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Symbolic Legitimacy Without Elections: A Computational Framing Analysis of the Bureaucratic Branding Practices of Non-Elected Officials on Social Media (Case Study of Teddy Indra Wijaya)

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Abstract

This study analyzes the phenomenon of bureaucratic branding on non-electoral officials in the context of digital political communication in Indonesia through a case study of the "Teddy Effect." The main objective of the study is to identify how symbolic legitimacy can be formed outside of electoral mechanisms through the construction of digital narratives on social media. This study uses a mixed-methods approach with an explanatory sequential design, which integrates computational content analysis and qualitative framing analysis. The research data consists of 20,317 text units covering 197 posts from the official account @teddy_hq and 20,120 audience comments on Instagram and TikTok platforms during the period of November 2025 to June 2026. The analysis techniques used include IndoBERT-based sentiment analysis, topic modeling with Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), framing analysis based on the Entman model, and network analysis to map digital interaction patterns. The results of the study indicate that symbolic legitimacy is formed through three main stages in the Digital Bureaucratic Branding (DBB) model, namely symbolic capital (military, loyalty, and competence), digital image construction mechanisms (self-presentation, framing, parasocial, and algorithmic amplification), and output in the form of legitimacy without an electoral mandate. The findings also indicate the dominance of parasocial political relationships and frames of management recommendations that indicate the granting of a "virtual mandate" by the audience. In conclusion, this phenomenon extends the concept of political branding to the non-electoral bureaucratic realm and shows that political legitimacy can be constructed symbolically through digital media without involving electoral mechanisms.

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has fundamentally transformed the way political actors communicate with the public. In Indonesia, a striking phenomenon has emerged in recent years that warrants academic scrutiny: the extraordinary digital visibility of a non-elected bureaucratic official, Teddy Indra Wijaya, who has served as Cabinet Secretary of the Republic of Indonesia since October 2024. This phenomenon has been termed the "Teddy Effect" by social media observers and communication scholars, referring to the ability of a career military officer who has not undergone an electoral process to establish a digital presence comparable to—and in some

metrics surpassing—that of politicians with electoral mandates. Preliminary data indicates that content related to Teddy Indra Wijaya experienced significant virality on X (Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok between October 2024 and May 2025.

The paradox underlying this phenomenon constitutes the central background of this research. An official not directly elected by the people through electoral mechanisms nonetheless possesses digital visibility and a fan base rivaling that of popular elected political figures. This raises a fundamental question: what political communication mechanisms enable the formation of symbolic legitimacy outside the electoral democratic pathway? Tempo.co (2026) raised critical questions in its journalistic report regarding the purpose of this digital popularity—whether it reflects the translation of work performance or merely the construction of an image. Meanwhile, political communication analyst Hendri Satrio (2026) observed that Teddy is growing as a public figure with national appeal, where the public may not recall his official duties but recognizes his persona through consistent appearances at various significant moments. These journalistic observations underscore the need for systematic academic investigation into this phenomenon.

The fundamental distinction between electoral political branding and non-electoral bureaucratic branding serves as a crucial analytical starting point. In conventional political branding, political actors construct their image through structured campaigns aimed at securing voter support. Conversely, in the observed phenomenon, a bureaucratic official builds a digital image without any electoral campaign context, resulting in a fundamentally different legitimacy mechanism that requires a novel analytical framework. Prior research by Manniko and Adnan (2021) examined BKKBN's rebranding as a manifestation of bureaucratic reform in the digital governance era using the Digital Weberianism Bureaucracy (DWB) concept, demonstrating that government institutions have begun leveraging digital platforms to build images and connect with the public, particularly the millennial generation. While this study provides valuable insights into institutional digital branding, it does not address the individual branding of non-elected officials, particularly those with military backgrounds.

A comprehensive review of the literature reveals that political branding studies predominantly focus on electoral actors—candidates and political parties—as their objects of analysis. Foundational works in this field, from Scammell (2007), Needham (2006), to Marland (2016), have consistently directed attention to branding dynamics within electoral competition contexts. Furthermore, research on political communication on Indonesian social media tends to concentrate on presidents, regional heads, or political parties. A significant **knowledge gap** emerges regarding how non-electoral officials, particularly those from military backgrounds, build and maintain their public image in the digital age. This gap is especially pertinent given that similar phenomena are emerging in various countries with comparable practices, as revealed by research on "digital ombudsmen" in Surabaya, which demonstrated that public figures utilize digital platforms to build legitimacy through direct citizen interaction. The lack of political communication studies specifically examining career military officials appointed to civilian bureaucratic roles in the Indonesian context represents a notable academic lacuna that deserves scholarly attention.

The urgency of this research lies in the contemporary reality that symbolic power no longer derives solely from formal electoral mechanisms, but also from political actors' ability to leverage digital media to build presence and influence. The "Teddy Effect" phenomenon

represents a paradigm shift in Indonesian political communication that requires adequate theoretical and empirical understanding. Research by Adha (2026) on the negotiation of civil servant identity through digital discourse found that ideal expectations of bureaucrats are not merely internalized but actively negotiated through everyday discourse on digital platforms, reinforcing the argument that bureaucratic identity and legitimacy are actively constructed in the digital sphere. Moreover, research by Dedees, Kania, and Suharyanti (2024) through a critical study of military idolization on TikTok found that the figure of Major Teddy is constructed as handsome, disciplined, and accomplished, thereby transforming public perception of the military from a fearsome institution to an attractive figure. These studies underscore the urgency of examining how digital platforms facilitate the construction of symbolic legitimacy for non-elected officials.

