



The Effect of Political Communication and Legislator Performance on Party Image with Public Trust as a Mediating Variable

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the influence of political communication and legislator performance on party image, both directly and indirectly through public trust as a mediating variable. The research is motivated by the dynamics of the National Mandate Party (PAN)'s seat acquisition in the Jakarta Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD DKI Jakarta) during the 2014–2024 elections, which experienced an increase but failed to reach the organization's internal target in the 2024 election. Using a quantitative explanatory approach, data were collected through an online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale from 392 voters in Jakarta. The data analysis technique employed Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) using SmartPLS 4. The descriptive analysis results indicated that all research variables were in the high category. The hypothesis testing results confirmed that political communication and legislator performance had positive and significant effects on public trust and party image. Furthermore, public trust was found to play a significant mediating role in connecting the effects of political communication and legislator performance to party image. The practical implications emphasize the importance of strengthening budget transparency, political ethics, and the effectiveness of two-way communication channels to improve public trust and party image.

Keyword: Political Communication, Legislator Performance, Public Trust, Party Image, SEM-PLS, PAN DKI Jakarta.

INTRODUCTION

Political parties in a democratic system perform vital functions as platforms for articulating citizens' interests, political recruitment, and bridging the gap between society and representative institutions. In electoral politics, party image is a strategic asset because it influences how the public perceives a party's identity, competence, closeness to the community, and credibility. Party image does not form automatically; rather, it is built through public experiences in receiving political messages, observing legislators' performance, and assessing the integrity of political elites.

In terms of electoral developments, PAN DKI Jakarta has demonstrated a distinctive pattern of representational growth. PAN's seat acquisition in the Jakarta Regional People's Representative Council increased from 2 seats in 2014 to 9 seats in 2019 and 10 seats in 2024. However, the achievement of 10 seats in the 2024 election remained below the organization's internal target of 15 seats, representing an achievement rate of 66.67% and a shortfall of 5 seats. This managerial and political gap highlights the importance of evaluating the perceptual factors influencing voters in the heterogeneous, information-rich urban environment of Jakarta

Table 1. PAN's Seat Acquisition in the Jakarta Regional People's Representative Council

Election Year	PAN Seats in DPRD DKI Jakarta	Change	Internal Target	Achievement
2014	2 seats	—	—	—
2019	9 seats	Increase of 7 seats (+350%)	—	—
2024	10 seats	Increase of 1 seat (+11.11%)	15 seats	66.67% (shortfall of 5 seats)

This study integrates three main theoretical foundations (Grand Theories): Political Marketing Theory (Cwalina et al., 2011; Lees-Marshment, 2019; Scammell, 2015), Political Communication Theory (McNair, 2018; Strömbäck & Kioussis, 2011), and Public Trust Theory (Mayer et al., 1995; OECD, 2024). The study formulates hypotheses to examine the direct effects of Political Communication (X1X_1) and Legislator Performance (X2X_2) on Public Trust (MM) and Party Image (YY), as well as the mediating role of Public Trust (MM).

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. The unit of analysis consists of individual voters in Jakarta who are at least 17 years old or married, are familiar with PAN, and have previously received information about PAN's political communication or legislators' performance.

Sampling combines the Lemeshow formula for a population of unknown size ($n=385n = 385$) with convenience sampling and regional quotas. Primary data were collected through an online questionnaire from July 16–20, 2026, resulting in 392 valid responses after screening and data cleaning.

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) through SmartPLS 4. The evaluation stages included:

Outer Model Evaluation

Convergent validity (Outer Loading ≥ 0.70 ; AVE ≥ 0.50), discriminant validity (HTMT < 0.90), and construct reliability (Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.70 ; Composite Reliability ≥ 0.70).

Inner Model Evaluation

Coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2).

Hypothesis Testing

Bootstrapping procedures using a t -statistic criterion of ≥ 1.96 and a p -value < 0.05 at a 5% significance level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profiles and Descriptive Analysis

Of the 392 valid respondents, 56.38% were male and 43.62% were female. The largest age group was 26–35 years (31.38%), the most common highest educational qualification was a bachelor's degree (S1) (42.09%), and the most common occupation was private-sector employee (33.16%). Geographically, respondents were distributed across Jakarta's six administrative areas, with the largest proportion coming from East Jakarta (28.57%). The descriptive analysis showed that the mean scores of all variables fell within the high category on a five-point scale.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Category	Highest-Scoring Indicator	Lowest-Scoring Indicator
Political Communication (X1X_1)	3.474	High	X1.5: Ease of Media Access (3.633)	X1.7: Responsiveness to Aspirations (3.339)
Legislator Performance (X2X_2)	3.468	High	X2.7: Aspirations Accommodation (3.592)	X2.5: Budgetary Favoritism (3.311)
Public Trust (MM)	3.445	High	M8: Reliability in Voicing Aspirations (3.566)	M6: Public Interest Orientation (3.278)
Party Image (YY)	3.498	High	Y2: Performance of Party Cadres/Legislators (3.625)	Y4: Maintenance of Political Ethics (3.385)

