

## **PARTY SWITCHING PHENOMENON SEEN FROM LEADERSHIP AS A TRIGGER FACTOR**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this research is the behavior of cadres who change parties often occurs in the political world, both at the grassroots level to the party elite. For political parties, losing the best cadres will have the potential to disrupt party stability. Thus, political parties must take anticipatory steps to prevent any party switching done by cadres. The purpose of the study was to identify the triggering factors for the movement of political party cadres in East Java to other parties in terms of leadership. This type of research is qualitative research with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through interviews with political party cadres who served as DPRD members in East Java who had changed parties as research informants. The data were then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model method. Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that leadership in political parties, in general, is a factor behind the movement of political parties to members of DPRD in East Java Province.*

*Keywords: Political parties, political switching, leadership*

### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji perilaku kader yang berpindah partai kerap terjadi dalam dunia politik, baik di tingkat akar rumput hingga kalangan elit partai. Bagi partai politik, kehilangan kader terbaik akan berpotensi mengganggu stabilitas partai, sehingga perlu bagi partai politik untuk membuat langkah-langkah antisipasi supaya tidak terjadi perpindahan kader ke partai politik lain. Tujuan dari penelitian untuk mengidentifikasi faktor pemicu perpindahan kader partai politik di Jawa Timur ke partai lain yang ditinjau dari kepemimpinan. Jenis penelitian merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara kepada kader-kader partai politik yang menjabat sebagai anggota DPRD di Jawa Timur yang pernah berpindah partai sebagai informan penelitian. Data selanjutnya dianalisis menggunakan metode model interaktif Miles dan Huberman. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian dapat disimpulkan bahwa kepemimpinan dalam partai politik secara umum merupakan salah satu faktor dibalik perpindahan partai politik anggota DPRD di Provinsi Jawa Timur.

Kata kunci: Partai politik, perpindahan kader, kepemimpinan.

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### INTRODUCTION

In winning the competition in the general election, the main means of political parties in achieving these goals is potential and qualified human resources. However, in reality, the performance of political parties has faded (damaged) in public perceptions due to the behavior of their members or cadres. One of which is switching parties (Sarjito & Sahrah, 2020) carried out by party cadres from the grassroots level to the level of political elites who have positions and influence (Faqih, 2018). The party switching carried out by political elites might have a negative impact on the parties left behind, for political party cadres who serve as members of the council are political elites who are able to influence people's political participation (Fadli *et al*, 2018). Party switching done by the political elite might trigger their followers to do the same thing, moving to the same party as the political elite they follow. Accordingly, this might have a negative impact on party stability, especially when it occurs before the election (Nida & Simarmata, 2014). The party switching done by party cadre is seen as an advantage for the new party, as it can increase the cadre's chance of winning the general election if it involves switching members of parliament to the more popular party in the proportional electoral system and the promise of higher list placements can also play a role. Party switching can also increase opportunities for advancing one's career through promotion to a higher position, for example, the assignment of more prominent committees in government (Tunkis, 2018). Party switching can be understood as a dynamic process that involves not only the individual's perception of the advantages or disadvantages accruing from leaving but also the perception of the benefits or costs of acting with a group. The decision to switch may be a personal decision, but observations show at least some amendments to the conventional argument that party switching is essentially an individual phenomenon (Heller & Mershon, 2009:30), seen as an internal factor causing cadre displacement.

One of the triggers for members of political parties to decide to change the party is the leadership factor (Mitonga-Monga, 2020; Shrestha & Mishra, 2011; Zahra, 2015; Gulluce, Kaygin, Kafadar, & Atay, 2016; Porter, 2015). A previous study conducted by Schumacher and Giger (2017) found a positive and significant effect on leadership dominance. Thus, the more parties are dominated by leadership, the more party members will tend to change. The lack of member commitment shown in the phenomenon of the movement of members from one party to another has disrupted the stability of political parties. In the modern era, the situation changes rapidly, requiring a fast adaptation process as well. Accordingly, the party needs to be ready to face change. Likewise, even large parties need to carry out internal reforms to increase party stability (Budiharto & Koentjoro, 2004). In this case, the role of the leader becomes important, because the leader functions to ensure goals and values, determine direction, create community, and regulate change (Allio, 2013).