The novelty of this research lies in the development of a conceptual "Digital Bureaucratic Branding" (DBB) model that integrates political communication perspectives, Bourdieu's (1986; 1991) cultural sociology, and digital media analysis. This model is designed to bridge the gap between the political branding literature focused on electoral actors and the contemporary political reality where non-electoral officials increasingly possess symbolic power through digital channels. This research also offers methodological contributions through a mixed-methods approach integrating large-scale computational content analysis with in-depth qualitative framing analysis, enabling the identification of macro-level patterns while providing a nuanced understanding of the micro-level mechanisms through which symbolic legitimacy is constructed. This methodological integration allows for robust triangulation of findings across quantitative and qualitative paradigms, addressing the limitations of studies that rely solely on one methodological approach.

Broadly, this research aims to analyze the political communication mechanisms within the "Teddy Effect" phenomenon as a representation of digital bureaucratic branding in Indonesia. More specifically, this study has three main objectives. **First**, to identify and analyze the political communication frames embedded in digital content about non-electoral officials, particularly in the context of the transition from military figures to civilian bureaucratic roles. **Second**, to analyze bureaucratic branding strategies through a computational approach integrating sentiment analysis, topic modeling, and network analysis methods. **Third**, to develop the "Digital Bureaucratic Branding" (DBB) conceptual model as a theoretical contribution to the advancement of political communication science. These objectives are systematically addressed through a two-phase sequential explanatory design that prioritizes quantitative analysis followed by qualitative in-depth examination.

The theoretical contribution of this research is the provision of an analytical framework for understanding symbolic legitimacy formation outside electoral mechanisms, enriching the political communication literature. The DBB model offers a structured approach to analyzing how non-elected officials convert various forms of symbolic capital into digital legitimacy through multiple simultaneous mechanisms. Practically, the research findings can serve as input for public communication managers in government institutions, policymakers concerning digital communication ethics for public officials, and the public in understanding the dynamics of image formation and legitimacy construction in the social media era. Furthermore, the findings have implications for democratic quality, as the formation of symbolic legitimacy without electoral mandates raises important questions about accountability and the relationship

between visibility, authority, and democratic representation in the digital age. By addressing these theoretical and practical dimensions, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary political communication in Indonesia and beyond.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a mixed methods approach with a sequential explanatory design strategy. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to integrate the power of quantitative methods in identifying large patterns in data with the power of qualitative methods in providing an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms and contexts behind those patterns. Creswell and Plano Clark emphasize that sequential explanatory designs are particularly suitable for research where quantitative findings need to be further explained through qualitative data.

The research design consists of two main phases:

Phase One, Computational Content Analysis (Quantitative): Large-scale social media data collection and analysis using computational content analysis techniques to identify framing, sentiment, and topic distribution patterns.

Phase Two, In-Depth Framing Analysis (Qualitative): In-depth analysis of representative content samples to construct a qualitative understanding of bureaucratic branding mechanisms that cannot be accessed through computational methods alone.

Analysis and Data Sources Unit

This study analyzed social media content from two official platforms owned by research figures, namely Instagram (@teddy_hq) and TikTok (@teddy_hq). The selection of these two platforms was based on the consideration that both are the only official social media accounts managed and directly associated with Teddy Indra Wijaya in his capacity as Cabinet Secretary. As Kriyantono (2014) emphasized, multi-platform analysis provides a more comprehensive picture than single-platform analysis; However, in the case of non-electoral officials whose digital presence is limited to official accounts, the focus on the two official platforms is actually more aligned with the research analysis unit, namely the narrative of officials and the audience's direct response to the narrative. This approach is also consistent with the political branding studies of Scammell (2007) and Marland (2016) which often focus on the analysis of official accounts of political actors.

The observation period covers the time range of November 2025 to June 2026. This period was chosen because it reaches the active phase of digital communication of post-appointment figures as Cabinet Secretary in October 2024, thus allowing observation of stable communication patterns and the formation of a consistent parasocial audience base. This seven-month period is considered adequate to identify stable framing, sentiment, and thematic patterns as recommended in longitudinal studies of political communication (Larsson 2016). The adjustment of the period from the initial plan (October 2024–May 2025) was made due to limited access to the platform's historical data and to ensure the relevance of the data to current dynamics.

Data capture is focused on @teddy_hq official accounts on both platforms along with live audience comments and responses to each post, instead of performing cross-platform keyword-based crawls. This strategy is more in line with the purpose of research that analyzes the

narrative of officials (captions) and the mechanisms of symbolic legitimacy formed through audience responses (comments). The volume of data collected after the pre-processing process included 20,317 units of text consisting of 197 official captions/posts (98 Instagram and 99 TikTok) and 20,120 audience comments (1,406 Instagram and 18,714 TikTok). TikTok comments are collected using a special scraping tool (abagasw/tiktok-comment-scrapper) with a maximum limit of 100 comments per video, while Instagram comments are obtained through Apify Instagram Scraper.

Data Collection

Data collection is carried out through Apify. The selection of collection methods is adjusted to the availability of access and the policies of the respective platforms.

Data pre-processing includes several stages: deduplication to remove content that is posted repeatedly, language filtering to filter Indonesian and English content, and bot removal to identify and exclude automated accounts that may distort the results of the analysis.

Ethical considerations in data collection are a serious concern in this study. Given that this study analyzed content from public accounts on social media platforms, no individual consent is required according to the policies of the respective platforms. However, this study still adheres to the principle of anonymization if necessary and does not collect sensitive personal data such as direct messages or content from private accounts. This approach is consistent with the social media research ethics guidelines of relevant scientific associations.

Computational Content Analysis (Quantitative Phase)

Sentiment analysis was carried out using a fine-tuned IndoBERT model for sentiment classification in Indonesian. This model will classify each post into positive, negative, or neutral categories. The accuracy of the model will be validated through manual sampling of a subset of the data to ensure the reliability of the classification. This sentiment analysis provides an overview of the emotional polarity associated with the figure being studied.

