stage* that Prabowo does not want to display as a presidential candidate on social media *Twitter*.

Regarding the problems in this study about the dramaturgy of Prabowo Subianto's Imaging on Twitter Social Media as a 2024 Presidential Candidate, the right approach to examine this research is Erving Goffman's dramaturgy. Goffman called it the dramaturgy of life, where human life is like a stage drama divided into a front stage and a back stage. As Goffman assumed, social life can be divided into "*front region*" and "*back region*". The front area is like the *front stage watched* by the audience, while the back area is like the *back stage* or dressing room where showmen relax, prepare or practice to play their roles on the front stage. (Mulyana, 2008).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Dramaturgy of Erving Goffman

Dramaturgy theory is a theory that explains that in the activity of interaction with each other is the same as the performance of a drama. In this case, humans are actors who perform everything to achieve certain goals through the drama they perform. The identity of an actor in interacting can change, depending on who the actor interacts with (Widodo, 2010)

Dramaturgy theory is inseparable from Cooley's influence on *the looking glass self*, in which it explains how a person looks like others, how others judge one's appearance and how one develops one's feelings of judgment from others. According to Goffman, interacting people want to present a picture of themselves that others will accept, which is called message entitlement. There are several studies that use dramaturgy theory, including *Dramaturgi Dalam Membentuk Persentasi Diri Presenter* (Wibowo & Soraya, 2023) and *Studi Dramaturgi Pengelolaan Kesan Melalui Twitter Sebagai Sarana Eksistensi Diri Mahasiswa di Jakarta*. Komunikasi (Girnanfa & Susilo, 2022)

The assumption of dramaturgy theory in Supardan (Supardan, 2011) is that Goffman does not try to focus on social structure, but on face-to-face interaction or *co-presence*. According to him, face-to-face interaction is limited as individuals who influence each other's actions when each is physically confronted. Similarly, interactions made by one user with other users on Twitter social media.

*Twitter* is a *front stage* that is used by individuals as a medium to present themselves because there are other *Twitter* users who see or watch. Because someone sees or watches, individuals try to show kindness from themselves on *Twitter*. Whereas when an individual is in the real world (*back stage*) then what is seen is the true nature.

## Prabowo's Front Stage on *Twitter*

*Twitter* is a *front stage* that is used by individuals as a medium to present themselves because there are other *Twitter* users who see or watch. Because someone sees or watches, individuals try to show kindness from themselves on *Twitter*. Whereas when an individual is in the real world (*back stage*) then what is seen is the true nature.

Social media *Twitter* is a *micro-blogging*. *Twitter* users can provide a variety of information about their activities and mood by means of *status updates* that are usually called "*tweets*." *Tweets* are text posts that are limited to 140 characters and will be seen by friends who are "*followers*" of *Twitter* users. Not only *followers* who can see the various information provided, users can also see various information provided by other *Twitter* users who have been *followed*. *Twitter* also provides *privacy setting* options, if the lock in *privacy settings* is not enabled, then anyone can see the information in the user's timeline.

According to a report by *We Are Social*, the number of *Twitter* users in Indonesia reached 18.45 million in 2022 (Monavia Ayu, 2022). This figure puts Indonesia in the fifth rank of the largest *Twitter* user country in the world. This may be a trigger for presidential candidates and vice presidents to use social media *Twitter* to get closer to voters and image themselves ahead of the election.

This then became an interesting thing for the author to study more deeply about how Prabowo could image himself well in the midst of many parties trying to bring him down (Dariyanto, 2021). Given that Prabowo was previously involved in several cases on his behalf, such as human rights cases that occurred during the New Order era. But Prabowo chose to defend himself by not disclosing information that entered his *Twitter* account. Prabowo actually displays positive information about himself and tries to chime in with the bad things that exist.

On the *front stage*, an actor tends to show only the best sides and wants a show to run smoothly. There are two things that Goffman emphasizes on the *front stage*, namely the *setting* and the *personal front*. *The setting* shows the procedure, in this case it can be seen from Prabowo's profile, namely @Prabowo as a *Twitter* account user.

In his profile, Prabowo provides information about his information as Minister of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia. While in the party account the @Gerindra are quite clear and which are reflected through a "*biography*" or "*bio*" which is used to describe information about the owner. The bio of the Gerindra Party account reads: "*If not us, who else? If not now, when will it be? Continue to follow the struggle of the Great Indonesia Movement Party in building an independent Indonesia*".

The sentence in the *Twitter* account bio is a piece of sentence that reflects the vision and mission of the Gerindra Party and becomes Prabowo's reference for the 2024 election. From the bio, it can be seen how the Gerindra Party shows that Prabowo's appointment as a candidate for the 2024 presidential candidate. Prabowo is a pribain the firm committed. Prabowo also changed his style of public communication, in order to gain public sympathy. If we look slowly, Prabowo's change in attitude is not the result of a day's work, but in recent years and the most influential person in his attitude change is Jokowi (Maruf, 2023).