The movement of political party cadres has also occurred in East Java Province. Many political party elites have complained about the transfer of their cadres to other parties, including party cadres who have become members of the council. As information obtained from the website of East Java Regional People's Representative Council (2013), the Bar Board of the East Java Regional People's Representative Council conducted consultations with the Minister of Home Affairs and Bar Board of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia related to the phenomenon of

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politicians party switching, one of which is the party switching happened in Sampang Regional People's Representative Council. It was revealed that many members of the council suddenly changed to another party during a meeting with the local Bar Board. The Deputy Chair of the Bar Board of East Java Regional People's Representative Council added that what needs to be further questioned is who the members of the council sitting in parliament represent if they have changed to switch to another political party. Likewise, which community group represented by the person concerned during a recess needs to be further investigated, since the political party that carries it has been crossed out of the electoral region where the member of the council was elected. Naturally, this might be detrimental to state finances. Considering that the person concerned is no longer registered as a member of the council since he has left the political party that assigned him.

Based on the background review above, the formulation of the research problem is "What is the picture of the transfer of political parties to members of the East Java Regional People's Representative Council in terms of leadership?" Previous studies on the phenomenon of party switching have been carried out by several previous researchers. A study conducted by Astrika (2013) mentioned that self-actualization, increased political career, recognition and respect (humanized) as a member of a political party, better social status, fostering relationship with fellow party members and with their party, and the need for a sense of comfort and security not found in the previous party influenced the attitude of members of political parties about party switching. Delza and Sahrah (2021) found that the factors for leaving members were career development problems, social jealousy, the inability of members to see career opportunities, lack of understanding in carrying out their duties and authority, and the lack of opportunities for candidacy. Another study carried out by Sarjito and Sahrah (2020) concluded that party switching done by members of a political party was due to the difficulty of obtaining promotion opportunities since careers or opportunities to get positions were still very limited because each position mutation is done once in 5 (five) years. A similar study was also conducted by Nida and Simarmata (2014) who found that the party switching by political elites before the general election affected party instability. This phenomenon is related to the low organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior of party functionaries. By being committed to the organization, party functionaries can identify themselves with their duties and goals and are loyal to the organization. This then makes the functionaries able to bring up organizational citizenship behavior.

However, there are no previous studies that have examined party switching in terms of leadership and previous studies had only focused on partisans and party functionaries as research subjects. Council members are political elites who have positions in government agencies and can have a major influence on people's political participation. Thus, if members of the political elite decide to change their party, the level of community support will also move to a new party. Unlike the case with partisan members and functionaries, whether or not the decision to change party can affect people's political participation. Based on the background elaborated above, this study aims to describe the factors that trigger the party switching done by political party cadres in East Java Province in terms of leadership.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Party Switching**

Since several decades ago, political party scientists have begun to pay attention to the problem of party switching by politicians. Scientists see that the biggest motivation for a politician to change political parties is to pursue his or her personal ambitions. When a person is unable to achieve his ambition in a political party, this might be a motivation for him to move to another party. Another thing that may be similar is when someone thinks that the party he is currently following is not the right party to achieve his big ambitions beyond the capacity of his party to realize his ambitions (Armunanto. A. A., 2016). This assumption is also reinforced by the results of a study conducted by Astrika (2009). In her study, it was found that subjective attitudes and norms possessed might be the biggest motivation for a politician to switch political party. According to her, the perception of the expectations of certain individuals or certain groups of themselves (normative belief) and individual motivation to meet these expectations (motivation to comply) will encourage a politician to switch party. Aldrich and Bianco (1992) suggest that three things allow people to pursue their personal ambitions by changing political party, namely vacancies in the party, access to party policies, and electoral benefits.

