

Leaders in disguise: power, perception, and paradox – economics and the fragile authority of politicians

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Abstract. *In the context of political leadership, this paper investigates the psychological phenomena of the Dunning-Kruger Effect (DKE) and Impostor Syndrome. It examines the impact of these two cognitive fallacies on the performance, decision-making, and behaviour of politicians. DKE causes less competent politicians to exaggerate their abilities, frequently resulting in poor decision-making and policy errors, while Impostor Syndrome causes highly competent politicians to doubt their abilities, attributing their success to external factors. The paper also explores the implications of these phenomena for political communication, leadership, and governance, particularly in environments that are characterized by high public scrutiny and media pressure. It also investigates the ways in which these cognitive prejudices can be amplified by political marketing and digital platforms, thereby affecting electoral outcomes and voter behaviour. Ultimately, the research underscores the necessity of political leaders exhibiting a higher degree of humility and self-awareness to promote more effective decision-making and governance.*

Keywords: impostor syndrome, Dunning-Kruger Effect, political leadership, governance, cognitive biases, political marketing.

JEL Classification: D72, D91, M12, Z13, I31.

1. Introduction

Impostor syndrome is characterized by a persistent internalized sense of self-doubt, inadequacy, or fraudulence, despite obvious evidence of success and competence (Clance, Imes, 1978). Those who suffer from impostor syndrome oftentimes attribute their accomplishments to external factors, such as luck, timing, or the assistance of others, rather than to their own abilities or efforts. This phenomenon is characterized by a substantial discrepancy between personal perception and objective reality, which results in anxiety and an unease of being "discovered."

Although not classified as a psychological disorder, impostor syndrome is acknowledged as a prevalent issue that can have a detrimental effect on an individual's mental health, career advancement, and overall well-being. It is typically associated with perfectionism, a fear of failure, and the tendency to set overly high rigid expectations. These patterns can result in overworking, a reluctance to pursue new opportunities, and difficulties with accepting success as part of their effort (Vergauwe et al., 2015).

The impostor syndrome has a multifaceted origin, including personal, social, and environmental factors. Early life experiences with inconsistent or excessively critical feedback, for example, may result in self-doubt. Similarly, these emotions may be worsened by environments that prioritize competition or unrealistic expectations (Matthews, Clance, 1985). Impostor tendencies are further exacerbated in organizational contexts by high-pressure roles and an absence of constructive feedback.

They might overlook or downplay the results as exceptions rather than indicators of genuine ability, even when presented with clear evidence of their abilities, such as positive feedback or successful results.

They may feel guilty for achieving success, believe they do not deserve it, or avoid new challenges to prevent potential failure to compensate for perceived inadequacies (Vergauwe et al., 2015).

2. The Dunning-Kruger Effect (DKE)

In 1999, psychologists David Dunning and Justin Kruger introduced the Dunning-Kruger Effect (DKE), a cognitive bias in which individuals who lack or have low competence in a specific area overestimate their abilities. These individuals lack the metacognitive awareness required to realize their inadequacies, limited knowledge and skill, resulting in overestimation. The situation reveals two issues: the incapacity to perform successfully and the inability for recognizing mistakes, lack of skill and knowledge.

The effect highlights the difficulty of self-evaluation, since individuals with insufficient expertise often assume their performance is substantially higher than it is. In contrast, the same lack of metacognitive skill also prevents these individuals from appreciating the higher levels of competency in others (Kruger, Dunning, 1999). Consequently, they may possess an overinflated sense of self-assurance in their capabilities, which may result in incorrect behaviours and decision-making.

The multifaceted psychological mix of DKE and Impostor Syndrome

Impostor syndrome and the Dunning-Kruger Effect (DKE) are psychological phenomena that reflect the opposite ends of the competence-perception spectrum. While impostor syndrome is defined by highly competent people who underestimate their talents and fear being discovered as frauds, DKE depicts the cognitive bias where individuals who exhibit low competence overestimate their abilities (Dunning, Kruger, 1999; Clance, Imes, 1978). Though they show out in different ways, both phenomena have their roots in the connection between one's impression of oneself and one's real abilities.

