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Consolidating Democracy: Political Communication and Public Trust in Early Leadership Post-Election in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the influence of political communication on public trust in the early post-election leadership period in Indonesia, which is often referred to as the honeymoon period. It also aims to address a gap in existing studies by emphasizing the strategic importance of political communication in this critical stage of governmental transition. This study uses a quantitative approach, and the primary data source is represented by the dataset of the Populix survey on social media users X and TikTok, as well as additional data collected independently, such as scientific articles, news, and website information. The supplemental material was coded via NVivo 12 Plus by adopting the method of systematic coding. These findings indicate that transparent, open, and interactive political communication is very important in building public trust in new leaders after the elections in Indonesia. Factors such as transparency, openness of information, and effective use of social media and digital platforms are key to strengthening legitimacy and public support while maintaining political stability in democratic consolidation. Furthermore, the public satisfaction levels in the different sectors in the first 100 days of leadership also indicate a positive relationship between responsive political communication and support and the new government's legitimacy.

Keywords: Political communication, public trust, early leadership, post-election, honeymoon period

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami pengaruh komunikasi politik terhadap kepercayaan publik pada masa awal kepemimpinan pascapemilu di Indonesia, yang sering disebut sebagai honeymoon period. Studi ini juga dimaksudkan untuk mengisi kekosongan literatur yang selama ini kurang menyoroti peran strategis komunikasi politik dalam fase krusial transisi pemerintahan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif dengan data utama berupa hasil survei Populix yang mencerminkan persepsi pengguna media sosial X dan TikTok, serta data tambahan yang dikumpulkan secara mandiri berupa artikel ilmiah, berita, dan informasi relevan dari situs web. Data tambahan tersebut dianalisis menggunakan NVivo 12 Plus melalui proses coding secara sistematis. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi politik yang transparan, terbuka, dan interaktif sangat penting dalam membangun kepercayaan publik terhadap pemimpin baru pasca pemilu di Indonesia. Faktor seperti transparansi, keterbukaan informasi, serta penggunaan media sosial dan platform digital secara efektif menjadi kunci memperkuat legitimasi dan dukungan publik, sekaligus menjaga stabilitas politik dalam proses konsolidasi demokrasi. Selain itu, tingkat kepuasan publik terhadap berbagai sektor pada 100 hari pertama

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masa kepemimpinan juga mencerminkan korelasi positif antara komunikasi politik yang responsif dengan meningkatnya dukungan dan legitimasi terhadap pemerintahan baru.

Kata Kunci: Komunikasi politik, kepercayaan publik, kepemimpinan awal, pascapemilu, honeymoon period

INTRODUCTION

The post-election leadership transition period is a crucial phase in a democratic system. During this stage, political communication plays a vital role in ensuring political stability, building public trust, and strengthening the legitimacy of the new government (Amin, Rahmadani, & Yusuf, 2022; Shamir, Shamir, & Sheafer, 2008). Without an appropriate communication strategy, the transition phase can lead to uncertainty, polarization, and even delegitimization of the elected leader (Ross, 2021; A Velasco Molpeceres, Miranda-Galbe, & Prieto Muñiz, 2025). Consequently, the manner in which a leader manages political communication during the initial stages of their tenure plays a decisive role in shaping the trajectory of public support and determining the overall effectiveness of governance.

Carrying over 96 million votes, Prabowo Subianto became the first president-elect with the most votes ever in Indonesia's history of direct ballots. According to the official result of the recount from The General Elections Commission (KPU) in the Presidential Election of 2024, the Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka pair won 96,214,691 of 58.59 of the total valid national votes (Satriawan et al., 2024). They well outperformed the other two candidates: Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar, with 40,971,906 votes (24.95%), and Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD, with 27,040,878 votes (16.46%). This victory not only brought Prabowo back to power from two previous election defeats (Yahya, Syukri, et al., 2024), but also bestowed high public expectations on his communication and leadership orientation during the post-election transition period.

While Prabowo Subianto's victory in the 2024 election with more than 96 million votes set a historic precedent, the figure simultaneously underscores a significant challenge, as approximately 42% of the electorate—over 68 million citizens—did not support him in a highly polarized contest. This reality suggests that the central post-election concern is not merely the consolidation of public trust in general, but rather the capacity of the president-elect to bridge political divides, engage opposition constituencies, and cultivate inclusive legitimacy. Within this context, political communication strategies function not only as a means of reinforcing support among his electoral base but also as a critical instrument of national reconciliation, shaping political stability and the sustainability of governance during

the formative stages of leadership. In this regard, Prabowo's political communication had a strategic function in fostering public trust and reinforcing the legitimacy of his government at the outset of his leadership.