Topic modeling uses the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) method to identify dominant themes in the data corpus. The optimal number of topics will be determined through the calculation of a coherence score. Each identified topic will then be thematically labeled based on keywords and representative documents for ease of interpretation. Topic modeling allows researchers to map the discursive landscape formed around the figure of Teddy Indra Wijaya.

Framing detection is carried out through supervised classification based on a codebook developed from the framework of Entman (1993). This codebook covers four dimensions of framing: problem definition, causal diagnosis, moral evaluation, and solution recommendations. Each dimension will be operationalized into specific categories that can be identified in the text. The classification process will use machine learning models trained on labeled datasets that are manually annotated by trained coder.

Temporal analysis is conducted to identify patterns of volume and sentiment based on time (event-based analysis). This analysis allowed researchers to relate fluctuations in data to specific political events that might affect communication dynamics. Network analysis is used to map the pattern of content diffusion and identify the influencer networks that play a role in the spread of narratives.

In-Depth Framing Analysis (Qualitative Phase)

The qualitative phase uses the purposive sampling method to select 50–100 representative content from each frame identified in the quantitative phase. Samples were selected based on

criteria: (a) the content with the highest engagement in their respective frame categories, and (b) content from official or verified accounts that have a significant influence on the information ecosystem. This approach ensures that qualitative analysis focuses on the content that is most influential in shaping the public narrative.

The qualitative analysis unit includes the posts with the highest engagement and content from the relevant official accounts. The analysis was carried out using Entman's Framing Matrix which includes four dimensions: problem definition, causal diagnosis, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. Each content will be analyzed in depth to identify how each dimension of framing is actualized in the context of Indonesian digital communication.

Qualitative coding reliability is guaranteed through the use of two independent coders with intercoder reliability calculations using Cohen's Kappa. A Kappa value received at least 0.80 indicates an excellent level of agreement between coder. If the Kappa value is below that threshold, a discussion and alignment of the codebook is carried out before recoding. The results of the reliability test in this study showed that Cohen's Kappa value met the methodological threshold: all four dimensions of Entman's framing reached Kappa = 1,000 (problem definition, causal diagnosis, moral evaluation, treatment recommendation) after a discussion of codebook alignment between two independent coders. The validation of the IndoBERT sentiment model against manual annotation reached Kappa = 0.962, far exceeding the threshold of >= 0.80. In the initial iteration, the problem definition dimension obtained a Kappa of 0.426 (below the threshold); after narrowing the operational definition and alignment discussions, the Kappa score rose to 1,000. This iterative process documents the transparency and replicability of coding as recommended by Cohen (1960) and Landis & Koch (1977).

3.6 Validity and Limitations

The validity of this study is guaranteed through multi-method triangulation: convergence of results from computational analysis and qualitative analysis. This triangulation allows researchers to validate findings from one method with findings from others, thereby increasing the credibility of the study's conclusions. In addition, a rigorous trail audit of the entire research process ensures transparency and replicability.

The limitations of this research need to be acknowledged transparently. First, the phenomenon of filter bubbles and echo chambers on social media platforms has the potential to limit the representativeness of the data collected. Second, data that is not publicly accessible (such as direct messages, private account content, or data that has been deleted) is inherently excluded from the analysis. Third, algorithmic platform bias can affect the visibility of certain content thereby affecting data distribution.

The position of the researcher and reflexivity are important ethical and methodological considerations. As a researcher of political communication, awareness of positions and possible biases is a prerequisite for credible knowledge production. This study explicitly documents the researcher's position and conducts critical reflection on how the position might affect the interpretation of the data. This approach is consistent with the contemporary qualitative research tradition that emphasizes the importance of reflexivity.

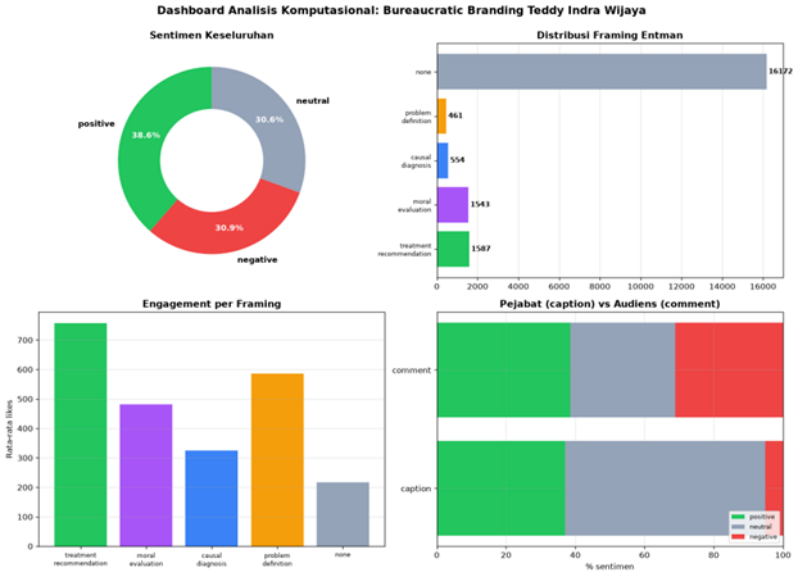
RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Corpus Profile and Phenomenon Context

This study analyzed 20,317 text units consisting of 197 captions/posts of official @teddy_hq accounts (98 Instagram and 99 TikTok) and 20,120 audience comments (1,406 Instagram and 18,714 TikTok) during the period November 2025 to June 2026. The corpus includes 12,810 unique commenters who responded to 198 posts/videos, indicating a substantial level of audience engagement. The highest engagement volume was recorded in posts with the caption:

"Simple happiness this afternoon, Cabinet Secretary Teddy greeted and talked for a moment with Mr. Ojol when reviewing the readiness of the homecoming flow at Senen Station..." (Caption TikTok @teddy_hq, 383,200 likes)

Figure 4.1 Computational analysis summary dashboard: sentiment distribution, framing, engagement, and caption vs comment comparison.