The Dunning-Kruger Effect happens when individuals with low skill levels are unable to evaluate their own performance accurately due to a lack of metacognitive ability. This "double burden" means that in addition to performing poorly, individuals are also unable to identify their knowledge or ability deficiencies. Because of this, individuals could be overconfident and have inflated opinions of themselves, thinking they are more capable than they are. For example, someone with minimal knowledge in a field might think they are an expert due to their inability to grasp and scale the complexity of the subject (Kruger, Dunning, 1999). Impostor syndrome, on the other hand, affects highly competent individuals who are unable to internalize their accomplishments and frequently attribute their success to outside influences such as luck or the assistance of others. Even in situations where their abilities are well proved, this results in persistent self-doubt and an ongoing fear of being perceived as insufficient or incompetent (Clance, Imes, 1978). Unlike DKE, impostor syndrome is caused by an overwhelming recognition of weaknesses paired with excessive expectations of rigid perfectionism. Despite their differences, these phenomena both draw attention to the difficulties of an accurately self-evaluation.

3. Governing with politicians influenced by DKE and Impostor Syndrome

Although it is often studied in relation to individual performance, its influence on political leaders is especially interesting. In the face of significant public scrutiny, politicians are expected to display authority and decisiveness. However, individuals who are experiencing impostor syndrome may find themselves doubting their leadership capabilities, even though their professional experience and track record indicates their competence. This phenomenon has significant implications for governance, decision-making, and public trust in leadership.

Confidence, charm, and the ability to make quick decisions are all essential components of leadership in politics. Impostor syndrome undermines these characteristics by inducing a persistent worry of being perceived as unqualified. Impostor syndrome-affected politicians may exhibit characteristics, including risk aversion, overcompensation, or decision paralysis, that are indicators of this internal conflict. To prevent possible failure, they could be reluctant to implement daring initiatives, choosing instead to go with safer, more conventional options. While it's a result of self-doubt, this cautious approach may limit innovation in governance and slow advancement on significant issues (Bravata et al., 2020).

Furthermore, a politician's communication style may be impacted by imposter syndrome. Debates, newspaper appearances, and public speaking are all essential components of political life. Leaders who experience imposter syndrome might over-plan and overprepare for these occasions out of concern that they won't be able to live up to expectations. While retaining factual accuracy, this over-preparation might decrease the relatability and spontaneity needed for successful public involvement (Cokley et al., 2018). Moreover, emotional pressure brought on by the effort to uphold a façade of confidence may eventually lead to burnout or an overall drop in political performance over time.

Effective governance requires informed, confident decision-making. Politicians who experience imposter syndrome may second-guess their decisions, postpone crucial actions, or rely heavily on consultants to confirm and validate their choices. For example, in crises such as public health emergencies or economic downturns, hesitancy or over consultation can have a meaningful impact on response time and efficacy. The fear of making mistakes, driven by self-perceived inadequacy, has the potential to compromise the decisiveness demanded of political leaders (Vergauwe et al. 2015).

Furthermore, imposter syndrome may interfere and disrupt delegation within political structures. Leaders who feel undeserving of their position may avoid delegating critical responsibilities to subordinates, believing that doing so may reveal their perceived inadequacies. This practice not only strains the leader, but it also inhibits collaborative governance, which relies on team involvement to address complex challenges (Matthews, Clance, 1985). As a result, these leaders may unintentionally centralize power, increasing their workload while reducing the efficiency and inventiveness of policymaking processes.

Campaigns are a breeding environment for imposter syndrome because they involve constant self-promotion, public scrutiny, and resilience when criticized. Politicians may mistrust their capacity to connect with voters or effectively communicate policy viewpoints. These uncertainties may show up as a hesitation to take chances during campaign planning or an avoidance of controversial but needed debates. The ongoing need to justify one's candidacy might intensify impostor emotions, particularly for candidates taking on high-profile roles for the first time (Clance, Imes 1978).

Furthermore, impostor syndrome could affect a politician's relationship with their constituency. A leader who doubts their legitimacy may find it difficult to connect with voters because of their perceived flaws. This reluctance may alienate supporters, especially in populist or grassroots campaigns where relatability and trust are critical.

Systemic and cultural factors within political environments frequently increase the prevalence of impostor syndrome among politicians. Hyper-competitive political structures that reward perfection and punish failure create ideal conditions for imposter syndrome to thrive. In such systems, leaders are required to be knowledgeable about a wide range of topics, from economic policy to international relations, leaving little margin for weakness or error. Media criticism contributes to the problem, since any display of uncertainty or self-doubt is frequently interpreted as weakness or incompetence (Cokley et al., 2018).