Communication in elections is vital to public perception and the confidence in the candidates (Susila, Dean, Yusof, Setyawan, & Wajdi, 2020; Ana Velasco Molpeceres, Miranda-Galbe, & Prieto Muñiz, 2025). Political communication styles can theoretically be viewed through rhetorical, charismatic, populist, and institutional lenses, stressing the relevance of symbolic, imaginary , and narrative elements in political communication (Lacatus, Meibauer, & Löfflmann, 2023). One piece of research found that persuasive, emotional, and personal communicative styles might be more effective in winning over the sympathy of voters than overly formal or technocratic responses (Bossetta & Schmøkel, 2023). In the Indonesian context,   other scholars have also emphasized the politics of impression in producing a "popular" political persona in the candidate's political identity to approach the mass base (Farhan, Revita, & Oktavianus, 2024; Qodir, 2024; Yahya, Sinilele, et al., 2024). This style of communication not only blooms as a tool for campaigning but also as an instigator of political legitimacy and electoral calculus within the democratic contestation (Anom, Vina, & Samani, 2024; Arrianie, Lestari, Meranti, & Ningrum, 2024).

On the other hand, public trust is also a crucial foundation in the legitimacy of power and stability of government in a democratic system (Cohen, Noh, & Zechmeister, 2024; De Magalhães et al., 2025; Rifaid, Rachman, Baharuddin, & Gohwong, 2023). When there is a lack of trust from the public, decisions made by leaders are resisted mainly, rejected, and even ignored by the public (Baharuddin, Jubba, Nurmandi, & Qodir, 2022; Parthasarathy, 2025). In the political legitimacy framework, public trust is understood as support for the entire political system, not just particular policies (Malone & Dammert, 2021). In the context of post-election leadership, public trust is an indicator of the extent to which society accepts the election results and gives a moral mandate to the elected leader to run the government (Jaffe, Loffredo, Baltz, Flores, & Stewart, 2024; Maweu, 2019). Consequently, developing and sustaining public trust using open, consistent, and inclusive political communication is essential to overseeing power transition and the sustainability of democracy.

Public trust in Indonesia cannot be conceptualized as a singular, homogeneous entity, but rather as a complex social construct shaped by a mosaic of beliefs, preferences, and lived experiences across diverse ethnic groups, religions, and political ideologies (Akbar, Nurmandi, Irawan, Qodir, & Juba, 2022; Paul Latupeirissa, 2022; Pernia, 2023). Within this framework, Prabowo Subianto's political communication strategy during the early stages of his leadership should be understood as a multi-layered process of message differentiation,

in which the effectiveness of communication is contingent upon sensitivity to local contexts and careful audience segmentation. A message that resonates positively with communities in Central Java, for instance, may be less relevant or even ineffective for voter groups in West Sumatra or Papua, each of which possesses distinct political trajectories, social dynamics, and expectations. Consequently, the legitimacy of leadership and the success of post-election political reconciliation are critically dependent on the capacity to communicate in ways that are inclusive, adaptive, and contextually grounded across Indonesia's diverse sociopolitical landscape.

The early leadership of a leader after being elected in an election is a crucial phase that determines the direction, image, and legitimacy of his government going forward (Linke, 2022). In the Indonesian context, this phase is even more critical given the highly polarized nature of electoral politics and the diverse socio-cultural composition of its society. Similar dynamics can also be observed in other democracies, where early leadership communication plays a decisive role in consolidating support and reducing post-election tensions. At this point, the public expects a continuation of previous campaign promises; they will all be judged against the leader's ostensible commitment and credibility. This phase is known in theory as the *honeymoon period*. It is that period where the leader continues to receive high support and has a great chance to establish trust and a style of leadership that will last throughout its mandate (Castro Cornejo, Beltrán, Ley, & Galicia, 2022). In the immediate post-election phase of leadership, according to transformational theory, leaders must project themselves as visionary, motivational, and communicative to establish their political authority and trust. The results indicate that such a leadership exercise effectively bolsters commitment and trust, which is also salient in the political context (Jiatong et al., 2022). Early leadership, therefore, is not just about changeover — it is also a strategic moment in creating stability, trust, and sustainable policy direction.