Data Source & Analysis: A synthesized visual summary combining IndoBERT sentiment classification, Entman framing analysis, and engagement rate metrics across 20,317 text units collected from Instagram and TikTok (@teddy_hq).

This phenomenon has been labeled by Indonesian media observers and communication academics as the "Teddy Effect": the ability of a non-electoral career military official to establish a digital presence on par with, even surpassing that of many electoral politicians. Tempo.co (2026) in his journalistic report raises critical questions about the purpose of this digital popularity — whether it is the translation of work performance or merely the construction of an image. The context of this phenomenon becomes the starting point for the DBB model analysis: how can symbolic legitimacy be formed without a general election mechanism?

INPUT: Symbolic Capital Construction

The INPUT component in the DBB model is the symbolic capital owned by non-electoral officials. Analysis of the caption of the official account @teddy_hq confirms the existence of three types of capital that are the initial capital for the construction of a digital image.

1. Military Capital

   Caption analysis showed that 7% of posts explicitly contained elements of military capital (knights, officers, seskoad, lieutenant colonels, commanders, cadets, Sapta Marga). The following quote illustrates:

   "In Sapta Marga, every soldier is an Indonesian Knight; upholding honor, courage, and loyalty..." (Caption TikTok @teddy_hq)

   "279 student officers and 11 students of friendly countries..." (Caption TikTok @teddy_hq)

   This military capital became a distinctive symbolic asset — different from civilian politicians, Teddy carried the aura of a soldier (Lt. Col., Seskoad graduate, kopassus) that in Indonesian political culture has a strong resonance. Bourdieu (1991) describes this as symbolic capital that can be converted to other forms of capital.

2. Loyalty Capital

   As many as 21% of captions contain elements of loyalty capital — references to President Prabowo, the cabinet, state duties, and the presidency. The caption quote illustrates the structural proximity:

   "Morning spirit from Davos... "A lot of people are going to sit down and sit down and have a cup of tea with Mr. Scott." (Caption Instagram @teddy_hq, 78,743 likes)

   This narrative strategy presents figures who are "just like us" (eating Pop Noodles, tired of the night shift) — who are at the same time in the circle of power (Davos, with the president). This pattern creates what Enli (2015) calls mediated authenticity: the audience feels like they are seeing the "original" side of the official.

3. Capital Competence

   Competencies are visualized via concrete performance narratives. Teddy's press statement from London (TVRI, 2026) shows formal-professional verbal performance:

   "So today, January 21, 2026, Mr. President has finished carrying out activities in the United Kingdom... Firstly, an investment commitment of 4 billion pounds sterling... cooperation in the construction of 1,582 fishing boats that will employ around 600,000 people." (Teddy Indra Wijaya, TVRI, January 21, 2026)

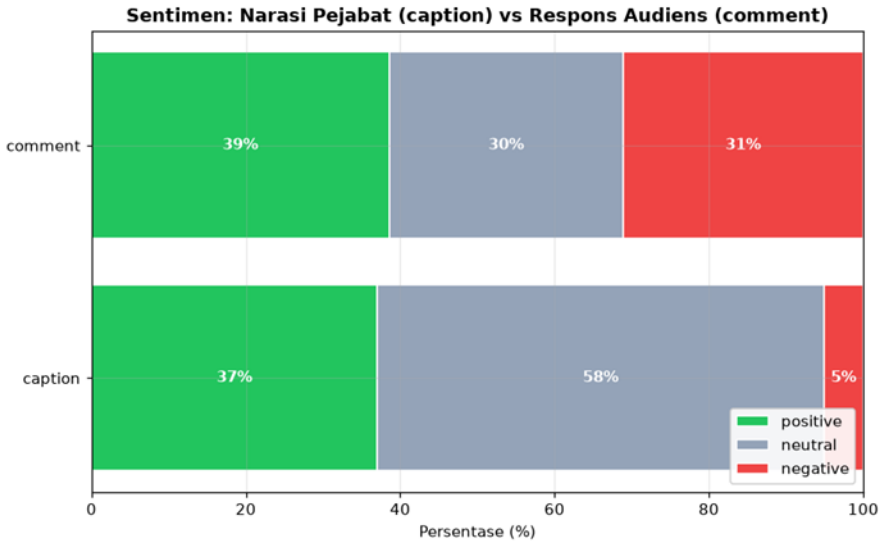
   Teddy acts as a translator of complex policies into an easy-to-digest narrative, complete with concrete numbers. It visualizes competency capital — an INPUT component that isn't captured on social media but captured in official audiovisual content. The three types of capital (military, loyalty, competence) interact to form the basis of initial legitimacy. Bourdieu (1991) explains that forms of capital are mutually reinforcing — Teddy brings a rare combination: a military aura, access to the center of power, and communicative competence.

PROCESS: Digital Image Construction Mechanism

The PROCESS component is at the heart of the DBB model — how symbolic capital is processed into a digital image. Sentiment analysis, topic modeling, framing, and networking uncovered five mechanisms that work simultaneously: digital self-presentation, Entman framing, parasocial relationships, algorithmic amplification, and communication gatekeeping.

1. Digital Self-Presentation: A "Neutral-Diplomatic" Strategy

Figure 4.2 Comparison of official caption sentiment (neutral-diplomatic) vs audience comment (emotional).



