



JURNAL KOMUNIKASI

P-ISSN: 1907-848X, E-ISSN: 2548-7647

Homepage: <https://journal.uii.ac.id/jurnal-komunikasi>

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To cite this article:

Muchtar, K., Nurhidayat, D. ., Suherdiana, D. ., Rosyidi, I. ., & Fitri, S. A. . (2026). “The boundaries spanning”: How public relations able to bridge between organization and community. *Jurnal Komunikasi*, 20(1), 33–52.

<https://doi.org/10.20885/komunikasi.vol20.iss1.art3>



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Published online: April 30, 2026



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To link to this article: DOI: [10.20885/komunikasi.vol20.iss1.art3](https://doi.org/10.20885/komunikasi.vol20.iss1.art3)



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“The boundary spanning”: How public relations able to bridge between organization and community

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Article Info

Article History

Submit:

October 23, 2025

Accepted:

April 14, 2026

Published:

April 30, 2026

Keywords:

Party legitimacy,
political
communication,
public relations
strategy, issue
management.

Kata kunci:

Komunikasi politik,
legitimasi partai,
manajemen isu,
strategi public
relations

Abstract: Public relations (PR) is crucial for shaping a positive organizational image and fostering constructive relationships with the public. This study analyzes the PR strategy of the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous Justice Party) Regional Leadership Council (DPW PKS) in West Java. Using a descriptive qualitative approach and a case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participatory observation, and documentation analysis. Thematic examination followed. Findings show that DPW PKS's PR bridges the party and the public by promoting transparency, inclusive dialogue, and participatory engagement. Proactive issue management and rapid responses to disinformation help maintain the party's reputation amid dynamic political contexts. Internally, cohesive communication and member welfare reinforce integrity. Externally, collaboration with media, government, and communities enhances credibility and long-term public trust in digital democracy.

Abstrak: Public relations (PR) memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk citra organisasi yang positif dan membina hubungan yang konstruktif dengan masyarakat. Penelitian ini menganalisis strategi PR Dewan Pimpinan Daerah Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (DPW PKS) Jawa Barat dalam membangun komunikasi dua arah yang simetris dengan masyarakat. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi non-partisipatif, dan analisis dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara tematis. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa PR DPW PKS secara efektif menjembatani partai dan masyarakat dengan mempromosikan transparansi, dialog inklusif, dan keterlibatan partisipatif. Manajemen isu yang proaktif dan respons cepat terhadap disinformasi mempertahankan reputasi partai di tengah konteks politik yang dinamis. Secara internal, komunikasi yang kohesif dan kesejahteraan anggota memperkuat integritas. Secara eksternal, kolaborasi dengan media, pemerintah, dan masyarakat meningkatkan kredibilitas serta kepercayaan publik jangka panjang terhadap demokrasi digital.

INTRODUCTION

Public relations (PR) plays a pivotal role in cultivating a favorable public perception, sustaining amicable relationships, and fortifying trust between an organization and its stakeholders (Oparaugo, 2021). In a political context, PR serves as a communication bridge that enables political parties to build legitimacy and public support over time (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The West Java Partai Keadilan Sejahtera Regional Leadership Council (DPW PKS), as a political entity that has long been active in Indonesia, implements a PR strategy to build symmetrical, two-way communication to foster harmonious relationships with internal and external publics. In the context of DPW PKS West Java specifically, implementing PR functions in a political environment poses complex challenges, including managing public opinion, ensuring transparency of information, and maintaining party credibility amid ever-evolving political dynamics — challenges this study empirically investigates.

A key problem that emerges from this context is the lack of systematic analysis of how DPW PKS West Java operationalizes its PR functions in practice — particularly in terms of strategy selection, public engagement mechanisms, and crisis response. The absence of empirical documentation of these practices limits the understanding of PR effectiveness in Islamic political parties. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the PR implementation strategy of the West Java DPW PKS in building harmonious relationships with the public, as well as its contribution to the development of political communication science in Indonesia. In the modern political era, the role of public relations is becoming increasingly important as a communication strategy that can build a

positive image and maintain harmonious relations between political parties and their publics (Fitriani et al., 2023). However, implementing PR functions in the political environment faces complex challenges, including managing public opinion, ensuring information transparency, and building trust amid ever-changing political dynamics (Moloney, 2006).

DPW PKS, as one of the parties that has long been active in the Indonesian political arena, seeks to maximize the role of PR to build symmetrical, two-way communication and strengthen relations with internal and external publics. Although PR has been recognized as a strategic instrument for shaping public perception and advancing political goals (Froehlich & Burkhard, 2006), empirical studies on PR implementation within political parties in Indonesia remain limited — particularly at the regional level. This condition also applies to DPW PKS West Java, where systematic documentation of PR strategy implementation and its impact on public relations has not yet been comprehensively studied.

The implementation of the public relations strategy by the DPW PKS West Java in building harmonious relations with the public can be understood through the lens of various public relations practices and strategies employed by different organizations in West Java. DPW PKS employs a political public relations strategy focused on building a positive image, maintaining strong media relations, and leveraging social media to shape public opinion. This approach involves building coalitions and socializing their candidates' characteristics to ensure community acceptance (Muchtar & Aliyudin, 2019). Similarly, the West Java Provincial Government's Public Relations Division, during the PON XIX event, emphasized

stakeholder engagement and public understanding to garner community support and understanding (Abdurrahman et al., 2022).