The initial post-election leadership period, often referred to as the honeymoon phase, represents a critical stage in democratic governance as it determines the legitimacy, orientation, and public image of the newly elected government. In the Indonesian context, the decisive victory of Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka in the 2024 presidential election generated heightened public expectations regarding their political communication strategies. Existing studies indicate that persuasive, emotional, and personalized modes of communication are generally more effective in fostering public sympathy than technocratic approaches, while simultaneously reinforcing political legitimacy and strengthening the candidate's identity. Public trust—widely recognized as the foundation of legitimate authority—can only be cultivated through communication that is transparent, consistent,

and inclusive. Consequently, the early phase of leadership should not be regarded merely as a procedural transfer of power, but rather as a strategic opportunity to consolidate trust, ensure political stability, and establish a sustainable policy trajectory. Prabowo Subianto's overwhelming victory in the 2024 election constitutes a particularly compelling case study, not only because it set a historic record for the highest vote share in Indonesia's era of direct presidential elections, but also because his early leadership has been characterized by heightened expectations and the complexities of his controversial political persona, thereby offering a unique context for examining the dynamics of political communication and public trust.

Although many studies have been conducted on political communication and public trust, most focus on the campaign's dynamics before the election or the candidate's image during the electoral contestation period. Indeed, the post-election period, particularly the early period in power, is critical in testing the political leader's communicative ability to generate and maintain public trust. It is here that the research gap exists that has not been minutely discussed, i.e., the lack of works that goes in-depth to discuss the relationship between a political communication strategy and the dynamics of public trust in the post-election period, particularly during the transition of power. Studies that examine the early phase of post-election leadership are important because this period is full of public expectations, political consolidation, and determination of policy directions that can affect the level of public trust in the new government. Thus, this study hopefully can backfill the void by bringing the case of Prabowo Subianto as president-elect in 2024 into a relevant and even actual study.

This research problem is formulated by dissecting some main questions, which will be discussed in this study in order to describe the dynamics of President Prabowo Subianto in early leadership after the 2024 election. *First,* what political communication model was built by President Prabowo Subianto in the early days of his leadership after the 2024 election, especially in responding to public expectations and managing political messages strategically. *Second,* to what extent does this political communication influence public trust in his leadership in the post-election transition phase. *Third,* how the level of public satisfaction with various government sectors—such as economic, social, and security—in the first 100 days of Prabowo Subianto's leadership in supporting the success of political consolidation and government communication.

This study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of President Prabowo Subianto's political communication during the initial phase of his leadership following the 2024 Presidential Election, with particular emphasis on how his communication strategies contribute to building legitimacy, fostering public trust, and demonstrating the effectiveness

of the new government through public perceptions of performance across various strategic sectors within the first one hundred days. The results of this study may offer valuable information for political leaders when considering effective communication strategies to establish and sustain public trust in the early stages of tenure. Furthermore, the findings of this study serve as a guide for policymakers aiming to enhance the performance of the government sector to satisfy the public's expectations in a measurable and responsive shape.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method in this work is quantitative research. A quantitative approach is relevant in this study because it allows researchers to measure, compare, and analyze statistical patterns regarding public trust in the early days of Prabowo Subianto's leadership. The primary data were collected from survey report documentation from Populix, a digital market and public opinion research platform. This survey data contains from X (formerly Twitter) and TikTok users, two platforms dominated by certain groups and very influential in forming public opinion and political discourse in Indonesia now. The data from Populix give an empirical view of how Indonesians view Prabowo's leadership in the first stages of this new era. Populix was chosen because it is a superior digital-centric research platform for public opinion, unlike other survey institutions that usually apply traditional methods.

The Populix survey respondent profile consisted of 1,000 participants with quite diverse demographic characteristics. The majority of respondents were women (62%) and men (38%), with a predominance of Gen Z (55%) and Millennials (45%). In terms of region, respondents were spread across Java (37%), Sumatra (27%), Kalimantan (17%), and other regions (19%). Respondents' socioeconomic status was in the middle (44%), upper (30%), and lower (26%) categories. The majority of respondents were single (60%), followed by married (39%), and widows/widowers (1%). In terms of occupation, respondents consisted of employees (44%), students (19%), entrepreneurs (9%), housewives (10%), and others (18%). For social media usage, the most frequently used platforms were TikTok and X/Twitter. The survey was conducted from January 24–31, 2025.

To supplement the documentation data drawn from Populix, the researchers independently obtained extra documents such as scientific articles, news, and other necessary information that spread on websites with the keywords "Prabowo" and "Pemilu" (election). In this study, data analysis process began with the application of inclusive and exclusive data filters to maintain the quality and relevance of the data used. Inclusive filters ensured the diversity of sources and perspectives was maintained, thus ensuring that different

perspectives were not excluded and instead enriched our understanding of the phenomena of political communication and public trust. Conversely, exclusive filters were used to filter out non-credible data, such as information containing hoaxes, extreme bias, or lacking relevance to the research focus. Thus, the analyzed data truly represented a valid and in-depth empirical context.