Data Source & Analysis: *Results of sentiment classification using a fine-tuned IndoBERT model comparing 197 official post captions against 20,120 audience comments.*

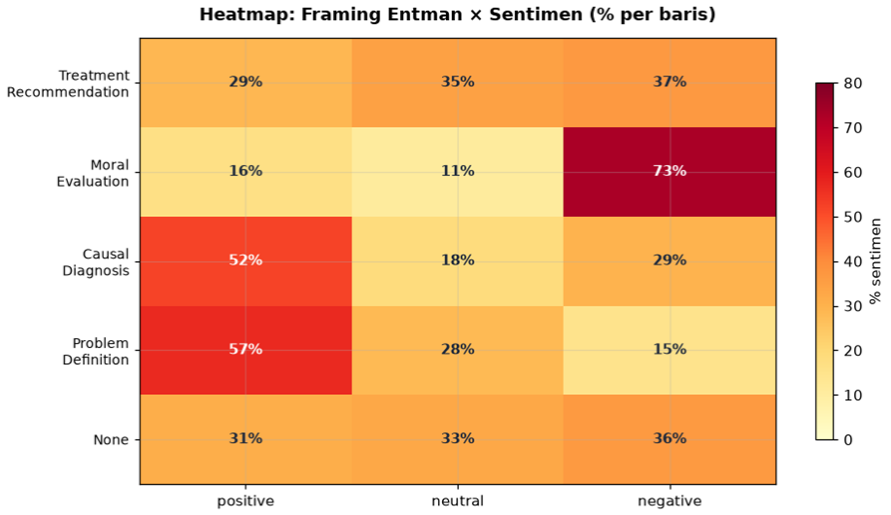
Teddy's official account captions were predominantly neutral-diplomatic (57.9% neutral, 37.1% positive, only 5.1% negative), while audience comments showed stronger emotional polarity (38.6% positive, 30.6% neutral, 30.9% negative). The reliability of the sentiment model was validated via manual sampling of 199 units with Cohen's Kappa = 0.962 (well beyond the methodological threshold of 0.80). For comparison, Sinaga and Aji's (2025) study on platform X (Twitter) reported a model accuracy of 73.68% with a more politically diverse distribution of sentiment — confirming that the emotional polarity of these figures varies between platforms.

Teddy's narrative strategy is fundamentally different from conventional political branding which is generally persuasive-emotional (Scammell, 2007; Needham, 2006). Teddy tells about his daily life — not campaigning. This is a neutral-diplomatic narrative strategy: politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson) that builds an image without being seen as campaigning. The implications for legitimacy are significant — as Weber (1978) explains, charismatic legitimacy does not require an electoral mandate when the authority of the figure is accepted based on the personal beliefs of the audience.

2. Framing Entman: The Four Dimensions of the Legitimacy Mechanism

Entman's (1993) Framing Matrix analysis of 70 units of representative content (purposive sampling, Cohen's Kappa all dimensions = 1,000 after codebook discussion) revealed a significant pattern. Each dimension reveals a different aspect of the legitimacy mechanism:

Figure 4.3 Entman framing heatmap × sentiment. Moral evaluation and treatment recommendation are dominated by positive sentiments.



Data Source & Analysis: Cross-tabulation between Robert Entman's 4 framing dimensions (problem definition, causal diagnosis, moral evaluation, treatment recommendation) and sentiment patterns using a purposive sample of 70 content units.

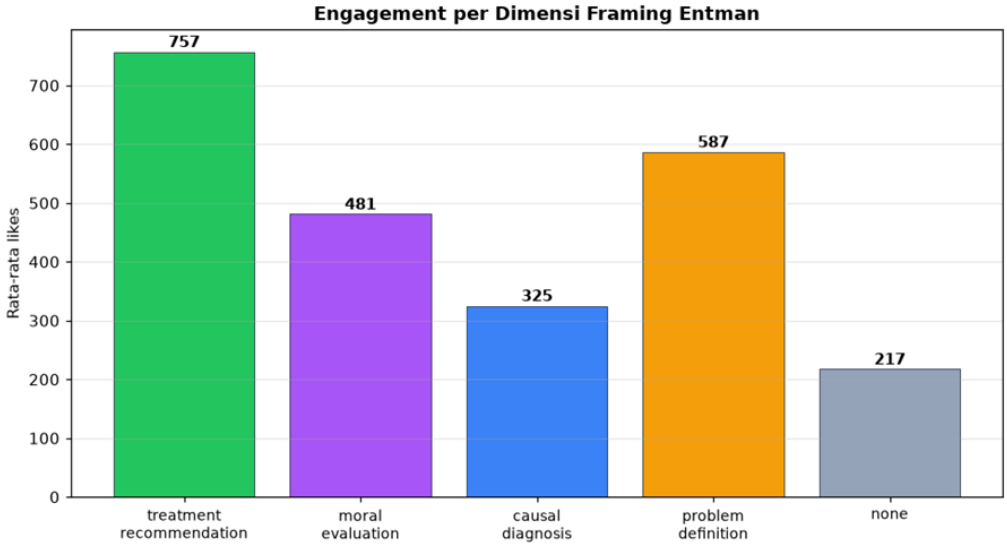
Problem Definition (3 units, 4.3%) appears most rarely and always from the audience — never from the official. The audience that defines the problem usually brings concrete administrative aspirations: "Please sir, the salaries of 13 ASN of Sarolangun Jambi Regency have not been disbursed..." This problem definition avoidance strategy is not a coincidence — by not defining the problem, the figure remains outside the problematic realm and does not become a target of blame attribution. This is consistent with Marland's (2016) brand command.

Causal Diagnosis (11 units, 15.7%) — typical pattern: causes attributed to systems/policies, rarely to personal figures. The audience consistently avoids personal blame attribution to Teddy. As Suchman (1995) explains about strategic legitimacy: the actors who manage to maintain legitimacy are those who are able to separate themselves from structural failures while associating themselves with collective achievements.