The same thing was stated by Desposato (2006) who consider that the movement of politicians from one party to another was a product of strategic behavior. Desposato further stated that party switching is the result of a cost and benefit calculation carried out by a politician. Meanwhile, Kato and Yamamoto (2008) considered that the movement of a person from one party to another, cannot be separated from the influence of political incentives and limitations in the institutional environment. Political incentives are often predicted to be one of the factors that trigger strategic political behavior, while limitations in the institutional environment are often seen as obstacles for politicians to create political incentives.

From the description of some of the research findings above, it can be shown that there are two major categories. First, the main factor for people changing party is the ambition of political actors to get greater benefits in their political activities. Second, the institutional factors include the limitations of party institutions, strong political competition in institutions, and weak political incentives.

### **Leadership**

Leadership is a process of one's activities to move others by leading, guiding, and influencing others to do something in order to achieve the expected results (Sutrisno, 2014:213). Bickes & Yilmaz (2020) define leadership as determining the path to be followed by a group, leading the group to achieve a goal, and having the skills needed to mobilize followers using intrinsic motivation (Bickes & Yilmaz, 2020). Although the definition of leadership varies depending on the perspective used, several aspects are found in common (Vroom & Jago, 2007): Leadership is not something that belongs to an individual but a process. This process involves a special form of influence called motivation. The nature of intrinsic or extrinsic incentives is not part of the definition of leadership, but the main purpose of this influence is to create collaboration to achieve a

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common goal, "Extraordinary things" occur in the minds of leaders and followers. This does not have to be desired by all group members. Leaders have several main functions, namely ensuring goals and values, determining direction, creating community, and managing change (Allio, 2013), therefore, the role of leaders in groups becomes important.

Political leadership can be understood in three perspectives, namely leadership as a pattern of behavior, leadership as a personal quality, and leadership as a political value. As a pattern of behavior, leadership is closely related to the ability to influence others in pursuing the desired goals. Influence is the essential term. Leadership is linked to charisma as a human trait. Meanwhile, leadership is linked to the ability to mobilize others with moral authority or ideological ideas as a political value (Budiatri *et al.*, 2018). Dynamics in the world of politics are always changing. A leader cannot stop changes that occur inside or outside the organization he leads in order to win the competition. Nowadays, leaders are obliged to have skills that are adaptive to changes inside or outside the organization they lead (Budiharto & Koentjoro, 2004). The leadership of a leader must follow the state of the organizational environment. Organizations that can survive these rapid changes must have leaders who can balance internal changes with changes outside the organization (Tennenbaum & Schmidt, 2008).

## **METHOD**

This study is qualitative research with a descriptive approach, research that describes the current state of the object of research as it is based on the facts (Moleong, 2017:6). This study aims to describe the factors that trigger party switching done by members of the East Java Regional People's Representative Council in terms of leadership. This study involved 12 (twelve) cadres of political parties who served as members of the East Java Regional People's Representative Council who had done party switching. Data were collected using interview techniques based on interview guidelines that had been prepared as research instruments. The validity of the data was tested using the triangulation method. The data collected were then processed using an interactive analysis model by Miles and Huberman. The stages of this analysis model include collecting data, reducing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusions/verification (Sugiyono, 2017:133).

## **RESULT**

### **Impact of Cadre Party Switching**

A perspective on the displacement of political party cadres in terms of leadership was obtained based on the results of interviews. The findings based on interviews given by the informants in this study in general state that the phenomenon of the party switching done by party members is a common and classic phenomenon that occurs in the political world, especially before the nomination event in the general election. As mentioned by several informants in the interviews as follows:

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*“The phenomenon of the party switching of members is not new or taboo since it involves the person of the political party itself. This phenomenon is a common thing that occurs in political parties.”* (HS, May 19, 2021).