The reality of human fallibility might clash with society norms about leadership qualities like steadfast confidence and decisiveness. Politicians dealing with impostor syndrome may feel isolated since cultural norms prevent open conversations of self-doubt. Without support structures or procedures to manage these pressures, leaders may internalize their emotions, affecting their well-being, efficiency and performance.

Individuals with imposter syndrome often lack the courage to act with confidence or assertiveness, even if they possess the competence or qualifications required for success.

Dunning-Kruger Effect and the political class

In politics, where decisions have significant repercussions and leaders must frequently manage difficult, complex situations, the Dunning-Kruger Effect can have serious consequences. Politicians who are influenced by this cognitive bias may display unwarranted confidence in their decision-making, policy proposals, and leadership, which can frequently be detrimental to an effective governance.

Political systems often promote confidence and boldness, traits that may advance individuals with minimal competence to positions of power. The Dunning-Kruger Effect can cause leaders to overestimate their comprehension of complicated topics such as economic reform, healthcare policy, or foreign relations, resulting in simple solutions that fail to account for governance complexities (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). For example, a politician with a superficial understanding of climate science may advocate for policies based on insufficient or misunderstood facts, resulting in inefficient or counterproductive results.

This phenomenon may also illustrate itself in public communication and debates. Politicians with insufficient competence may express total assurance about their positions, leveraging their confidence to gain support from the public. Such behaviour may appeal to constituents who appreciate decisiveness, but it could damage long-term trust if policies fail to deliver on their promises. Additionally, the overconfidence that is often associated with DKE may lead politicians to disregard expert advice in favour of their own incorrect comprehension of complicated issues. This opposition to outside feedback has the potential to weaken the role of evidence-based policymaking, which is a key component of effective governance (Sheldon et al., 2014).

One of the most worrying features of the Dunning-Kruger Effect in politics is how it affects decision-making processes. Overconfident leaders might develop poorly informed policies, ignore to consider the unintended consequences of their decisions, or ignore the complexities of administrative execution. For example, economic strategies based on overly simplified tax reforms may ignore the intricacies of wealth distribution and fiscal stability, worsening rather than reducing social inequality (Krueger, Mueller, 2002).

DKE also has an impact on international affairs, as overconfidence in diplomatic capabilities or strategic planning can lead to poor judgment in negotiations or military actions. Leaders who overestimate their understanding of global dynamics may pursue

aggressive foreign policies without fully considering the implications and risks, thereby disrupting international relations and national security.

Overconfident politicians may undermine institutional checks and balances by viewing opposition or constructive criticism as obstacles rather than useful contributions. This dynamic has the potential to weaken democratic governance, as leaders inspired by DKE may consolidate power or disregard procedural standards, believing their judgment is superior.

The Dunning-Kruger Effect applies not only to governance, but also to electoral behaviour. During campaigns, candidates with minimal expertise may appeal to voters by proposing simple solutions to difficult, complex problems. Their overconfidence can appeal to constituents who appreciate clarity and decisiveness, even when such positions lack substantive grounding (Kruger, Dunning, 1999). This tendency is worsened by the rise of populist rhetoric, in which overly confident declarations are frequently seen as authenticity or strength, overshadowing the significance of expertise and deliberation.

The media's role also intensifies the Dunning-Kruger Effect in politics. In contrast, leaders who are overconfident often dominate public discourse, while those who are more measured or cautious may encounter difficulty in obtaining equal attention. This media dynamic strengthens the appeal of overconfident politicians, perpetuating a cycle in which confidence is rewarded over competence (Fischhoff, 1982). They are likely to prioritize content that is intended for virality, such as memes and short videos, which simplify complex concepts into digestible formats (Pariser, 2011).

Their provocative online behaviour may involve controversial statements that drive engagement by exploiting the preference of digital algorithms for emotionally charged content (Benkler, et al., 2018).

Political contexts can increase the Dunning-Kruger Effect by promoting overconfidence and penalizing perceived uncertainty. Leaders in many political systems are expected to exhibit unshakeable confidence, regardless of the complexity or uncertainty surrounding a given topic.