Moral Evaluation (15 units, 21.4%) was dominated by positive evaluations of personal character — not policies. In the full dataset, 73.1% of moral evaluations were positive. This is the core mechanism of capital conversion: military capital is converted into positive moral estimates via audience evaluation (Bourdieu, 1991). The quote describes: "the handsome caveat admits Major Tedy is more handsome" (1,665 likes); "The aura is very authoritative... Mr. Prabowo did not choose the wrong one" (4,012 likes).

Treatment Recommendation (19 units, 27.1%) was the dominant frame with the highest engagement (mean 757 likes, exceeding the moral evaluation of 481). The pattern includes prayers, career support, and political projections: "the service has a lot of capital for 2029" (1,417 likes). This reveals a key phenomenon: audiences give virtual mandates without an electoral mechanism.

Figure 4.4 Average engagement per framing dimension. Treatment recommendations have the highest engagement.

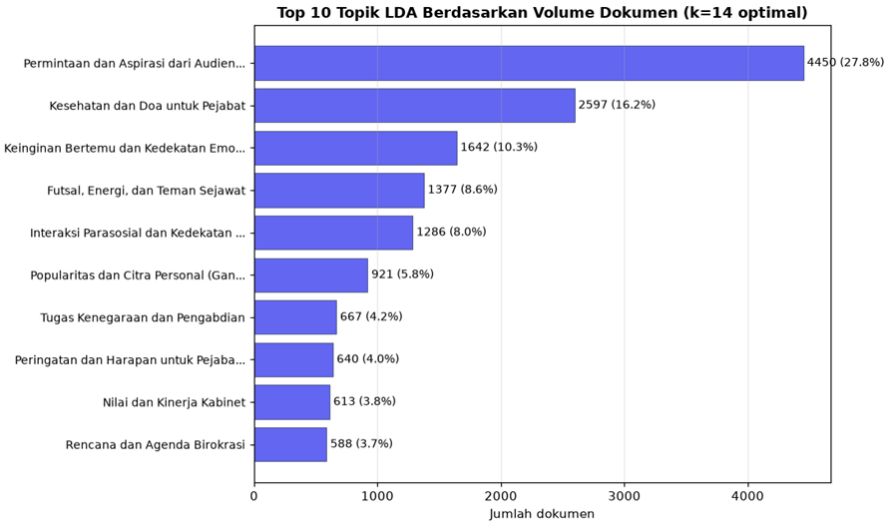


Data Source & Analysis: Calculated average audience engagement (likes / interactions) categorized by Entman's framing dimensions across the post and comment data.

3. Parasocial Political Relations

LDA analysis (k=14 optimal via coherence c_v=0.4602) reveals two thematic poles: formal-institutional and personal-parasocial. Dominant topics: Audience Requests and Aspirations (27.8%), Health/Prayers for Officials (16.2%), Desire to Meet/Emotional Closeness (10.3%), Parasocial Interaction (8.0%). The parasocial pole accounts for >60% of the corpus.

Figure 4.5 Top 10 LDA topics by document volume.



Data Source & Analysis: Topic modeling extraction results using the Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) method applied to the audience comment corpus.

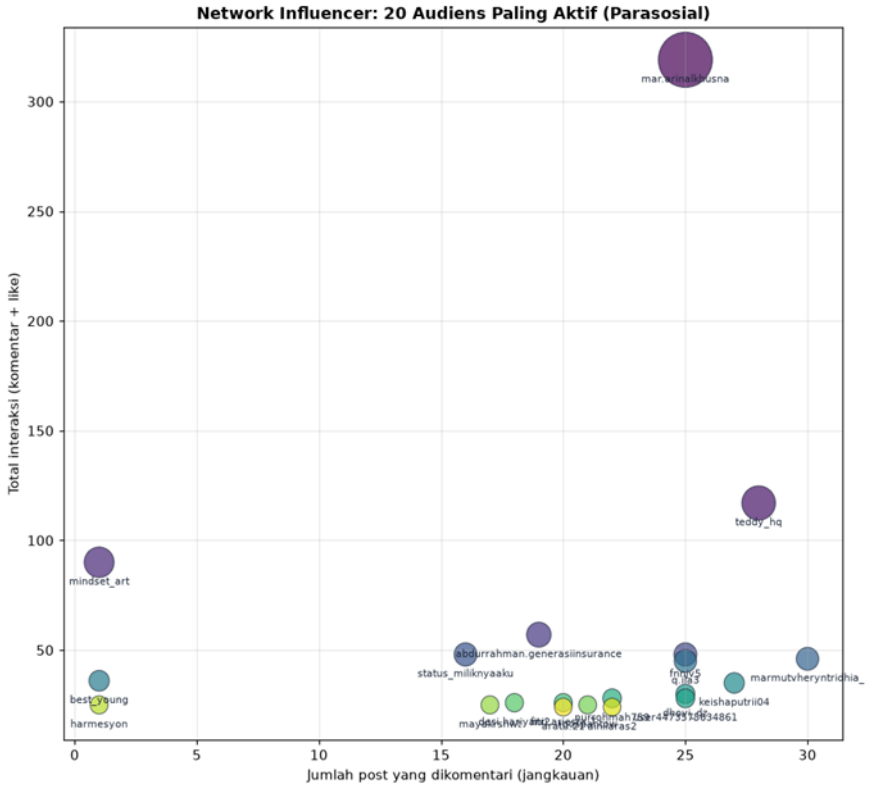
The dominance of the parasocial pole confirms Horton and Wohl's (1956) concept of parasocial relationships which in the digital era has been revitalized. Delli Carpini

and Williams (2001) developed it into the political domain. In Teddy's case, political parasocial work is intense because non-electoral officials are not constrained by the climate of electoral competition—the emotional support base is formed organically. Konde.co (2024) identifies the phenomenon of "madness on Teddy" as a form of idolization of the military on social media, and the academic paper Dedees, Kania, & Suharyanti (2024) provides a feminist perspective on gender dynamics in idolization based on the physical appearance of military officials.