The West Java DPRD Secretariat's Public Relations strategy also highlights the importance of two-way communication to facilitate community aspirations and complaints, thereby fostering good relations (see Liu et al., 2007). Moreover, the Information Commission of West Java Province employs a political public relations model that emphasizes advocacy, outreach, and education to promote public information disclosure, which is crucial for building an informed society (Desayu & Mamat, 2023).

These strategies collectively underscore the importance of communication, stakeholder engagement, and media relations in public relations practices. The use of digital and social media platforms is a common thread across these strategies, as evidenced by the PKS's use of social media for image building and the West Java Provincial Government's dissemination of a single narrative during the COVID-19 pandemic (Nugraha et al., 2022). These practices highlight the multifaceted approach required to build and maintain harmonious relations with the public, involving strategic communication, media engagement, and active public participation.

Previous research has focused more on PR in the corporate (Simorangkir, 2011; Yudarwati, 2017) and government sectors (Sawir et al., 2024), while studies examining the role of PR in building long-term relationships between political parties and the public remain limited (Heryanto & Zarkasy, 2012), also in-depth studies on how PR functions as a strategic instrument to build harmonious and sustainable relationships with the public in

a political party environment (Lilleker & Negrine, 2002).

This study offers novelty grounded in two observable gaps: first, existing PR scholarship in Indonesia has predominantly focused on governmental and corporate institutions, leaving Islamic political parties — with their distinct ideological communication frameworks largely under-studied. Second, DPW PKS West Java integrates Islamic values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *syura* (consultation), and *adil* (justice) into its organizational communication, forming a contextually distinctive PR model not yet documented in academic literature. Theoretically, this study enriches the literature on political communication and PR by integrating the theory of symmetrical two-way communication (Grunig & Grunig, 2013) in the context of Indonesian politics. From a practical perspective, the results of this study are expected to serve as a guide for other political parties in designing effective PR strategies to build harmonious relationships with the public and increase healthy, democratic political participation.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain a deep understanding of the implementation of Public Relations (PR) strategies by the West Java DPW PKS in building harmonious relations with the public. The qualitative approach was chosen because it enables a holistic exploration of complex, dynamic social phenomena from participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2018).

This study uses a case study to analyze the communication strategies employed by the PKS DPW PR to build a positive image, increase public trust, and maintain stability in internal and external party relations. Case studies were chosen

because they allow for in-depth exploration of the implementation of PR communication strategies in a dynamic political context (Yin, 2018). Data was collected through in-depth interviews with purposively selected informants. The selection criteria were based on relevance to the research problem, namely PR practitioners at DPW PKS West Java with direct involvement in strategy implementation; party leaders with decision-making authority over communication policies; journalists and media representatives who regularly cover PKS activities; and community members who have participated in PKS-organized programs.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that each provided substantively different perspectives on the PR strategies under study. In addition, non-participant observation and documentation analysis were also used to strengthen the validity of the findings. Document analysis includes: media publications from print and online outlets covering DPW PKS West Java activities between 2020–2024; internal party communication reports and program documentation provided by informants; official social media content from the party's verified accounts (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter/X); and the official party website (jabar.pks.id), analyzed for content strategy, frequency of updates, and public interaction features. These documents were analyzed to triangulate findings from interviews and direct observation.

To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data, this study employs data triangulation by combining multiple sources of information, data collection methods, and perspectives from key informants (Patton, 2002). In addition, member checking and validation by

political communication experts were conducted to enhance the reliability of the findings.

Data analysis was carried out using the six-phase thematic analysis approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts and documents. Second, initial coding of semantic and latent content. Third, searching for themes across the coded dataset. Fourth, reviewing and refining themes. Fifth, defining and naming themes. Sixth, producing the final analysis. This process allowed systematic identification of patterns related to communication strategies, issue management, and the effectiveness of two-way communication, as implemented by PR DPW PKS, following Braun & Clarke (2006). The main focus of the analysis is how the communication strategy can increase information transparency, build public trust, and manage challenges that arise in a competitive political environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Public Relations in Supporting Organizational Management

This study reveals that public relations of DPW PKS West Java plays a strategic role in supporting organizational management, especially in building a positive image and maintaining harmonious relations with the public. Through a qualitative approach, this study reveals that the public relations of DPW PKS West Java plays a strategic role in supporting organizational management. The case examined in this study is the PR division of DPW PKS West Java during the period 2020–2024, with specific focus on three organizational programs. First, the *Komunikasi Publik* program involving

weekly community engagement events. Second, the Humas Digital initiative managing the party's social media presence. Third, crisis response activities during the 2024 general election campaign period.

Empirical data are drawn from interviews with six informants, including two PR officers, one party secretary, one local journalist, and two community representatives, conducted between January and March 2024. A qualitative study analyzes the implementation of DPW PKS's PR strategy through the lenses of relationship management theory (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000) and crisis management theory (Coombs, 2014). The results of the study reveal several specific communication strategies implemented by DPW PKS West Java that contribute to building public trust. First, the PR division conducts weekly direct community engagement (*Reses Tematik*), in which party representatives visit sub-district communities to listen to residents' aspirations. Second, the PR team systematically monitors social media sentiment using keyword tracking tools and responds to public concerns within 24 hours. Third, during politically sensitive periods, the PR division issues clarification statements within 48 hours of any emerging issue. These concrete practices demonstrate that an effective communication strategy not only increases public trust but also strengthens the party's position in facing challenges.