Additionally, the polarization of political discourse frequently reduces complex discussions to binary choices, thereby limiting the space for humility or uncertainty. Politicians who operate within this framework may be compelled to adopt excessively simplistic stances, which may further perpetuate the Dunning-Kruger Effect. The increasing reliance on social media as a means for political engagement has also contributed to this tendency, as platforms prefer bold, unqualified assertions over nuanced, evidence-based arguments.

4. Cognitive and emotional influence on voting

Humans possess finite cognitive resources, and intricate decisions—such as selecting political leaders—frequently necessitate the simplification of information. Cognitive heuristics, or mental shortcuts, are often used to facilitate the rapid formulation of decisions

without conducting a comprehensive analysis. Political marketers leverage and exploit these shortcuts. Heuristics enable individuals to make judgments effectively; nevertheless, they also render them vulnerable to simplified or deceitful narratives.

The decision-making process behind voting behaviour is complex, determined by psychological, social, and contextual factors. Voters are not fully rational actors; emotions, cognitive biases, identity, social factors, and candidate perceptions all impact their preferences. Psychological views provide a more in-depth understanding of why voters support specific politicians or parties, underlining the connection between internal cognitive processes and external social dynamics.

Voters often resort to heuristics (mental shortcuts) to simplify complex verdicts and decisions. These shortcuts enable individuals to make decisions based on minimal information, such as party affiliation, endorsements, or a candidate's perceived competency. For example, party identification is an important heuristic that allows voters to match their selections with their ideological preferences without thoroughly examining all candidates or policies (Lodge, Taber, 2013).

Similarly, characteristics such as appearance and charm might unintentionally persuade voters. According to studies, candidates who appear competent or attractive are more likely to win votes, especially in low-information elections where voters are unfamiliar with policy complexities (Todorov et al., 2005).

Emotional responses play an important influence in shaping voting behaviour. Fear, hope, and fury are especially powerful emotions that can shape political preferences. Fear frequently pushes voters to candidates who offer stability and security, whereas anger can motivate people to support candidates who call on for change or correct perceived injustices (Marcus et al., 2000).

Furthermore, positive emotions like hope can boost a candidate's attractiveness by instilling optimism about the future. Emotional appeals in political advertising are a potent instrument for moulding voter opinions, frequently overriding rational evaluations in favour of instinctive responses.

Confirmation Bias Voters are prone to confirmation bias, which is the tendency to seek out and interpret information that reinforces pre-existing opinions while discounting conflicting data. This bias maintains partisan alignment and contributes to political discourse polarization, as individuals selectively engage in information and narratives that validate their worldview (Taber, Lodge, 2006).

According to social identity theory, individuals get a sense of self from their affiliation with social organizations such as political parties, ethnic groups, or socioeconomic classes. Voting behaviour can be influenced by a desire to reinforce one's group identity. Individuals, for example, may support politicians who represent their in-group or push for policies that are in the best interests of their group.

Ethnic, religious, or cultural identity can also be important elements in elections, particularly when these dimensions are politicized. Voter loyalty can be enhanced by politicians who prioritize shared identity, regardless of whether their policy preferences differ (Huddy et al., 2015).

Social influence is a factor that influences voting behaviour. Social customs, such as the expectation of voting, can encourage people to vote out of civic responsibility. Peer influence is also important; individuals are more likely to vote for candidates or parties supported by their social network. Social media platforms increase this effect by offering constant exposure to peers' political beliefs, thus influencing perceptions of what is socially acceptable or popular (Bond et al., 2012).

Voters may experience cognitive dissonance when their favoured candidate's actions contradict their principles or beliefs. The candidate's behaviour is often rationalized, or information is selectively interpreted to align with the initial decision to alleviate this distress. This approach can strengthen allegiance even in the face of proof of the candidate's flaws and shortcomings (Festinger, 1957).

According to psychological research, many voters have a status quo bias and prefer stability over change. This bias is especially strong in elections, as the risks associated with change are believed to outweigh the possible positive benefits. Incumbents often benefit from this tendency since their leadership reflects continuity (Samuelson, Zeckhauser, 1988).

Voter fatigue and political indifference happen frequently in highly politicized or information-saturated environments. Overexposure to political messages can lead to disengagement, as voters may feel overwhelmed or powerless to change or influence outcomes. This disengagement disproportionately impacts uncertain voters, who may refrain from voting entirely (Funk, 2010).