From Prabowo Subianto's social media pages, he is active on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. From the monitoring of the social media, Prabowo's actions as Minister of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia were more raised than Prabowo's movement in the Gerindra Party. Of course, in addition to the account media sosial Gerindra Party, the account of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia (@Kemhan\_RI) has a big role in lifting Prabowo's actions as Minister of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia and influencing his image in media sosial. Every visit, important meeting, attendance at an international event, and Prabowo's statement become content material that is routinely shared by the Indonesian Ministry of Defense on various accounts media sosial. From the media sosial that he has, Prabowo always displays positive information about himself and tries to chime in on the bad things that exist.



Figure1. Source: twitter account @Gerindra



Figure 2: Souce :twitter account @Kemhan\_RI

While Twitter has been Probowo's biggest image contributor, there areno accounts on the platform that have strongly garnered sympathy for Prabowo. So far there have been no accounts of volunteers, sympathizers, or successful teams (outside of akun who regularly and actively) have given their support to Prabowo. Ironically, the volunteer accounts that used to exist seem to disappear from circulation since the defeat of the Prabowo-Sandi pair in the 2019 presidential election.

The results of the Kompas R&D survey show that Prabowo Subianto is the presidential candidate whose figure is most popular in the eyes of the public. Based on the survey results, the level of popularity or public awareness of Prabowo's figure is at 94 percent, outperforming Two other candidates(Ramadhan, 2023; Redaksi CNBC, 2023)

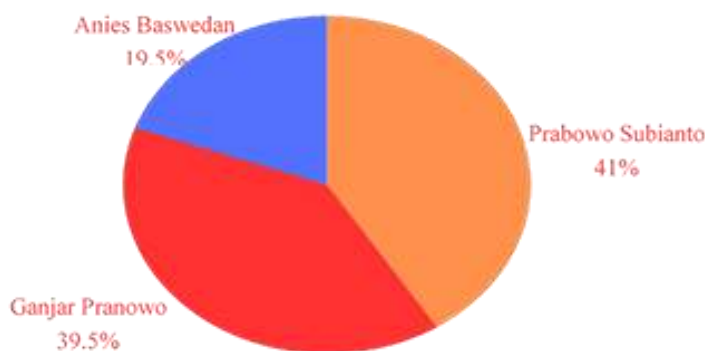


Figure 3: Survei Litbang Kompas on May

Political communication expert, Effendi Gazali, gave his analysis regarding the high electability of Gerindra Party Chairman Prabowo Subianto in several surveys. He talked about the theory of middle ground selection (Safitri, 2023). Effendi then gave an example, if the public does not like Ganjar, they will vote for Prabowo. Likewise, if the public does not like Anies, they will vote for Prabowo. According to him, this is a factor why Prabowo's electability has increased in recent surveys.

Executive Director of Citra Institute, Yusak Farchan said, Minister of Defense (Menhan) Prabowo Subianto is a presidential candidate figure who can embrace all levels of society. He also predicted, the General Chairman of the Gerindra Party has a great chance of winning in the 2024 Presidential Election.

Yusak explained, Prabowo's joining the Joko Widodo (Jokowi) government carriage, accompanied by his work has done a lot for Indonesia. This was marked by his performance leading the Ministry of Defense (Kemenhan). Therefore, he continued, Prabowo is currently one of the ministers with positive performance seen in the community. Therefore, it is not surprising that Prabowo gets the highest electability in various surveys.

The image of being dashing, unpretentious, and carrying out service as defense minister became a strong impression raised by Prabowo's social media content. On Prabowo's Facebook account, the content uploaded mostly shows the side of Prabowo who is actively involved in the Gerindra Party movement. On the Instagram account, the side of personal life and performance as Minister of Defense is more uploaded.

In *frontstage*, Goffman explains another aspect of dramaturgy, which is about *frontstage* behavior, which is an attempt by actors to convey impressions closer to the audience than the impressions that actually exist as they are. There must be a uniqueness in the actor when performing a performance, which uniqueness also wants to be felt by the audience when seeing it. Goffman also makes an important point that the audience wants a credibility in the actor's performance, so the audience is involved in the performance process while maintaining distance from the actor. And from this explanation, it is illustrated that the focus of Goffman's ideas related to the interactionist-symbolic process is not only on individual interactions, but on *teams* or groups. There is the involvement of actors and audiences who are interconnected like a group or *team*. And the *team* in this case is @Prabowo and *followers* of Prabowo's account and other accounts that are not Prabowo's followers.

On the *front stage*, an actor tends to show only the best sides and wants a show to run smoothly. There are two things that Goffman emphasizes on the *front stage*, namely the *setting* and the *personal front*. *The setting* shows the procedure, in this case it can be seen from Prabowo's profile, namely @Prabowo as a Twitter account user. He recently posted the following tweet:

"Apa yang saya bisa tinggalkan hanya rohku saja, yaitu roh setia hingga terakhir kepada tanah air, dan tidak mundur sekalipun menemui rintangan apapun menuju cita-cita kebangsaan yang tetap."