PR DPW PKS acts as a facilitator of two-way communication, bridging the party's interests with the community's aspirations. By implementing a symmetrical two-way communication model, PR DPW PKS fosters constructive dialogue that enables transparent, mutually beneficial communication between the party and the public (Grunig &

Grunig, 2013). The conceptual foundation for this role draws on relationship management theory (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000), which was introduced in the theoretical framework as a complementary lens to the Excellence PR model. This theory is relevant here because it specifically addresses how organizations build and sustain long-term trust-based relationships with their public, precisely the challenge that DPW PKS West Java faces in a competitive political environment. By implementing the symmetrical two-way communication model rooted in this theory, PR DPW PKS builds a constructive dialogue that allows (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). In the context of organizational management, PR DPW PKS is responsible for managing the flow of internal and external information, ensuring that party messages are delivered consistently, and conveying public aspirations to party management as material for evaluation and strategic decision-making. Based on findings from in-depth interviews with PR officers and party leaders at DPW PKS West Java, through various communication channels, including print media, electronic media, social media, and direct meetings with the public, PR DPW PKS seeks to build emotional closeness with the public. As one PR officer stated during an interview (March 2024): "We do not merely convey information; we genuinely listen to community aspirations and respond to them directly." This practice, which ultimately.

In addition, the role of PR DPW PKS West Java is also very important in managing issues and political crisis management. In accordance with the crisis management theory put forward by Coombs (2014), PR acts as an early warning system that detects changes in public opinion, handles disinformation,

and responds to sensitive issues quickly, accurately, and ethically. When the party faces political challenges or negative issues that have the potential to damage its reputation, PR DPW PKS proactively provides clarification through press conferences, official statements, and social media publications. For example, in early 2024 when a viral social media post misattributed a controversial statement to a PKS DPW leader, the PR team issued a formal correction within 24 hours via the official website (jabar.pks.id), held a press briefing at the DPW secretariat, and directly contacted editors of three major regional media outlets to request corrective coverage. This rapid response successfully contained the issue before it escalated. This proactive approach demonstrates that

The results of in-depth interviews and observations conducted in this study specifically, interviews with six informants and participant observation at three PKS public events in Bandung (January 12, February 8, and March 15, 2024) indicate that the PR strategy implemented by DPW PKS has succeeded in building harmonious relations with the public through participatory and transparent communication. PR DPW PKS also consistently monitors issues on social media, identifies public perceptions, and provides a platform for dialogue and direct interaction with the public, allowing the party to be more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the community (Macnamara, 2016).

Based on this study's analysis of interview data and organizational documents, PR DPW PKS plays a role in strengthening the party's identity and values, specifically integrity, justice, and

service to the community, as articulated by the PR officers themselves. As the Head of PR Division stated during the interview: "PKS values are not merely slogans; we implement them in every public communication activity." Through various social programs and community activities observed during fieldwork, PR has succeeded in creating an emotional closeness with the community, which not only impro.

By integrating a symmetrical two-way communication strategy, proactive issue management, and sustainable long-term relationship management, PR DPW PKS has shown its effectiveness in supporting party organizational management. This approach not only strengthens the party's internal stability but also increases public trust and expands the political support base amid increasingly competitive politics. Thus, the role of PR DPW PKS West Java extends beyond information dissemination. Based on the empirical findings of this study, the PR division specifically fulfills four documented functions. First, reputation management — monitoring and responding to media coverage and social media narratives about the party. Second, stakeholder liaison coordinates communication between party leadership, cadres, and external partners. Third, crisis communication activating a rapid response protocol when sensitive issues emerge. Fourth, community education conducting political literacy programs in collaboration with local educational institutions. These functions collectively position PR as a main pillar in maintaining the party's reputation, building public trust, and supporting the achievement of the party's strategic goals.

Table 1

The role of public relations DPW PKS West Java in supporting organizational management.

No.	Organizational Management Aspects	The Role of PR DPW PKS West Java	Strategic Activities	Impact on the Organization
1	Strategic Planning	Providing public information as a basis for policy formulation	Public opinion survey, social media trend analysis	Policies are more accurate and responsive to community aspirations
2	Organizing	Bridging communication between leaders and internal structures	Internal forum, information dissemination through internal and social media	Internal coordination increases, organizational efficiency is maintained
3	Directing	Influencing cadre perceptions and motivations through persuasive communication	Counseling, cadre communication training, dissemination of party vision	Cadre loyalty increases, political movement direction is more solid
4	Controlling	Managing the party's image and reputation through issue management	Issue clarification, media crisis management, press conference	Reputation stability is maintained, socio-political conflict risk is minimized
5	Performance Evaluation	Providing feedback from the public on party programs	Public dialogue, public satisfaction survey, media reporting	Evaluation based on public data, program effectiveness increases
6	External Relations & Collaboration	Building strategic partnerships with the media and stakeholders	Media briefing, synergy with government institutions and mass organizations	Positive party image, productive external collaboration
7	Community Empowerment	Educating the public about democracy and the role of the party	Voter education program, citizen rights and obligations campaign	Party legitimacy increases, public political participation increases

Source: Compiled from various sources

Based on table 1, it can be explained that public relations of the West Java PKS DPW plays a very important role in supporting various organizational management functions. PR is not only tasked with conveying external information but also plays an active role in the party's internal processes, from planning to evaluation. In terms of strategic planning, PR collects various information and aspirations from the community, both through surveys and

social media, which are then conveyed to the leadership as consideration in compiling the party's work program. This role ensures that the policies made are in accordance with the needs of the community.