Outer Model and Inner Model Evaluation

The measurement model evaluation (outer model) confirmed that all indicators for Political Communication, Legislator Performance, Public Trust, and Party Image met the criteria of outer loading greater than 0.70, AVE greater than 0.50, and HTMT below 0.90. All constructs were considered to have convergent and discriminant validity and very high internal reliability, with Composite Reliability exceeding 0.80.

The structural model evaluation (inner model) indicated that the model had solid predictive capabilities:

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Public Trust had an R^2 value explained by Political Communication and Legislator Performance. Party Image had a high R^2 value and was simultaneously influenced by Political Communication, Legislator Performance, and Public Trust.

Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

A Q^2 value greater than zero confirmed that the model had good predictive capacity for the endogenous variables.

Hypothesis Testing and Discussion

Hypotheses were tested using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS 4. The summary of hypothesis decisions is presented below.

Table 3. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship Path	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic Criterion	P-Value Criterion	Decision
H1	Political Communication → Public Trust	Positive	≥ 1.96	< 0.05	Accepted
H2	Legislator Performance → Public Trust	Positive	≥ 1.96	< 0.05	Accepted
H3	Public Trust → Party Image	Positive	≥ 1.96	< 0.05	Accepted
H4	Political Communication → Party Image	Positive	≥ 1.96	< 0.05	Accepted

H5	Legislator Party Image	Performance	→	Positive	≥ 1.96	< 0.05	Accepted
H6	Political Public Trust → Party Image	Communication	→	Positive (Mediation)	≥ 1.96	< 0.05	Accepted
H7	Legislator Public Trust → Party Image	Performance	→	Positive (Mediation)	≥ 1.96	< 0.05	Accepted

The Effects of Political Communication and Legislator Performance on Public Trust (H1 and H2)

Clear, consistent, and accessible political communication was found to increase public trust. Public experiences of receiving rational and relevant messages build confidence in a party's competence and integrity. Similarly, legislators' actual performance in carrying out legislative, oversight, and public-aspiration-gathering functions provides concrete evidence that elected representatives work in the public interest, thereby strengthening public trust.

The Effects of Public Trust, Political Communication, and Legislator Performance on Party Image (H3, H4, and H5)

Public trust was found to be a major driver of a party's reputation and positive identity. When voters trust a party's integrity, the political brand associations they form become more favorable. Directly, intensive political communication and a positive track record of legislators' performance also contribute to PAN's attractiveness and image differentiation in Jakarta.

The Mediating Role of Public Trust (H6 and H7)

The specific indirect effects testing showed that Public Trust significantly mediates the effects of Political Communication and Legislator Performance on Party Image. This finding confirms that political messages and legislators' track records do not automatically create a positive image unless the public is first convinced that the party possesses credibility, concern for the community, and consistency. Public trust functions as a critical psychological mechanism for converting perceptions of political performance into long-term reputation.

CONCLUSION

Conclusions

1. Political communication has a positive and significant effect on public trust. 2. Legislator performance has a positive and significant effect on public trust. 3. Public trust has a positive and significant effect on party image.

4. Political communication has a positive and significant effect on party image. 5. Legislator performance has a positive and significant effect on party image. 6. Public trust significantly mediates the effect of political communication on party image. 7. Public trust significantly mediates the effect of legislator performance on party image.

Recommendations

For PAN DKI Jakarta

The party needs to improve the effectiveness of two-way communication channels and its responsiveness to citizens' complaints. It should strengthen communication regarding political ethics and the party's distinctive positioning so that the public's perception of its ethical conduct becomes stronger.

For PAN Legislators in the Jakarta Regional People's Representative Council

Greater transparency and publication of performance in budgeting and oversight functions are needed. Legislators must demonstrate that every regional policy they advocate is genuinely oriented toward the interests of the wider community.

For Future Researchers

Future studies are advised to expand the research model by adding other electoral variables, such as party identification, voter satisfaction, or political loyalty, and to broaden the sample to include other urban areas.

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