The next stage involved coding in NVivo 12 Plus through open coding to identify keywords or important concepts, followed by axial coding to connect similar codes, and selective coding to formulate the main research themes. Each piece of text from survey reports, scientific articles, and news items was organized into broader categories, such as political communication strategies, public responses, and government legitimacy. The results of these groupings were then visualized in diagrams and concept maps in NVivo, allowing for clearer relationships between subthemes. This approach enabled researchers to produce a systematic, transparent, and valid analysis of the dynamics of political communication and public trust during the early period of President Prabowo Subianto's leadership.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part explains the political communication model President Prabowo Subianto adopted in the early days of his post-election leadership. Furthermore, the level of public trust in the early leadership is discussed. Third, the public's satisfaction level with different sectors of government performance in these first 100 days is considered a measure of the new government's initial performance.

Prabowo Subianto's Political Communication Model in the Early Post-Election Leadership Period

The early period of Prabowo Subianto's leadership after the 2024 election is important in determining the direction of his government's political communication. The communication model established will impact public perception, political stability, and the efficacy of national policy agendas. Several key points that were successfully mapped about President Prabowo Subianto's political communication model post-election can be seen in Figure 1.
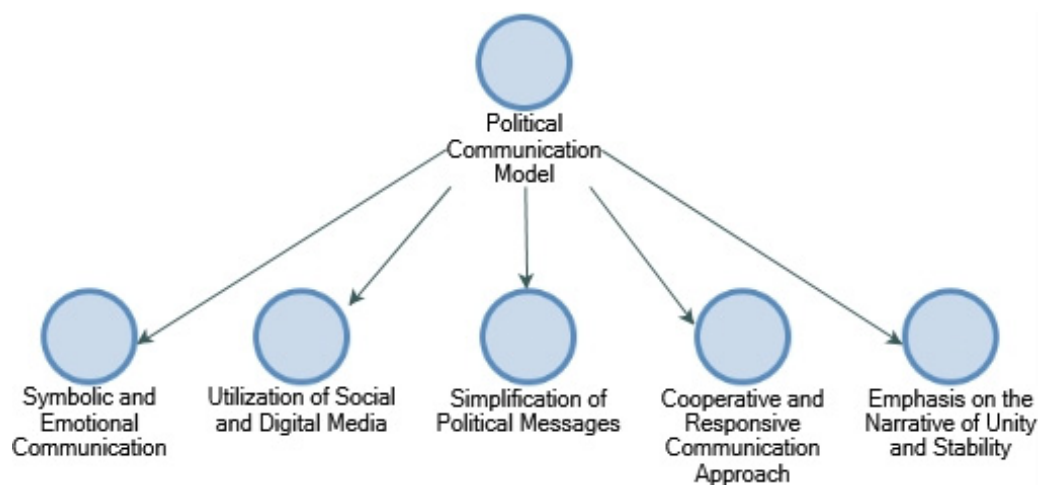
Figure 1. Prabowo Subianto's Political Communication Model in the Early Post-Election Leadership Period
Source: Processed by Researchers with Nvivo 12 Plus, 2025

Symbolic and emotional communication that Prabowo Subianto has executed can be seen in the way he sells and packages his speeches and appearances so that a spirit of nationalism arises and a sense of closeness to the emotions of the community. He regularly appears in military or traditional dress at state functions as part of his nationalist self-image (The Jakarta Post, 2025). In his speech, Prabowo is characterized by the themes of devotion, love of the country, and suffering of the people conveyed through strong intonation and emotional expression (Hariati & Purwarno, 2025). His firm communication style and down-to-earth, sometimes humor-inflected language enhance the image of a conversant leader who understands and represents ordinary people's aspirations.

Prabowo Subianto's political communication model can be examined more analytically when symbols, narratives, and strategies of message simplification are situated within a theoretical framework that elucidates their mechanisms of effectiveness. The deployment of military symbols, for instance, extends beyond the expression of personal identity; as Edelman argues, such symbols function to activate public emotional associations with stability, strength, and nationalism. Within the Indonesian context—where the military historically holds legitimacy as the guardian of state order—these symbols play a pivotal role in reinforcing the image of firm and credible leadership (Edelman, 2013). Likewise, the incorporation of humor can be interpreted through the lens of affective framing, a communicative strategy that embeds messages in positive emotions to reduce power distance and enhance public receptivity to political discourse (Verhulsdonk, Nai, & Karp, 2022).