*“Currently, it is normal for members to move from one party to another, because party switching often happens recently.”* (BG, May 19, 2021)

*“It is common for party members to move (to another party) for certain reasons, such as differences in principle with other members.”* (LA, May 21, 2021)

The informants agreed that the party that is left by the cadres will bear the negative impact, especially if the party switching is carried out by a figure who is considered strong. The supporting cadres might follow to move to another party. Another impact is the reduction in some structures that gain votes, such as the number of voters, constituents, sympathizers, supports, and members. The explanation above refers to the opinions of the following 3 informants:

*“The party left will suffer a loss in vote acquisition, especially if the party switching was done before the election and carried out by a strong figure in that party because the party switching might be followed by several cadres who have good relations. Thus, the party left behind will be disadvantaged.”* (HS, May 19, 2021)

*“There must be a loss for the party left because the party has lost some structures to gain votes.”* (RK, May 20, 2021)

*“Accordingly, it has an impact such as a decrease in support and a decrease in party members.”* (LA, May 21, 2021)

The impact experienced by political parties when there is a transfer of cadres in the party body as research findings by Nida & Simarmata (2014) states that the presence of party switching done by members affects the instability of the political party concerned. The party switching that occurs within the party's internal body will make the party lose voter support from the cadres who move and it is necessary to adapt in the form of adjustments to the functionary structure of the party due to the loss of functionaries in certain positions and the need for time to fill these positions. Moreover, the factor of damage to the formation of the pattern of regeneration is also a negative effect of the many cadres who do party switching. The loss for the movement is not only experienced by the party but also by individuals who carry out party switching related to the integrity and loyalty of functionaries to the party in the eyes of the community. This study supports a previous study conducted by Fadli *et al*, (2018) stated that the party switching carried out by political elites can have a negative impact on the party left behind, for political party cadres who serve as members of the council are political elites who are able to influence public political participation.

#### **Leadership as a factor triggering party switching**

Furthermore, the results of interviews on the picture of leadership as a factor behind the movement of political party cadres can be explained as follows:

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*"Well, there are policies carried out by other structures that I expect them too high, especially those carried out by leaders or those on a higher position, but not those at the top of the leadership. The previous leader was quite dictatorial in leading. It was not following with what was expected to be able to lead the party."* (HS, May 19, 2021)

*"It was uncomfortable because the board at that time was too authoritarian, arbitrarily self-serving, and not in harmony. It made me uncomfortable since my leader at that time in United Development Party was not following the party's Memorandum of Association/Articles of Association. The party's Memorandum of Association/Articles of Association should be based on Islam. It is different from nationalism. Thus, I do not agree with that."* (SB, May 21, 2021)

*"Well, since I feel that the previous party leadership was less democratic."* (LA, May 21, 2021)

Based on the results of interviews with informants, it was found that leadership was one of the factors behind party switching. The leadership in the previous party did not match the expectations of the cadres. The leader in the previous party was more likely to be dictatorial, less democratic, authoritarian, and more concerned with his cronies (close friends) than others. The findings of this study support Webb and Bale (2021) who suggest that some people decide to leave one party and join another because of the party leader. If people feel they are aligned with a particular party in terms of its core values and leaders, they are naturally drawn to joining it. However, they are equally likely to end up leaving the same party if they feel the leadership has changed tactics and is becoming more distant. Another study by Rakner *et al.* (2021) mentions that party leaders have incentives to increase the competitiveness of their party by recruiting candidates who can fund their own campaigns as much as possible. To compensate for their own party institutional weaknesses, party leaders will tend to encourage defection among candidates who already have the financial resources to independently pay the costs associated with mobilizing voters, including vote-buying. Party leaders themselves will specifically encourage party switching among candidates with the necessary financial resources for the campaign. Members of political parties have various reasons that encourage the intention to party switching. When members of a political party feel that their political party cannot achieve the goals they want, they will be disappointed with the party. Therefore, it will support the intention of members of the political party to find a new party that can fulfill their wishes (Astrika, 2013).