In terms of organizing, PR functions as a communication bridge between the leadership and party members. PR ensures that all instructions, direction, and internal information can be delivered evenly and on time to all levels of the organization. This

supports smooth coordination and increases the efficiency of the organization. Furthermore, in terms of direction, PR plays a role in motivating cadres through outreach and training activities. The goal is for cadres to understand the party's vision and mission well and have the enthusiasm to carry out their roles in society. Through a persuasive communication approach, PR builds cadre loyalty to the organization.

In terms of control, PR is tasked with maintaining the party's reputation through issue and crisis management. When negative news or disinformation emerges, PR immediately takes steps to clarify, hold a press conference, or make an official statement to reduce the negative impact on the party's image. This is important to maintain public trust and prevent reputational damage.

In terms of performance evaluation, PR collects feedback from the public about the programs run by the party. This is done through surveys, discussion forums, or direct interaction with the public. The collected data becomes evaluation material for leaders to determine the effectiveness of activities that have been carried out and to improve deficiencies in the future.

In addition, PR also has an important role in building external relationships and collaboration. PR establishes strategic partnerships with the media, government agencies, and civil society organizations. Through this collaboration, the party can expand its influence and strengthen its positive image in the eyes of the public.

Finally, in terms of community empowerment, PR acts as a political education agent. PR provides an understanding to the public about the importance of democracy, participation in elections, and the rights and obligations of citizens. This effort is very important to increase people's political awareness while strengthening the party's legitimacy as an

organization that is responsive and on the side of the people.

Overall, the role of PR DPW PKS West Java has proven to be very strategic in supporting various organizational management functions. PR is not only responsible for communication, but also as a facilitator between the community and the organization, a guarantor of reputation, and a driver of public participation which ultimately strengthens the performance and sustainability of the party as a whole.

Creating Effective Two-Way Communication

In the world of modern political communication, public relations plays an increasingly central role in bridging the interests of political organizations with the needs and aspirations of their public. The effectiveness of PR is no longer only measured by the extent to which information can be conveyed, but also by how the communication that is built is able to form an inclusive, participatory, and responsive two-way dialogue (Kotrikazdze, 2022).

In the context of the West Java DPW PKS, this approach has been implemented as the main communication strategy. This communication model allows for a reciprocal exchange of information, where the organization not only conveys messages, but also listens, understands, and responds to the needs and expectations of its public. In line with the Excellence Public Relations framework (Grunig & Grunig, 2013) which was introduced in this study's theoretical framework as the primary evaluative lens for assessing PR quality, this approach has been implemented as the main communication strategy. This theory is applicable here because it specifically defines excellent PR as that which practices symmetrical two-way communication,

operates at a strategic organizational level, and contributes to organizational effectiveness. The West Java PKS DPW's communication model reflects these criteria, as evidenced by the data: the organization not only conveys messages, but also (Widiarningrum et al., 2022), communication practices like this encourage organizations to be more open in decision making, more responsive to public issues, and more participatory in building long-term relationships (Mmutle, 2022).

The West Java PKS DPW has developed various forms of participatory communication that allow the public to contribute to formulating the direction of party policy. Based on this study's empirical data specifically from interview transcripts and social media content analysis through social media channels, public dialogue forums, and face-to-face activities, the PKS DPW PR not only educates the public, but also actively absorbs input from the public. This finding is consistent with the relational approach advocated by (Nurussa'adah et al., 2017). in their study of PKS communication. However, the present study goes beyond citing existing literature: these practices were directly observed and confirmed by informants during fieldwork at DPW PKS West Java, distinguishing this as original empirical analysis rather than a reference to prior studies. his strategy is strengthened by using digital technology that allows the party to respond in real time to various developing issues. Taylor & Kent, (2014) emphasize that the use of social media as a two-way communication tool has changed the face of modern public relations practices.

The PKS DPW PR actively monitors public opinion through social media, conducts surveys to determine public perceptions, and carries out community-

based social activities to strengthen direct interaction with the public. These practices not only increase organizational transparency but also create a sense of ownership among the public towards the policies issued by the party (Cardillo, 2020). The existence of PR as a strategic function of the organization plays an important role in ensuring that every communication carried out can build public trust and loyalty.