The way concerns are portrayed in political campaigns has a considerable impact on voter mindsets. The strategic highlighting of specific aspects of issues by candidates and media outlets is intended to influence voter attitudes. For example, framing and displaying an economic policy as a job-creation initiative could attract more support and popularity than framing it as an expenditure (Chong, Druckman, 2007).

The propagation of misinformation, particularly via social media, impacts decision making. Voters who are exposed to false or misleading information might form incorrect and inaccurate opinions of candidates or subjects, resulting in decisions based on manufactured narratives rather than factual analysis (Lewandowsky et al. 2012).

The behaviour and economics of voters and authority

Humans are predisposed to trust individuals in positions of authority, particularly those who exude confidence and decisiveness. This trust is derived from evolutionary psychology, which suggests that following strong leaders was frequently a guarantee of group survival. By portraying candidates as knowledgeable, relatable, or morally superior leaders, political marketing teams magnify this phenomenon. The perception of authority

can be sufficient to influence belief, even when these representations lack substance (Cialdini, 2001). Because of psychological, social, and informational vulnerabilities, certain demographics are more susceptible to political marketing teams' influence or manipulation. Politicians and their marketing strategists use these elements to influence voter behaviour, frequently targeting specific demographics or psychological profiles that are less difficult to persuade. The vulnerability to manipulation is a result of cognitive biases, triggers of emotion, limited access to reliable, trustworthy information, and the influence of group identity.

Voters with a limited understanding of political processes, candidates, or policies are more inclined to rely on emotional appeals and surface-level information. Political marketing teams frequently target this demographic with simple messaging, slogans, and visuals that induce strong emotional responses, such as fear or hope. These voters may lack the tools or motivation to verify allegations, leaving them especially vulnerable to disinformation and propaganda (Lau, Redlawsk, 2001).

Emotional appeals are a powerful instrument in political marketing, and individuals who are overly emotional or reactive are more vulnerable to manipulation. Fear-based advertising, for example, might increase support for programs or candidates believed to provide protection or stability. Similarly, anger can be used to rally people against perceived enemies or threats, whereas hope can motivate support for leaders who promise significant change (Marcus et al., 2000).

Emotional response sometimes seems more convincing and instantaneous than logical analysis, thus enabling people to accept emotionally charged messages without challenging their veracity.

People with strong group identities, such as ethnic, religious, or ideological affiliations, are more likely to support politicians who highlight common identification markers. Political campaigns frequently capitalize on these identities, casting policies or candidates as defenders of the in-group while portraying opponents as dangers to the group's ideals or security. This can result in polarized voting patterns, even if the targeted individuals' larger interests do not coincide with the candidate's program (Huddy et al., 2015).

Individuals experiencing economic difficulty or social marginalization are especially susceptible to manipulation tactics. Political marketing teams frequently create messaging that offer remedies to these groups' problems, even when such claims lack solid legislative supporting. Populist discourse, which simplifies complex problems and blames scapegoats, is especially effective in rallying support among these groups (Norris, Inglehart, 2019).

Younger voters or those voting for the first time often have no expertise in critically analysing political messaging. Marketing teams may target them with aspirational or trendy messaging on platforms they use, such as social media. This group is particularly vulnerable to social influence, as peer approval and group norms have a considerable impact on their political choices (Bond et al., 2012).

People who rely extensively on digital media for news and information are more likely to see targeted political advertisements and algorithmically generated content. Political marketing teams take advantage of this dependency by employing data analytics and psychographic profiling to provide personalized messaging. Micro-targeting can promote echo chambers and influence perceptions by selectively exposing people to information.

Individuals who are susceptible to cognitive biases, such as confirmation bias, are more easily manipulated. Political campaigns capitalize on these biases by giving information that reinforces pre-existing ideas, ensuring that voters remain loyal to their favoured candidate or party. This strategy is especially effective in polarized circumstances because people are unwilling to reconsider opposing ideas (Taber, Lodge, 2006).

The bandwagon effect is the phenomenon in which people accept ideas or actions just because others do so. Political marketing sometimes accentuates this impact by stressing a candidate's popularity or inevitability, therefore creating a sense of general support. This dynamic appeals to the human need to fit in and belong, therefore avoiding being in the minority (Goethals, Nelson, 1973).