- Wolter Mongisidi –

*Selamat pagi. Selamat berkarya membangun negeri.*

*"All I can leave is my spirit, that is, the spirit of being loyal to the last to the motherland, and not retreating even once encountering any obstacle towards the fixed ideal of nationhood."*

*- Wolter Mongisidi –*

*Good morning. Happy work to build the country.*



Figure 4: Twitter account @Gerindra

In the twitter account, Prabowo quoted a fragment of the motivation of Hero Wolter Monginsidi. From the tweet, it can be seen how Prabowo shows that he is a presidential candidate who fights for the last drop of blood that will not back down even though obstacles stand in the way to achieve the nation's ideals. It can be seen from some of the comments left are positive, *retweeted* 173 times with 1,317 likes.

Prabowo tried to portray himself as the president's person, close to the president and that was confirmed by billboards, banners along Solo Raya starting from Solo to East Java, Lampung. The large Prabowo-Jokowi billboard only shows the closeness of the two figures while capitalizing on the voter base. In order to attract a niche of loyal Jokowi voters, Prabowo also changed his political style and character to the public sphere. "That seems to be what he is doing now, for example, with more relaxed, open models. That's part of his approach to consolidating a different voter base to the previous one.



Figure 5: image of Prabowo and Jokowi billboards broadcast by a television channel



## Prabowo's Back Stage on *Twitter*

*Back stage* in dramaturgy explains the image that there is something that the actor wants the audience not to know. Goffman suggests that an actor expects the audience of his front show not to show up to the show in the back. In this case, for example, Prabowo does not tell his personal life, dark side, past bad experiences and things. Because this will only weaken his position.

In the *back stage* there is also the concept of "*impression management*", which is how to manage impressions or images when dealing with audiences. *Impression management* aims to keep unexpected risks from an action can be avoided. The imagery done @Prabowo when reviewed is indeed very visible. Some of the negative issues he was accused of were not raised through his profile.

Meanwhile, this year, Prabowo seems to be trying to show his more relaxed figure. For example, on May 12, 2023, he posted a photo on his twitter page showing him wearing a white *sweater* complete with a hoodie with the Gerindra party logo, accompanied by the following tweet:

“Semangat Pemuda-Pemudi Indonesia!!! Harumkan Nama Bangsa!”



Figure 6: Twitter account @Gerindra

The tweet shows how Prabowo's position explains that he is creating an interesting narrative to reach a wider audience, especially the group of voters who have the most potential to be glimpsed are young people, especially Generation Z (Gen Z). Prabowo's upload is considered cute for netizens, different from the image that has been displayed, to provoke massive conversations. This is part of a political *branding* strategy to attract voters, especially young voters, some millennials and Gen Z who do not feel and do not know about Prabowo's dark history. This is a good strategy, because data from the General Elections Commission (KPU) records that as many as 55% of voters in the 2024 presidential election will be aged 15 to 40 years.

The narrative used in a presidential candidate's social media campaign will also be a key element in building political dramaturgy. The narrative will involve stories and messages conveyed to voters, reflecting the candidate's values, vision, and promises. Presidential candidates will also strive to convey a narrative that is convincing, relevant, and appealing to voters, in hopes of building trust and support.

Ritzer (Ritzer, 2008) explains that humans are able to carry out various roles according to different situations and conditions. Humans as creative actors are able to create various things, one of which is the space for virtual world interaction. Each individual is able to display a different character when in the virtual world with the real world. This is what is then called dramaturgy or *self-presentation (The Presentation of Self)* to explain how a person presents himself in a certain environment or stage.

## CONCLUSION

*Twitter* is a stage play for users of their *Twitter* accounts. All *Twitter* users are vying to bring out the best of themselves on *Twitter*. This is then often referred to as imaging. The same thing was also done by Prabowo through his *Twitter* account, namely @Prabowo. Currently, Prabowo often posts, provides information to the public through social media. This is something Prabowo has only done because it has never been done before, this is a form of political transformation. Prabowo tries to show everything good about himself (*front stage*) and ignores oblique things about him that emerge from the *back stage*.

The narrative used in a presidential candidate's social media campaign will also be a key element in building political dramaturgy. The narrative will involve stories and messages conveyed to voters, reflecting the candidate's values, vision, and promises. Presidential candidates will also strive to convey a narrative that is convincing, relevant, and appealing to voters, in hopes of building trust and support.

This research can still be developed or explored more broadly / with different research methods, such as quantitative research methods. The goal is to measure how much influence imaging has in improving a positive image as a candidate. Practical advice based on the results of this study is the image that is acting out drama in order to gain public sympathy and is his political communication strategy. It should be done consistently so that no one doubts Prabowo's emotional changes and some even say that there is a decrease in reality. In the context of contesting the Presidential Election, imagery must be done in such a way, when Prabowo's calm about his leadership carries the message that a leader must be able to play a role in the play of circumstances. By paying attention to the compatibility between individual characters and potential presidential candidates expected by the community.

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