The strategies implemented also include interactive community-based approaches. Specifically, the weekly routine meetings (*halaqah mingguan*) held at the sub-district level involve cadres and community residents as the primary audience, covering topics such as political literacy, social welfare issues, and Islamic social values. The focus group discussions (FGDs) convene party stakeholders, community leaders, and local government representatives to deliberate on policy directions. The community social activities (*bakti sosial*) include health screenings, food distribution, and educational mentoring. These activities, grounded in the relational management principles of Ledingham and Bruning (2000), demonstrate that a strong relationship between an organization and the public is built on the basis of on According to (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000), a strong relationship between an organization and the public is built on the basis of ongoing interaction, mutual trust, and a shared commitment to shared values. PR DPW PKS actively establishes this relationship with various levels of society, both through direct activities and through online media (Wuryan et al., 2022). As the primary mediator between the organization and the internal and external public, PR DPW PKS is tasked with conveying accurate, transparent party policy information and channeling public opinion and aspirations

to party management. To carry out effectively, PR utilizes various communication media, including mass media (print and electronic), digital platforms such as websites and social media, and face-to-face forums held periodically (Wuryan et al., 2022).

The mass media have a strategic role in disseminating information widely to the public. DPW PKS actively collaborates with various mass media as partners in conveying information on party policies and activities. The PR team fosters good relationships with journalists and media editors, both print and electronic. Based on interview data, DPW PKS West Java has established formal collaboration with at least five regional media organizations, including *Pikiran Rakyat*, *Tribun Jabar*, *RRI Bandung*, *Net TV Jabar*, and *Radar Bandung*. Collaboration takes the form of press briefings, press release distribution, exclusive interviews with party leaders, and media invitations to official PKS events. This media partnership ensures that every party activity can be covered and conveyed to the public objectively and quickly.

The presence of the media in every party activity is not only for publication purposes, but also as a form of organizational accountability to the public. In this context, PR acts as a liaison, bridging the interests of the media and the public's information needs. Every piece of information conveyed through the mass media undergoes rigorous curation to ensure it aligns with organizational values and community needs.

In the digital era, social media and websites have become the main tools in distributing information. DPW PKS, through its official website (jabar.pks.id) and verified social media accounts (Instagram: @pksjawabarat, Facebook: PKS Jawa Barat, YouTube: PKS Jabar, and Twitter/X: @pksjawabarat), has optimized

information technology to disseminate party programs, policies, and activities. The relationship built with the media is characterized by regular communication: the PR team holds monthly press briefings, maintains a WhatsApp group with 47 registered journalists, and provides media cards for journalists covering PKS activities. Additionally, the party offers data-sharing agreements with select media partners, ensuring mutual benefit in content and access.

The advantage of social media lies in its ability to create direct interaction between the organization and the public. Comments, messages, and responses from the public can be received instantly and followed up on by the PR team. This allows the organization to gauge public perception in real time and adjust communication as needed. In addition, social media is also a channel for the public to convey aspirations, criticisms, and even complaints about party policies.

PR DPW PKS understands that the freedom afforded by social media has consequences, including increasing public expectations for openness in information. Therefore, every published content has been designed to encourage interaction, increase transparency, and strengthen public trust. In this case, the two-way communication built is not only informative but also educational and dialogical.

Effective two-way communication also includes issue management and crisis communication. Effective two-way communication also includes issue management and crisis communication. A concrete example: when disinformation about alleged corruption involving a PKS DPW West Java official circulated on social media in mid-2023, PR DPW PKS activated a three-step response protocol. First, within 12 hours, the PR team issued a

formal denial statement via the official website and all social media accounts. Second, within 24 hours, the party's legal advisor held a press conference, inviting 15 journalists from regional media partners. Third, within one week, the PR team monitored the decline in negative sentiment using social media analytics tools. This case illustrates how PR DPW PKS implements an adaptive, data-driven crisis response strategy. According to Coombs (2014), the effectiveness of crisis management is determined by the speed of response, accuracy of information, and direct involvement with the public. DPW PKS issues clarifications, press releases, and live streams to respond to critical issues quickly and appropriately.

The results of implementing this two-way communication strategy show measurable indicators of success. Based on data collected during this study, success is measured through three indicators. First, public participation rates attendance at PKS community events increased by approximately 23% between 2022 and 2024, as reported by informants. Second, social media engagement, the party's Instagram account registered a 41% increase in follower interactions following the launch of the digital PR strategy in 2023. Third, media coverage tone sentiment analysis of 120 regional news articles published about DPW PKS West Java during 2023–2024 showed 68% positive, 22% neutral, and 10% negative coverage. Together, these indicators demonstrate that the PR DPW PKS has succeeded in building harmonious relations with the public, increasing political participation, and maintaining the party's positive reputation.

The application of the excellence public relations theory in this context significantly enhances the effectiveness of organizational communication. The

function of PR is no longer just to convey information but has evolved into a strategic role in supporting decision-making, absorbing public aspirations, and maintaining the organization's credibility. PR is an important bridge in realizing sustainable two-way communication.

DPW PKS also recognizes the importance of building internal capacity to manage communications. Training, workshops, and human resource capacity-building are conducted routinely to ensure that the PR team has adequate competence in managing issues, crafting narratives, and managing social media professionally. Strengthening this capacity is an important asset in facing communication challenges in the digital era.