Murray Edelman (1985), in *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, states that symbolic communication in politics is critical in how the public perceives leaders (Edelman, 1985). Symbols, rhetoric, and visual actions serve as tools to build legitimacy and public trust, not only through policy content but also through constructed images and emotions. In Prabowo's context, the use of nationalist symbols and emotional language is part of a symbolic strategy to establish a psychological connection between leadership and the people, which can increase acceptance of policies and the legitimacy of power.

Social media and digital platforms also became one of the main communication strategies Prabowo Subianto used to build an image and approach the public in the early days of his leadership after the elections. Prabowo's communication teams distribute short, visually appealing content that is easy to understand and carries messages of nationalism and proximity to the people on platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. The same has been evident during the election (Surya, Ridwan, Fahriza, & Naurah, 2025). The narrative style tends to be informal and inclusive, often showing Prabowo's side in daily activities or direct interactions with the community. This has been an appealing strategy as it has led to engagement and the influence his political message exerts, particularly on social media users of the millennial and Gen Z age frame.

According to the framework of digital political communication, digital media has offered politicians the opportunity for self-mediation, in which politicians have developed autonomy by generating their narratives without mainstream reliance (Elishar-Malka, Ariel, & Weimann, 2020). The use of Social Media can be personalized in political messages, interactively, as well as quickly and can be accessed broadly (Baharuddin, Qodir, Jubba, & Nurmandi, 2022; Luth, Maswati, & Baharuddin, 2023; Pureklolon, Pawe, & Pramono, 2025). In Prabowo's context, this communication strategy is in line with the principle of networked politics, where the power of a message depends not only on the content but also on how the message is produced, packaged, and disseminated through an active and responsive digital network.

On the other hand, simplifying political messages is also one of the main characteristics of Prabowo Subianto's communication strategy, especially in the early days of his leadership after the 2024 election. In speech, interviews, and social media, the disclosed messages are couched in simple, straightforward, and populist terms (Pureklolon et al., 2025). This approach hopes to make all information on government policies and programs accessible to people, regardless of their levels of education and socio-economic status. This mode of communication also exemplifies Prabowo's desire to hug the broader society in non-elitist ways, creating a symbolic form of intimacy between the leader and the people.

Drawing from framing theory in political communication, message simplification is conceptualized as a step in framing an issue or policy for audience orientation and comprehension (Farkas et al., 2022). In the domain of populist politics, such an emotional closeness would be facilitated by the populist mode of communication, which tends to resort to simple language and diction that is close to the people's ordinary lives to build the impression that there is a highly considerable understanding between leaders and the people (Nai, 2021). With this strategy, Prabowo attempts to reduce the effervescence between the government and society and synchronize the process of legitimizing policies in society.

Prabowo's strategy of message simplification can be interpreted through framing theory, whereby complex policy issues are condensed into practical slogans such as "free lunch," which direct public attention toward immediate benefits while obscuring the technical dimensions of policy. This form of framing proves effective because it resonates with a public that seeks simple assurances amid socio-economic uncertainty. Nevertheless, its effectiveness carries inherent risks, including the potential to generate inflated expectations that may be difficult to fulfill and to narrow the space for critical discourse. When compared with the political communication practices of other leaders—such as Jokowi's blusukan narrative or Narendra Modi's digital nationalism—Prabowo's strategy demonstrates a parallel pattern of constructing legitimacy through emotional symbolism and simplified narratives. Within the context of post-election transitions, this approach can effectively accelerate early political consolidation, yet its long-term sustainability depends critically on the consistency of policy implementation to safeguard public credibility.

One of the characteristics of Prabowo Subianto's political communication after the 2024 election is a cooperative and responsive approach. Prabowo openly accepts criticism from the public, media, community organizations, and fellow political elites (Susilo, 2025). This approach is reflected in various opportunities for open dialogue and cross-group meetings facilitated by the government. With this approach, Prabowo tries to establish two-way communication, not just to deliver messages but also to listen to public aspirations and criticisms.

This inclusive communication is also designed to calm the opposites and polarization brewing during the 2024 election political contestation. Engaging a range of political and social actors in a level-playing field of dialogue, Prabowo attempted to break through the ideological barriers that had formed in the lead-up to the elections. This mobilization is part of broader initiatives to heal national divides and the government's political stability and

status. His collaborative narrative was developed through dialogue forums, unifying speeches, and calming messages to reinforce his political legitimacy.