4. Algorithmic Amplification

Network analysis confirms algorithmic amplification. Bipartite author-post network: 13,006 nodes, 16,895 edges. TikTok's parasocial reply network: 2,920 nodes, 2,972 edges. Centrality rankings reveal influencers are not celebrities or paid buzzers, but rather commonly active accounts — organic micro-influencers (e.g., @marmutvheryntridhia_ 46 comments on 30 posts). This pattern is fundamentally different from the influencer network of electoral politicians who generally pay endorsements (Larsson, 2016).

Figure 4.6 Distribution of the 20 most active audiences. Fan clubs are organic, not paid buzzers.



Data Source & Analysis: Digital Network Analysis (bipartite author-post network) mapping the reach and total interactions of the 20 most active organic audience accounts.

Gonzalez-Bailon (2017) and Pariser (2011) remind that echo chambers and filter bubbles artificially reinforce legitimacy. However, the relatively balanced distribution of sentiment (30.9% negative) shows that the bubble filter is not completely hermetic. The case of Tribunnews (2026) about the hoax issue "Teddy was slapped by

Pangkopassus" shows that the information ecosystem around Teddy's figure also contains misinformation that tests the resilience of legitimacy.

5. Communication Gatekeeping (A New Dimension of Video Analytics)

Analysis of political interview transcripts (Tempodotco, 2026) reveals a dimension of PROCESS that is not captured on social media: Teddy's role as a gatekeeper of access to the President.

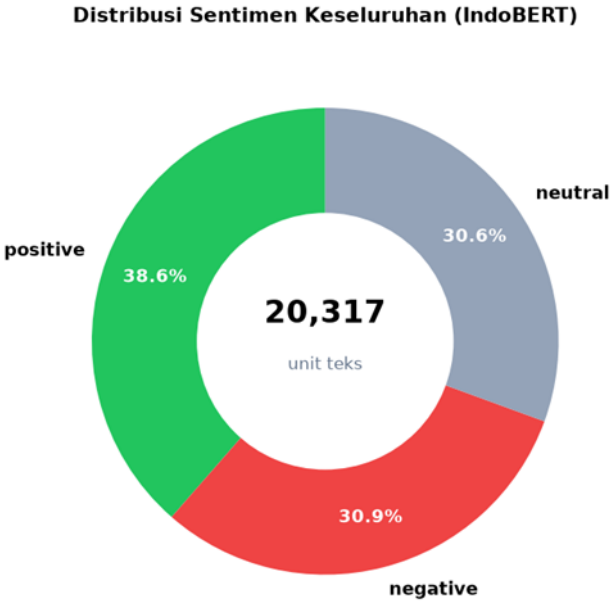
"All officials or people who want to meet with the President for any business are always through Teddy Indra Wijaya... The entrance is almost the only one." (Tempodotco, Political Leaks, 2026)

The transcript reveals Teddy filtering out who can access the President, with a concrete impact on the 12% VAT case and Trump's tariff negotiations. This is a fundamental finding: the symbolic legitimacy formed in social media correlates with Teddy's structural position as a controller of the flow of information. This gatekeeping dimension becomes an additional PROCESS component that enriches the DBB model.

OUTPUT: The Formation of Symbolic Legitimacy Without Elections

The convergence of the five mechanisms of the PROCESS results in the OUTPUT of the DBB model — symbolic legitimacy without an electoral mandate. Three measurable indicators confirm the formation of this output.

Figure 4.7 Overall sentiment distribution. Positive dominant (38.6%) — the emotional basis of legitimacy.



Data Source & Analysis: Automated sentiment classification outputs generated by the IndoBERT model across the complete dataset (20,317 text units).

First, positive moral evaluation (73.1% on the moral evaluation dimension) — the audience evaluates the personal character of the official affirmatively, not his policies. This is the core of Bourdieu's capital conversion mechanism: military capital is converted into moral capital.

Second, a virtual mandate via treatment recommendation — the recommendation frame includes a political projection of 2029 ("the service has a lot of capital for 2029"), military career support ("general"), and a prayer for success. The audience provides political support without a formal mechanism of election — the essence of symbolic legitimacy without elections.

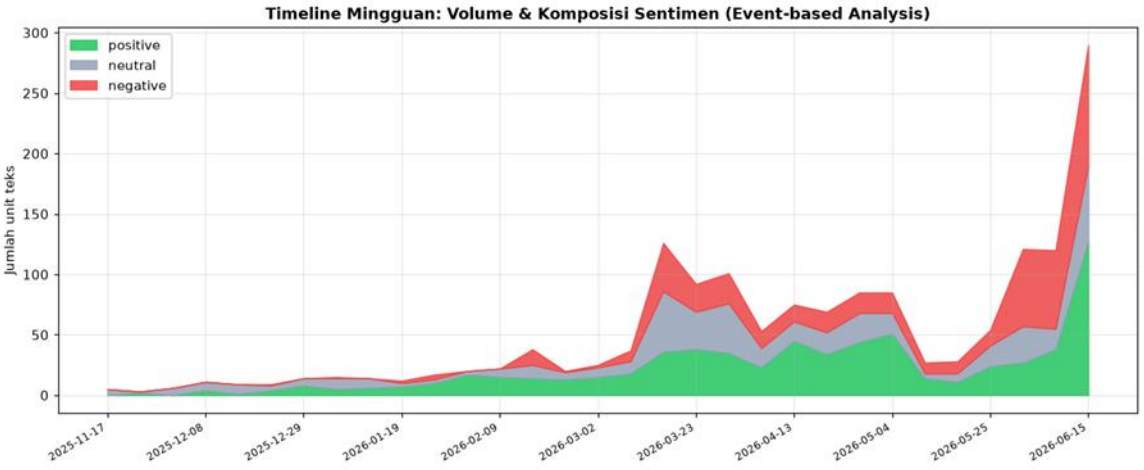
Third, the parasocial relationship that treats officials as personal-informal figures — the audience treats Teddy not as a formal bureaucratic actor, but as an emotionally close figure (friend, brother, idol). Weber (1978) conceptualized this as a charismatic authority based on follower recognition, rather than a formal electoral procedure.