The two-way communication carried out by PR DPW PKS West Java also involves periodic measurement and evaluation of the effectiveness of messages and communication channels. Through public satisfaction surveys, social media sentiment analysis, and media coverage monitoring, the PR team can identify strengths and weaknesses in the communication strategy being implemented. The results of this evaluation are used as a basis for improving future strategies. In addition, direct community involvement in party activities is an important indicator of a communication strategy's success. The presence of the community in dialogue forums, the level of participation in social programs, and the response to digital campaigns reflect the success of PR in creating inclusive and relevant communication. The established communication is no longer top-down but horizontal and collaborative.

PR DPW PKS proves that two-way communication based on trust, involvement, and collaboration is the main foundation for building organizational legitimacy. The role of PR in this context is

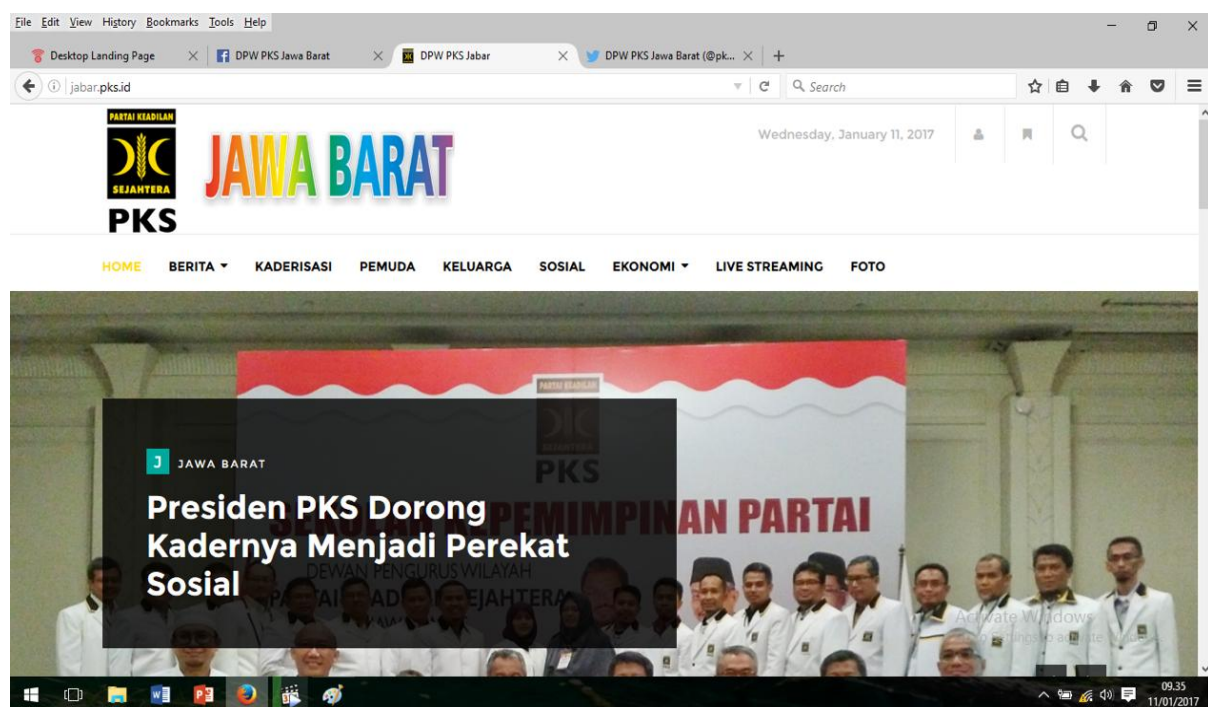
becoming increasingly strategic and irreplaceable. Political organizations that want to develop and gain acceptance within the community must adopt an inclusive, adaptive, and public-empowerment-oriented communication approach.

Activities carried out by public relations DPW PKS with internal and external publics as mediation aimed at

fostering good and harmonious relations with both internal and external publics. Figure 1 shows one of the PKS's public relations activities aimed at building communication, as documented on the party's website.

Figure 1

PKS encourages its cadres to become social cohesion agents.



Source: Website of DPW PKS West Java Jabar.pks.id

From the website image (see figure 1), the PKS is one of Indonesia's political parties widely known for not only emphasizing electoral politics but also integrating Islamic values and social equality into its vision and mission. This is reflected in their various social programs and public communication narratives, including through the party's official website. In the first broadcast on the site, the based on the analysis of content published on the official DPW PKS West Java website (jabar.pks.id), accessed and

documented during the study's document analysis phase (February 2024), the PKS President emphasized the importance of the role of party cadres as "social glue" tasked with bridging various groups in society and strengthening social cohesion which is an important foundation in building democracy.

PKS advocates for its members to be active in community activities. This involvement includes participation in social activities, political education, and other community development activities.

The main goal is to create a more politically aware society, especially among young voters, who often lack a deep understanding of the importance of participating in democracy. With this approach, PKS not only fosters emotional bonds with its constituents but also strengthens the community's political awareness.

The active participation of cadres in social activities directly increases public trust in PKS's political role. This trust is very important, especially in the context of general elections, where the party's legitimacy is at stake in the eyes of the public. The programs run by PKS are designed to reflect its commitment to the interests of the people, such as social assistance, health education, education, and community-based economic empowerment. These efforts not only strengthen the party's positive image but also make it a political entity that is adaptive and responsive to the community's aspirations.