In addition to being cooperative, Prabowo's communication strategy emphasizes the importance of national unity. In numerous state addresses, press conferences, and social media posts, he stresses that all parts of the country must confront national and international challenges. This story is a rhetorical story and a trust-building strategy that presents a leader who wants social peace. This focus on nationalism and solidarity is crucial for bolstering his government's legitimacy and popular backing.

The narrative of unity that is built is also always accompanied by an invitation to maintain stability and continue national development. In such context, Prabowo frequently refers to strategic programs initiated by the preceding government and urges their continuation, along with new designs that he claims would benefit the people more. Moreover, this messaging style demonstrates that his government is responsive to the vagaries of the moment's politics and focused on governing continuously and competently. By juxtaposing a discourse of stability and development, he highlights the government as the central agent in ensuring the nation's direction is in safe and progressive hands.

Public Trust in Prabowo Subianto's Early Leadership Post-Election

This section focuses on the extent of public trust towards the early leadership of Prabowo Subianto as the newly elected President and his government after the 2024 Election. Such an analysis is important for how the public reacts to and reads the new leader's performance in the early transition days. This public trust also demonstrates how the model of political communication applied by President Prabowo and his team in constructing a relationship, especially in terms of legitimacy, with the public.
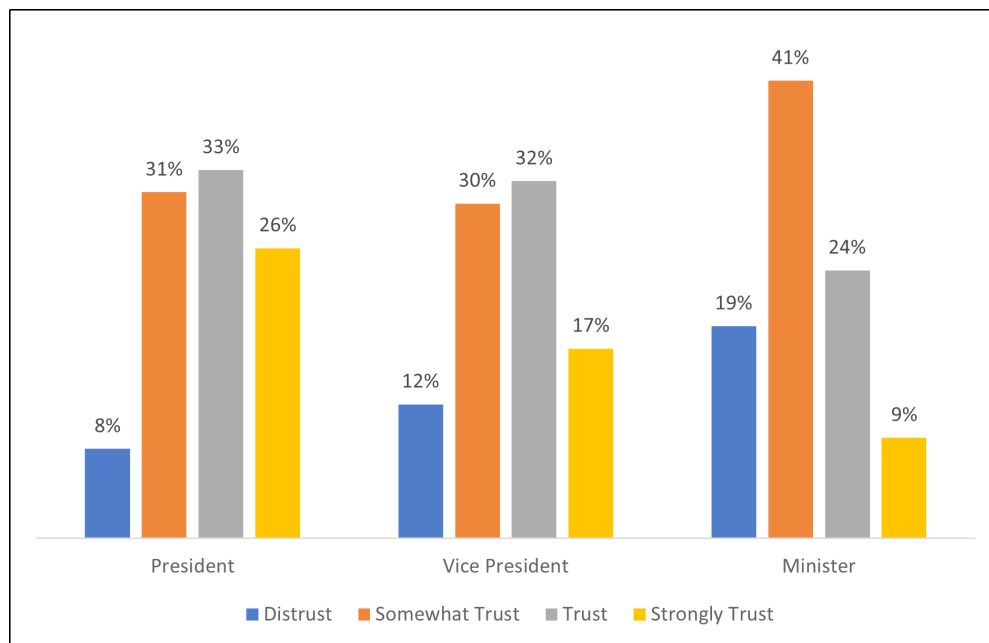
Figure 2. Public Trust in Prabowo's Leadership During the Transition Period
Source: Populix, 2025

Favourability towards President Prabowo Subianto in the early days of leadership post-election registered a relatively high level of public trust (Populix, 2025). This suggests that the President has managed to work for a short time for a good image build-up in the eyes of the public, likely due to strategic political communication. Relying on symbolism, emotion, and unity-based storytelling in his communication, the President (reconnected his heart with the public's) to rebuild trust. This public trust is crucial because it is the source of legitimacy and political support to buttress the President's executive performance in his government programs.

In comparison, the level of public trust for the Vice President and the Ministers is lower than for the President (Populix, 2025). That decrease may indicate the suboptimal political communication practiced by this actor. In the literature of political communication, the credibility of sources is one of the significant factors determining the receiver's judgment of messages. In political communication theory, source credibility is one of the main factors influencing the public's acceptance of messages (Venus, Intyaswati, & Ayuningtyas, 2024). If the credibility of the Vice President and Ministers is perceived as low—either due to lack of media exposure, poorly coordinated communication, or a mismatch between promises

and policy realization—then the level of trust in them will decrease. This discrepancy can lead to confusion among the public over the uniformity of government leadership.