The context of mass media news enriches the understanding of OUTPUT. The mainstream media (Kompas, CNN Indonesia, Detik.com) use an administrative-formal frame that places Teddy as a performance official, while independent media (Project Multatuli) uses a critical frame that criticizes information control practices. This news validates that Teddy's symbolic legitimacy does not only operate in the digital space but also in the journalistic space.

TRIANGULATION: Validation via Secondary Data

Triangulation of data sources confirms and enriches the findings of the three components of the DBB model. Three main convergences: First, the INPUT component is validated via captions (military capital & loyalty), TVRI press statements (competency capital), and media reports (Kopassus background, relationship with Prabowo). Second, the PROCESS component is validated via social media analysis (parasocial framing), mass media reporting (administrative-critical framing), and YouTube video content (gatekeeping framing). Third, the OUTPUT component is validated via positive moral evaluation (social media), institutional recognition (mass media), and positive views/comments (YouTube videos).

Figure 4.8 Weekly timeline of volume & composition of sentiment. Temporal patterns are an indicator of legitimacy stability throughout the observation period.



Data Source & Analysis: Event-based temporal analysis measuring fluctuations in post/comment volume and sentiment trends week-by-week throughout the observation window (November 2025–June 2026).

The triangulation synthesis shows that the phenomenon of the "Teddy Effect" is not just a social media phenomenon, but a multidimensional political communication phenomenon that involves the construction of images in various spaces — digital, journalistic, and audiovisual. PinterPolitik (2025) deepens with the concept of "auto damage" — a phenomenon in which visual impressions attract officials like Teddy to create a "halo effect" and the illusion of competence. Detik.com (2025) reported that the spotlight of PDIP legislators on Teddy's "unusual" promotion, shows that symbolic legitimacy is not overshadowed by formal political contestation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the triangulation of 20,317 units of social media text, mass media news reports, and YouTube video content, this study answers the research question: symbolic legitimacy is formed through a systematic three-stage flow as explained by the Digital Bureaucratic Branding (DBB) model. First (INPUT), non-electoral officials convert three types of symbolic capital—military capital, loyalty capital, and competency capital—into the initial basis of digital imagery. The combination of these three capitals is rare and mutually reinforcing (Bourdieu, 1991). Analysis of official account captions confirms that 7% of posts explicitly contain military capital elements, 21% contain loyalty capital elements, and competency capital is visualized through concrete performance narratives in audiovisual content. These three types of symbolic capital interact to form the foundation of initial legitimacy, providing a distinct advantage for non-electoral officials in the digital public sphere.

Second (PROCESS), five mechanisms work simultaneously to convert capital into image: (a) digital self-presentation with a neutral-diplomatic narrative strategy (Goffman, 1959), as evidenced by the dominance of neutral sentiment (57.9%) in official captions compared to more emotionally polarized audience comments; (b) Entman's framing which is dominated by treatment recommendation (virtual mandate) and positive moral evaluation (conversion of capital to moral estimation), with 73.1% of moral evaluations being positive; (c) intense political parasocial relations (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Delli Carpini & Williams, 2001), where the parasocial pole accounts for more than 60% of the LDA corpus; (d) algorithmic amplification that amplifies parasocial narratives through organic micro-influencer networks; and (e) communication gatekeeping which becomes a new dimension as a result of secondary data integration, revealing the official's structural position as a controller of information flow to the President. These five mechanisms operate simultaneously and synergistically, transforming symbolic capital into a coherent and compelling digital image.

Third (OUTPUT), symbolic legitimacy is formed without an election mechanism, indicated by three measurable indicators: positive moral evaluation of the character of officials (73.1% positive on the moral evaluation dimension), virtual mandates via 2029 political projections in the treatment recommendation frame, and parasocial relationships that treat officials as personal figures. Weber (1978) conceptualized this as charismatic authority based on follower recognition, rather than formal procedure. The convergence of these three indicators confirms that the "Teddy Effect" is not merely a social media phenomenon but a multidimensional political communication phenomenon involving image construction across digital, journalistic, and audiovisual spaces. The triangulation synthesis demonstrates that

symbolic legitimacy without electoral mandate is empirically observable and measurable through computational and qualitative methods.

For future research, several directions are recommended to extend and validate the DBB model. First, subsequent studies should expand the scope of analysis to include other non-electoral officials at various levels of government to test the generalizability of the DBB model across different institutional contexts and military-civilian transitions. Second, cross-national comparative studies are needed to understand whether similar phenomena occur in different political contexts, particularly in countries with varying degrees of democratic consolidation and military-political relations. Third, longitudinal research could explore the long-term implications of symbolic legitimacy without electoral mandates on democratic quality and public accountability, examining whether such legitimacy translates into actual political influence or remains confined to the digital sphere. Fourth, research employing digital ethnography approaches could provide deeper understanding of audience experiences and motivations in building parasocial relationships with non-electoral officials, revealing the micro-dynamics of digital legitimacy formation. Finally, investigations into institutional responses to this phenomenon—including public communication policies and digital bureaucratic ethics—represent an important agenda for maintaining governmental integrity in the digital age. Such research would contribute to the development of normative frameworks for digital political communication that balance the benefits of public engagement with the principles of democratic accountability.

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