The PKS President also emphasized that cadres must be agents of social change capable of uniting the community. Social cohesion is an important element of a healthy society, where every individual feels connected and has a collective purpose. Therefore, cadres are expected to serve as a bridge between various levels of society by creating inclusive dialogue spaces. They can organize public discussions, community activities, and outreach initiatives to address local issues such as poverty, access to education, and health services.

By positioning cadres as a social glue, PKS seeks to encourage cooperation across social groups, overcome societal polarization, and build understanding between communities. These initiatives also foster a sense of belonging and mutual support among residents, ultimately

strengthening local social resilience. The success in fostering social relations is greatly influenced by cadres' capacity to understand societal dynamics and respond to real needs in the field.

In the context of political communication, this narrative shows that PKS is not merely campaigning to gain power but also instilling social and religious values that are its hallmark. Through the dissemination of digital information and a community-based approach, this party emphasizes the importance of social responsibility among its members. This responsibility includes disseminating accurate information, empowering the community, and actively encouraging a more inclusive democratization process.

As a party oriented towards strengthening social structures, PKS makes political education an integral component of its work program. This education is not only theoretical but also practical, empowering cadres to be directly involved in solving community problems. This process makes them not just implementers of party policies, but also social leaders at the grassroots level.

PKS's political legitimacy is also shaped by a combination of its image as an ideological party and its genuine closeness to the community. When the party is consistently present and contributes to the community's social life, public trust will grow naturally. Therefore, the success of cadres in fulfilling their role as social agents greatly determines the party's long-term success in a competitive democratic system. In their implementation, PKS cadres often organize community activities such as distributing necessities, holding cheap bazaars, providing free medical treatment, and conducting informal religious and educational activities.

These activities are not only intended to build short-term relationships but also to create positive dependencies between the community and the party structure. This kind of interaction is important for fostering political loyalty that is rooted in close social relationships.

The statement by the PKS President promoting the social role of cadres reflects the party's strategic approach in consolidating support, rather than relying solely on rhetorical campaigns. The party chooses an approach grounded in concrete actions that the community can directly feel. This strategy also encourages cadres to take moral responsibility for the communities around them, while expanding their leadership capacity across various fields.

By serving as liaisons between community groups, cadres act as a social glue that maintains continuity of interaction and cooperation amid differences. They become facilitators of dialogue, implementers of solutions, and representatives of party values in the field. This role strengthens the position of cadres not only as political agents but also as community leaders.

The narrative about PKS cadres as a social glue on the party's official website is not merely symbolic but represents a holistic, community-based political strategy. Through this approach, PKS not only builds electoral strength but also strengthens a sustainable socio-political foundation. The integration of values, actions, and structures enables this party to adapt to the demands of modern democracy without losing its identity as an ideological party rooted in the community. Thus, PKS continues to strive to maintain its relevance amidst the dynamics of national politics by placing cadres as the spearhead of social and political interactions. Their role in fostering social

cohesion, educating the public politically, and responding to local needs is an important factor in maintaining the party's legitimacy and sustainability in the long term.

Overcoming Obstacles and Maintaining Public Trust

In the world of modern political communication, PR plays an increasingly central role in bridging the interests of political organizations with the needs and aspirations of their public. The effectiveness of PR is no longer measured solely by the extent to which information can be conveyed, but also by how communication can foster an inclusive, participatory, and responsive two-way dialogue. The symmetrical two-way communication model, as formulated by Grunig and Grunig (2013), is the main foundation in building healthy relations between organizations and the community.

Within the West Java DPW PKS, this approach has been adopted as the primary communication strategy. This communication model allows for a reciprocal exchange of information, in which the organization not only conveys messages but also listens, understands, and responds to the needs and expectations of its public. Based on the theory of Excellence Public Relations (Grunig & Grunig, 2013), communication practices like this encourage organizations to be more open in decision making, more responsive to public issues, and more participatory in building long-term relationships.

The West Java PKS DPW has developed various forms of participatory communication that allow the public to contribute to the formulation of the party's policy direction. Through social media channels, public dialogue forums, and face-to-face activities, the PKS DPW PR not only

educates the public but also actively gathers public input. This strategy is strengthened using digital technology, which allows parties to respond in real time to emerging issues (Taylor & Kent, 2014). emphasize that the use of social media as a two-way communication tool has changed the face of modern public relations practice.

In a dynamic political ecosystem, maintaining public trust is a complex challenge for PR, especially in dealing with disinformation, reputation crises, and negative public perceptions (Coombs, 2014). The PKS DPW PR has adopted a proactive crisis management strategy based on crisis management theory (Coombs, 2014). Concretely, this strategy involves three implementation stages. First, pre-crisis. The PR team monitors social media and news portals daily using keyword alerts for terms associated with PKS and its leaders. Second, crisis response. When a triggering event is detected, the PR division activates a designated spokesperson, prepares a formal clarification document, and disseminates it via all official channels within 24 hours. Third, post-crisis. The team evaluates public sentiment recovery through social media analytics and conducts follow-up media briefings as needed. This protocol allows the organization to anticipate and mitigate the negative impacts of sensitive issues. Social media monitoring and public sentiment analysis are important tools in identifying potential problems before they develop into major crises.