Distrust of Ministers is significant and suggests widespread discontent or skepticism. This indicates that the ministers have not successfully developed a strong, communicative relationship with the public regarding political communication. Communication that is less responsive and fails to answer public concerns will erode the legitimacy and support of the policies. Moreover, such a high degree of distrust can have dire repercussions on implementing government programs' efficacy. The public is not entirely convinced that the policies conveyed are truly in their interests. Research by He and Ma (2021) confirms that high public trust in government contributes significantly to policy effectiveness and citizen participation.

This phenomenon also shows the importance of political communication that is not only focused on the main figure such as the President, but must also be strengthened by consistent and credible communication from other officials in the government. According to the theory of political communication systems, each player in the political system should be active in sending out consistent and credible messages so that a positive feedback mechanism can be generated, enhancing public trust as a whole (Baek, 2009). When only the President can establish trust but not his subordinates, the government's legitimacy is also subject to continuous attrition. Thus, an integrated communication strategy with the stakeholders' active participation is needed to enhance the credibility of government organizations.

Generally, this public trust data emphasizes that Prabowo's political communication successfully generated rating trust and was the key capital at the beginning of his leadership. However, there is homework about how the Vice President and Ministers could build up public credibility and trust by improving the quality of their communication, how quickly they respond to communication and others. That is critical if the government is to govern with a level of support in the community. Thus, an inclusive, coordinated, and adaptive political communication strategy to socio-political dynamics is needed to maintain and increase the government's legitimacy in the long term.

Public Trust: Level of Satisfaction with Various Sectors in the First 100 Days of Prabowo Subianto's Leadership

Public satisfaction with various sectors during the first 100 days of Prabowo Subianto's leadership is an important indicator in assessing the success of his government's political communication. These results reflect how the political messages conveyed can influence public perception and response to the performance of strategic sectors.
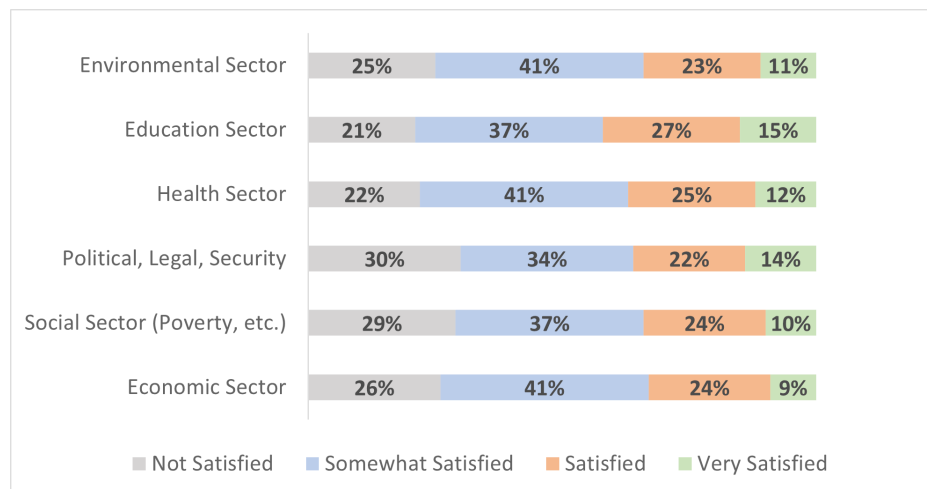
Figure 3. Public Satisfaction Levels in Various Sectors in the First 100 Days of Prabowo Subianto's Leadership
Source: Populix, 2025

The level of public satisfaction with the performance of the Prabowo Subianto government in the first 100 days shows a varied pattern across strategic sectors (Populix, 2025). Data shows that the economic and social sectors are two areas that received a relatively high percentage of dissatisfaction, at 26% and 29%, respectively. This demonstrates that the public still faces formidable obstacles in economic recovery and addressing social issues such as poverty, which are the government's top priorities. In terms of political communication, this dissatisfaction can indicate that messages about policies and implementation of government programs in these areas have not been effectively communicated or have not been widely experienced by the public.

The political, legal, and security sectors even recorded the highest level of dissatisfaction, at 30%, indicating public unrest regarding political stability and law enforcement conditions at the beginning of the administration. The relatively large dissatisfaction could disrupt the perception of government legitimacy. The theory of political legitimacy underlines that the stability and public acceptance of political authority are substantially influenced by the fairness and the effectiveness of the implementation of government functions, which is directly attributed to public trust (Gede Wahyu Wicaksana, 2021; Mittiga, 2022). Thus, this dissatisfaction underscores the necessity of special consideration in communication and policy to decrease public concerns about political and national security.