Even when no real proof is available, repetition raises the chance of belief. Known as the illusory truth effect, this phenomenon explains why frequent exposure to political slogans, advertisements, or talking points makes them appear more trustworthy over time (Dechêne et al., 2010). Repetition overcomes doubt and provides a sense of familiarity with the message, making it simpler for voters to accept.

Manipulating vulnerable groups creates serious ethical considerations. While political marketing is a permissible form of communication, exploiting psychological and social vulnerabilities might jeopardize democratic principles. Over-reliance on emotional appeals and misinformation has the potential to polarize societies, undermine trust in institutions, and marginalize critical thinking. Addressing these concerns will necessitate better political literacy, openness in campaign procedures, and more regulations on the use of data-driven targeting in political advertisements.

5. The marketing of politics and the output of Dunning-Kruger Effect in politicians

Political systems frequently operate with some degree of opacity, whether intended or not. This lack of openness might make it simpler for politicians and their marketing staff to create narratives which influence public opinion. When the public does not have access to complete or correct information, they are more inclined to rely on simplified, emotionally driven messaging.

Politics and policymaking require complex processes, technical complexities, and nuanced decisions that are often difficult for the public to comprehend. Politicians may take advantage of this complexity by withholding complete explanations and instead giving simple or misleading representations of reality to suit their purposes (Zaller, 1992).

Governments or political actors may intentionally conceal information about their practices, decision making processes, or policies to dominate and control narratives. This is most visible in systems with limited press freedom, but selective disclosure is also prevalent in democratic systems that defend political interests or avoid scrutiny (Kovach, Rosenstiel, 2014).

Political marketing often exploits human cognitive and emotional vulnerabilities. Politicians can impact public opinion by keeping political practices unknown or unclear, allowing them to avoid accountability for inconsistency between their actions and their statements.

When citizens are uninformed about political processes, they are more vulnerable to fear-driven narratives. Politicians may employ secrecy or selective information to increase real or perceived risks while presenting themselves as protectors (Marcus et al., 2000).

Politicians might avoid critical scrutiny by providing simple solutions to complicated situations, appealing directly to voters' emotions. For example, marketing campaigns often feature emotionally charged slogans such as "make the country great again" or "fight corruption," which lack actual policy details (Norris, 2000). Political systems may encourage acts which reduce transparency. This can happen in both authoritarian and democratic environments.

In authoritarian governments, secrecy and manipulation are often employed as instruments of control. State-controlled media, censorship, and propaganda ensure that citizens only receive information that supports the ruling party (Inglehart, Norris, 2016).

Even in democracies, political players can bypass full transparency to preserve their reputation or maintain strategic advantages. For example, political marketing teams may use identity politics or wedge issues to divert voters' attention away from serious policy debates (Iyengar, Kinder, 1987).

Modern politics rely largely on marketing and media efforts to influence voter behaviour. These strategies frequently prioritize influence over education, resulting in the intentional dissemination of incomplete or deceptive information.

Politicians and their teams often work together with media outlets to frame issues in ways that advance their agendas. This selective framing may blur the whole context of political actions, making it easier to influence public opinion (Entman, 1993).

Social media algorithms create situations in which people are predominantly exposed to content that supports their opinions. Political actors use echo chambers to enhance their messages, restricting voters' exposure to alternative points of view or the larger context of the political practices (Sunstein, 2001).

While secrecy and manipulation are occasionally intentional, not all opacity in political processes is malevolent. In some circumstances, confidentiality is required to safeguard sensitive information, such as national security decisions or delicate diplomatic

negotiations. However, the line between genuine confidentiality and manipulation is thin and sometimes crossed for political gains.

A politician with characteristics of the Dunning-Kruger Effect (DKE) and Impostor Syndrome may navigate the political environment in a complex and contradictory manner. Their actions would show a conflict between overconfidence caused by ignorance (DKE) and self-doubt caused by the idea that they are unfit or undeserving of their position (Impostor Syndrome). Analysing how these factors appear in their rhetoric, decisions regarding policies, and public participation provides insight into their political style.

Politicians influenced by Dunning-Kruger Effect may exhibit excessive confidence, particularly on intricate policy matters, due to their failure to acknowledge their own knowledge deficiencies. This may result in excessively simplified answers and solutions, dependence on populist rhetoric, and a dismissive stance towards qualified advice. Such a politician might, for instance, frame their proposals in general terms, such as "This policy is going to eliminate poverty in the next five years," and make broad statements about eliminating economic inequality without knowing its structural causes.