In the modern era, the situation changes rapidly which requires a fast adaptation process as well. The party needs to be ready to face change. Likewise, even large parties need to carry out internal reforms to increase party stability (Budiharto & Koentjoro, 2004). In this case, the role of the leader becomes important, because the leader functions to ensure goals and values, determine direction, create community, and regulate change (Allio, 2013). The type of leader that political party cadres dream of who decides to move to another party is revealed from the following interview results:

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*"A good leader is an accommodative, receptive to input, democratic, loyal, and generous leader. Therefore, I move (to another party) solely because a policy-making person in a structure (of the previous party) did not match my character. What I want is that the leader can supervise those who are being led, can accept input from those who are led, and not be dictatorial." (HS, May 19, 2021)*

*"In terms of leadership issue, I expect a leader who is willing to implement the Memorandum of Association/Articles of Association because Memorandum of Association/Articles of Association regulates all party rules. In the previous party, the leadership did not match what we wanted. Ideally, the leadership should comply with the Memorandum of Association/Articles of Association made by the party itself. The leadership of the party should follow the Memorandum of Association/Articles of Association." (SB, May 21, 2021)*

*"The proper leadership is transparent leadership and also has a leadership and democratic spirit." (BG, May 19, 2021)*

*"A good leader is a democratic and aspirational leader." (RK, May 20, 2021)*

*"The leadership should be democratic and transparent to the members of the party." (LA, May 21, 2021)*

According to the interview excerpt above, the leader of a party should be democratic and aspirational to be able to accommodate the opinions of its members and obeys party regulations such as the Memorandum of Association/Articles of Association. Democratic leaders have the ability to carry out democratization within their political parties, including the rights of party members, representation of various elements in the party, the election of central level party management, institutionalization of democratic principles and procedures in party management, the democratization of party financial resources, party transparency and accountability, party relations with party factions in the legislature, the autonomy of regional party administrators, the authority of branch administrators in regional elections, and the role of central-level parties in national elections (Surbakti and Supriyanto 2013).

Furthermore, the leader in the desired political party must also be transparent regarding all informants in the organization. Nothing should be covered up when it comes to common interests because all members have the right to obtain complete and valid information. Law Number 14 of 2008 on Public Information Disclosure Article 1 number 1 defines information as statements, ideas, and signs that contain values, meanings, and messages, both data, facts, and explanations that can be seen, heard, and read presented in various means and format following the development of information and communication technology electronically and non-electronically. This demand for transparency or disclosure of information serves to guarantee the right of everyone to obtain information. Through transparency, good governance will be created as one of the prerequisites for the realization of true democracy.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings are based on the results of interviews that the phenomenon of party switching is a common and classic phenomenon that occurs in the political world, especially before the nomination event in the general election. The party left by the cadre will bear the negative impact, especially if the party switching is carried out by a figure who is considered strong, the supporting cadre might follow. Another impact is the reduction in some structures that gain votes, such as the number of voters, constituents, sympathizers, supports, and members. The rise of party switching carried out by members of the political elite, namely members of the East Java Regional People's Representative Council cannot be separated from the leadership factor as the trigger. It was found that the leadership in the previous party did not meet the expectations of cadres. The leader in the previous party was more likely to be dictatorial, less democratic, authoritarian, and more concerned with its cronies (close friends) than others. The leaders that political party cadres who decide to do party switching dream of are leaders who have democratic and aspirational characteristics. Thus, they are able to accommodate the opinions of their members, comply with party regulations, and must be transparent regarding all information in the organization.

Further researchers are suggested to deepen the review related to the reasons for the party switching. Then, further researchers should be able to use different research objects, because each political party in a certain area has different characteristics. Moreover, further research is needed to further expand the review on the factors behind party switching done by political cadres other than leadership, such as political behavior, electability, political ambition, and so on. Political parties are suggested to develop strategies to minimize members' party switching, for example by establishing good communication between fellow party members and leaders with party members, as well as holding routine activities involving members of political parties, and providing opportunities for political party members to express their aspirations in terms of preparation of work program.

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