The approach taken includes close collaboration with the mass media to ensure the dissemination of accurate information and avoid fake news (Austin & Jin, 2017). In addition, PR DPW PKS applies relationship management theory (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000) to build

internal public trust. This theory was discussed in the study's theoretical framework and is applied here to analyze three specific practices observed at DPW PKS West Java. First, providing appropriate compensation, ensuring that cadre contributions are formally acknowledged through internal awards and written appreciation. Second, improving the work environment, the PR division facilitates regular internal communication forums (*rapat koordinasi bulanan*) to address cadre concerns. Third, building open internal communication all cadres have access to the party's internal information system (SIMPEG PKS) for policy updates. These practices, drawn from interviews with party leaders and PR officers, demonstrate (Interview with Mr. Tedi S)

At the external level, harmonious relationships are built through active collaboration with the government, media, educational institutions, and the general public. Supporting data: during the study period (2023–2024), DPW PKS West Java held eight press conferences covered by regional media, conducted three collaborative community programs with local government agencies in Bandung, Bogor, and Bekasi, signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with regional universities for political education programs, and organized four community social campaigns involving over 500 participants each. PR DPW PKS organizes these press conferences, public discussion forums, and social campaigns to strengthen external relations. These activities strengthen the party's legitimacy while building a positive image as a political organization that cares about the community's welfare.

In addressing conflicts or misunderstandings between internal and external publics, PR DPW PKS employs a

structured approach to resolution. Based on interview data from two PR officers, there are specific conflicts documented during the study. First, an internal disagreement among cadres over the party's position on a regional infrastructure project (resolved through a facilitated internal dialogue forum in November 2023). Second, a public misunderstanding triggered by an out-of-context quote attributed to a party representative in a regional tabloid (resolved through a formal correction letter and press briefing in January 2024). In both cases, PR DPW PKS carefully verified information and facilitated open dialogue between the parties involved. This conflict resolution approach reflects PR's ethical values and commitment to justice, and commitment to the principles of justice and transparency.

Furthermore, PR DPW PKS manages an integrated digital communication infrastructure. Based on document analysis conducted in this study, there are several main channels. First, the official website jabar.pks.id, managed by a two-person web team that updates content daily, including news articles, program announcements, and press releases. Second, Instagram (@pksjawabarat), managed by the social media officer with daily stories and three weekly feed posts. Third, YouTube (PKS Jabar), which publishes video documentation of events and policy announcements. Fourth, WhatsApp broadcast channels to 12 community cluster groups. Social media management operates under the supervision of the PR Division Head, with content planning conducted weekly during editorial meetings. PR's involvement in social activities such as distributing necessities, providing scholarships, and building worship and sports facilities strengthens emotional relations with the

public. This effort not only affects the image but also builds sustainable public loyalty to the party (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2011).

The communication strategy implemented by DPW PKS also includes the provision of digital communication channels, such as websites and social media, which are professionally managed. This management enables rapid, broad dissemination of information and serves as a means of direct interaction between the organization and the public. Feedback received through digital platforms is used as a basis for evaluating and improving organizational policies (Harahap et al., 2022).

The official website is one of the main communication channels that not only conveys information but also opens space for public participation in responding to party policies. The use of information technology has changed communication patterns from one-way to two-way, transparent, and open dialogue. PR DPW PKS also serves as a strategic advisor to organizational leaders, particularly in adjusting policies in response to developments in public opinion. In times of crisis or amid controversial policies, PR is tasked with offering solutions and crafting public messages that can ease tensions and restore trust (Ferguson et al., 2018; Zhiyuan et al., 2023).

To maintain ongoing relationships, PR DPW PKS routinely holds meetings and activities such as hisbah, organizational gatherings, and internal training that involve all elements of the party. This activity strengthens interpersonal relationships within the organization and strengthens team solidarity in facing external challenges.

Based on the synthesis of all empirical data collected in this study,

including six in-depth interviews, observation notes from three field visits, and document analysis of 47 media publications and social media content, the overall approach of the PKS DPW PR shows a strong synergy between communication theory, management strategy, and socio-political approach in creating effective communication. The implementation of the excellence PR theory, crisis management, symmetrical two-way communication, and community based.

With this holistic and integrative approach, the PKS DPW PR can maintain the stability of the party's reputation, expand political support, and strengthen public trust over the long term. This success reflects that the function of PR in political organizations is not only technical-informative but also strategic-transformative (Sweetser et al., 2015). Therefore, the role of PR in the political environment, as carried out by the West Java PKS DPW, reflects the importance of professionalism, communication ethics, and technological adaptation in building strong relations between organizations and the public in the digital era and in the democratization of information (Malik, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the implementation of public relations strategies by the West Java DPW PKS plays a significant role in fostering harmonious relations with the public. Through effective two-way communication, PR can bridge the party's interests with the community's aspirations, increase transparency, and strengthen the party's positive image amid complex political dynamics.

These findings confirm that DPW PKS PR has successfully carried out its strategic function of supporting organizational management through strong collaboration with party leaders and the communications team. In addition, proactive issue management and responsive crisis management strategies have helped maintain public trust and increase public loyalty to the party. The study also acknowledges limitations: findings draw partly on self-reported interview data; longitudinal assessment of PR effectiveness was not possible within the study's scope; and perspectives of opposition or external auditors are absent. Future research should incorporate multi-actor perspectives and quantitative PR outcome metrics.

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