On the other hand, their Impostor Syndrome can appear during periods of intense examination, prompting them to excessively compensate for perceived deficiencies. The potential outcome of this duality is an oscillation between subtle self-sabotage, such as avoiding critical negotiations for fear of exposure, and excessive self-promotion ("*I am the only one able to fix this*").

In policymaking, the Dunning-Kruger Effect may cause individuals to misjudge the intricacies of government, resulting in the proposal and execution of ill-conceived or populist decisions. For example, they may prioritize performative rather than substantive environmental legislation because to their misunderstanding of climate science.

Their Impostor Syndrome may result in an overreliance on consultants or technocrats to protect themselves from accountability. To avoid being seen as inadequate they may put off making important decisions and rely mostly on already established frameworks or policies.

In interpersonal dynamics, the impact of DKE may lead to a confrontational or dismissive disposition towards critics, whom they could perceive as less capable or adversarial, even when such critics provide beneficial feedback. This may estrange allies and undermine trust among colleagues. Their Impostor Syndrome, on the other hand, could make them open to manipulation by more confident coworkers or subordinates since they are hesitant to completely express their authority.

To set themselves apart from the "elites," politicians with DKE tendencies may project an excessive sense of confidence and highlight their "outsider" status or "common sense" approach. However, their impostor syndrome may cause them to overemphasize their qualifications or prior successes to justify their position, which could make their efforts seem defensive or overtly technical.

Such a politician's leadership could pose serious governance issues. Their self-doubt might make it more difficult for them to reach an agreement or inspire confidence among colleagues and constituents, while their overconfidence could lead to policy errors and missteps. This conflict could result in unpredictable leadership styles where choices are made on the spur of the moment or excessively slowly.

Furthermore, the Dunning-Kruger Effect thrives in the political environment, which frequently rewards charisma and seeming confidence. But over time, their efficacy may be compromised by the weaknesses brought on by impostor syndrome, especially when high-stakes political crises are present.

A politician who is influenced by both the Dunning-Kruger Effect and Impostor Syndrome is likely to display a politically unstable combination of insecurity and overconfidence, which will affect their interpersonal relationships, public image, and policy decisions. This contrast may result in unpredictable governance, in which bold declarations get undermined by hesitating implementation. Recognizing these interactions highlights the significance of cultivating self-awareness and humility in political leadership while advocating for systems that prioritize and value expertise over performative confidence.

6. The bias generated by online platforms – the implications of psychological, economic, and social dimensions

The typical, traditional political campaign is changed by the digital medium into a diverse, intricate process that increases both chances and risks. This change radically alters public perception, messaging tactics, and voter engagement.

When politicians use online media, they must carefully manage how people see them. Here, the candidate works within the "front stage" of social media, creating an image that conforms to public expectations, using Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach to self-presentation. However, if the candidate's online persona and offline behaviours or beliefs diverge, this could result in cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Long-term use of this polarity can make people more stressed and anxious, especially before significant elections.

The algorithmic characteristics of platforms intensify cognitive biases, including confirmation bias and the availability heuristic. Voters frequently encounter content that corresponds with their own ideas, hence strengthening political polarization (Pariser, 2011). Politicians must maneuver through this split landscape, balancing widespread appeal with customized messaging for distinct populations.

Social media advertising frequently depend on emotionally intriguing content that stimulates interaction and engagement. For instance, fear appeals are commonly employed to rally voters, but they can have long-term psychological impacts, such as lowering political efficacy and increasing worry and anxiety among voters (Brader, 2006).

Digital platforms diminish the expenses linked to traditional campaigning, including travel and physical advertisements. This enables politicians to distribute resources more

strategically. Crowdfunding via platforms such as GoFundMe or direct donation links on websites has democratized campaign financing, allowing candidates to accumulate modest contributions from an extensive variety of supporters (Karpf, 2012).

Digital platforms reveal disparities even as they provide opportunity for affordable and cost-effective outreach. A significant investment in data analytics, ad targeting, and qualified consultants is frequently necessary to obtain high-quality digital campaigns. Smaller parties or politicians from lower socioeconomic backgrounds could find it difficult to compete with well-funded oppositions.