The environmental sector, with a dissatisfaction rate of 25%, also shows public awareness of environmental issues that are now a global concern. Public satisfaction of "somewhat satisfied" at 41% suggests that some are beginning to believe the government response, but, for the most part, there is room for progress. A popular communication perspective that incorporates the objective of green communication can be a powerful, policy-oriented means for enhancing public understanding and support of environmental policy (Xu & Wang, 2023; Zhang, Zhou, Naeem, & Rauf, 2025). By using hope narratives with sustainable values and shared responsibility, the government can also increase the legitimacy of environmental policies and how the future generation needs to be aware of the value of the environment to protect it in the future (Lestaluhu, Baharuddin, & Wance, 2023).

Despite the generally high satisfaction levels across many sectors, the proportion of the public not satisfied also suggests some expectations remain unfulfilled. This sense of satisfaction that has not been maximized can be interpreted as the public's need for improved service quality and more tangible results in the short term. This is a big problem for the government in terms of effective and continual communication and sustaining and fast-tracking the transformation to implement programs that reach the grassroots. In the theory of strategic communication, by hearing what the community seeks and complains about, the government should feed feedback — namely, actively accepting and responding to criticism and aspirations from the community so that communication strategies and policies can continue to be improved (Hyland-Wood, Gardner, Leask, & Ecker, 2021).

Overall, the public satisfaction data on various strategic sectors reflects the complexity of the challenges faced by the Prabowo Subianto administration in the early stages of its leadership. The satisfaction dominated by the category "quite satisfied" and dissatisfaction of notable level demonstrates a need to improve the quality of political communication, which should not only pass the message but also trust legitimacy and the active involvement of the people in matters of public life. An inclusive, responsive, and adaptive communication strategy to socio-political dynamics will significantly determine the government's success in responding to public expectations while maintaining national stability during this transition period.

This study indicates that public trust in Prabowo Subianto during the early transitional phase of his leadership is relatively high, while trust in the Vice President and cabinet ministers remains comparatively lower. In terms of public satisfaction during the first 100 days of government, the data reveal sectoral variations: dissatisfaction is highest in the political, legal, and security sectors (30%), followed by the social sector (29%) and the economic sector (26%), with the environmental sector at 25%. At the same time, the "fairly

satisfied" category continues to dominate public perceptions, particularly with 41% in environmental issues, reflecting an initial acknowledgment of policy efforts while also highlighting significant room for improvement. Overall, these figures suggest that although the President has successfully secured strong initial legitimacy, gaps persist in the consistency of political communication across the broader government apparatus.

This context can be interpreted through Prabowo's political communication model, which emphasizes symbolic approaches, emotional appeals, and narratives of unity to build closeness with the public. His digital communication strategy, particularly through social media, has reinforced the image of strong personal leadership, yet this approach has not been consistently mirrored by other officials, who are often perceived as less credible or responsive. Public dissatisfaction in the economic and social sectors further suggests that simplified messaging or policy framing has not adequately addressed citizens' everyday concerns, such as economic recovery and poverty alleviation. Accordingly, Populix data highlight that Prabowo's success in symbolic and digital communication must be balanced with cooperative and consistent strategies across all levels of government, ensuring that the legitimacy gained is not merely personal but also institutional.

CONCLUSION

Effective political communication is crucial in building and maintaining public trust in new leaders post elections in Indonesia. This research demonstrates transparency, openness of information, and direct response between leadership and the public as key elements in enhancing the legitimacy of the initial leadership. Communication that can respond to the needs and expectations of the community appropriately not only strengthens the positive image of the leader but also minimizes the skepticism and uncertainty that often arise after elections. In addition to the content of the communication message itself, the media and method of delivering the message—primarily through social media and digital platforms—influence public opinion and the legitimacy of new leaders in this modern era. Thus, managing adaptive and responsive communication is crucial for new leaders to secure political stability and public support.

The main limitation of this study lies in its reliance on data that treats public trust and satisfaction as homogeneous constructs, without accounting for the ethnic, religious, and political diversity that plays a decisive role in Indonesia. As a result, the analysis risks becoming superficial and fails to capture the multicultural dynamics that fundamentally shape the nation's political reality. Further research employing mixed methods and more

representative datasets is therefore necessary to produce findings that are both comprehensive and generalizable. Nevertheless, the study underscores that transparent, open, and interactive political communication constitutes the primary foundation for democratic consolidation in post-election Indonesia, where the success of new leadership is highly contingent upon its ability to foster effective and trustworthy communication with the broader public. The implication is that the effectiveness of new leadership in Indonesia will largely depend on the capacity to design political communication strategies that are transparent, responsive, and adaptive to the country's complex socio-political dynamics.

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