Platforms like Facebook and Twitter rely on attention economies, in which engagement leads to popularity and visibility. Politicians often must pay for ad spaces or boosted content, which benefits tech corporations and makes them more reliant on platform algorithms. Additionally, this monetization brings up moral and ethical questions regarding data usage and transparency.

Politicians can now instantly access large audiences through online platforms, oftentimes skipping the gatekeepers of traditional media. By enabling direct engagement with voters, this democratization of communication promotes opinions of transparency, accessibility and genuineness. But it also makes it possible for false information to spread quickly, which may reduce the public's trust (Benkler, et al., 2018).

Identifying the Dunning-Kruger Effect in politicians

A politician who is influenced by DKE usually proposes excessively simplistic solutions to complicated issues without having any understanding of the subtleties of the matter. They are inclined to disregard expert opinions or data, present themselves as the sole authority. Also, they may make excessive promises, demonstrating a lack of understanding regarding the limits of their authority or resources. Their confidence often surpasses their capacity.

When participating in interviews or debates, they may encounter difficulty in responding to follow-up inquiries that necessitate a more profound understanding, which may indicate deficiencies in their understanding of it. They commonly use definitive language, refraining from using qualifiers such as "perhaps" or "maybe." This is an aim to offer a sense of certainty, which is appealing to citizens who are emotionally driven (Kruger, Dunning, 1999).

They frequently assume a confrontational or populist stance, presenting themselves as the "outsider" who is fighting against "the establishment" while disregarding their own knowledge deficiencies. They will consistently diminish and undermine credible and trusted institutions or experts and apply a lot of reliance on slogans and soundbites rather than substantive policy proposals.

Online platforms are used by politicians to create communities centred around common beliefs or causes. Viral material, memes, and hashtags encourage supporters' unity.

However, this can result in echo chambers, which contribute to societal fragmentation by excluding other points of view (Sunstein, 2018).

Social media platforms have proven to be useful in organizing and mobilizing young voters, traditionally a disengaged demographic. But the emphasis on digital contacts runs at the risk of alienating elder or less tech-savvy voters, widening the gap between generations in terms of political engagement (Schradié, 2018).

To win an election solely through the digital landscape, it is necessary to strategically utilize technology to establish connections, mobilize voters, and effectively communicate the campaign's vision.

By utilizing cost efficiency, targeted outreach, and modernity, a digital-only campaign can prevail over hybrid competitors. The campaign must, however, creatively implement digital tools to replicate the personal touch of traditional methods to mitigate its inherent disadvantages, including limited offline reach and diminished emotional connections. Gaining the trust of voters and closing the gap between digital innovation and grassroots authenticity will require striking a balance between inclusivity, ability to adapt, and authenticity.

Identifying the Impostor Syndrome in politicians

To substantiate and validate their decisions, politicians with Impostor Syndrome often give detailed justifications, such as lengthy explanations or excessive references to credentials (Clance, Imes, 1978). They may appear hesitant to take decisive action, as they are concerned about public scrutiny or failure.

They avoid situations in which their perceived deficiencies may be exposed. For instance, they may restrict press interviews or refrain from participating in live debates. Even minor criticism is met with extensive defences or apologies, which may negatively affect their public image.

They ensure that decisions are consistent with scientific evidence and best practices with the help of credible sources, which reduces the likelihood of personal bias or cognitive errors (Kahneman, 2011).

To substantiate their decisions, they may make an excessive number of references to experts, committees, or advisors, which may suggest that they are uncertain of their own judgment; voters often give value to leaders who can balance expert advice with their own personal vision, as excessive deference may raise some concerns about the leader's ability to act independently when needed. In addition, excessive deference to advisors raises the possibility of manipulation by vested interests or technocrats with hidden agendas and interests.

Humility may be a virtue; however, an excessively modest demeanour may indicate an underlying struggle with self-doubt. They often postpone decisions or announcements to achieve unattainable levels of preparation. This conduct may lead to missed opportunities or a lack of agility in fast-paced political environments. They frequently attribute their

success to luck or others, publicly diminishing their accomplishments. In policy debates, there is an excessive emphasis on the process rather than the outcome.

Voters and analysts can make more informed decisions when evaluating the leadership potential of politicians by understanding these characteristics, which will enable them to more effectively evaluate politicians' behaviours and actions.

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