

Building Public Trust: Public Acceptance of the Madiun City General Election Commission's Communication Strategy for the 2024 Elections

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ABSTRACT

Public trust is a fundamental element in the implementation of democratic elections. The General Elections Commission (KPU), as the election organizing body, plays a strategic role in building and maintaining public trust, one of which is through effective public communication strategies. This study aims to analyze public acceptance of the communication strategies implemented by the Madiun City KPU in the 2024 Elections, and how these strategies contribute to building public trust. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with voters, community leaders, and the Madiun City KPU, supported by observation and analysis of official KPU documents. The results show that the Madiun City KPU's communication strategies were implemented through various channels, both conventional and digital, such as face-to-face outreach, social media, and collaboration with local stakeholders. In general, these strategies were positively received by the public, particularly in increasing understanding of election stages and voter rights and obligations. However, this study also identified challenges, such as limited information reach for certain groups and differences in the level of political literacy of the community. In conclusion, the Madiun City General Elections Commission (KPU)'s communication strategy played a crucial role in building public trust in the 2024 election process, although further strengthening of inclusiveness and sustainability is still needed. This research is expected to contribute to the development of communication strategies for election organizers at the local level.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a democratic country that adheres to a system of the people, by the people, for the people. This concept was put forward by Abraham Lincoln, who essentially stated that democracy is a system of government in which the people, either directly or indirectly, have full power and sovereignty (Yasir, 2006). One manifestation of democracy is through holding general elections that directly involve the people in electing representatives to hold certain positions. This way, the realization of popular sovereignty can be achieved by producing aspirational, responsible, and qualified representatives.

Sardini believes that Indonesia is a country that upholds openness, where all citizens who have the right to vote can choose their leaders in the administration of the state (Sardini, 2011). Voting must, of course, be done directly, universally, freely, and secretly, with a sense of representation from the community itself, allowing it to actively participate in determining the direction of national development. Therefore, election organizers must have high integrity, be impartial to any election participant, and understand their duties and responsibilities as election organizers. The institution must also be credible to guarantee the implementation of the community's political rights.

In Indonesia, elections are held by the General Election Commission (KPU) based on Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections. There are four types of elections in Indonesia, namely the Presidential Election (Pilpres), Legislative Election (Pileg), and Regional Head Election (Pilkada). The Regional Head Election, hereinafter referred to as Pilkada, is a community need to produce leaders at the regional level. In the normative legal order and empirical experience, the filling of Regional Heads has been regulated in Law 32/2004 Article 24 (5) which reads "The Regional Head and Deputy Regional Head as referred to in paragraph (2) and paragraph (3) are elected as one pair directly by the people of the region themselves." So it can be concluded that Pilkada is directly elected by the people.

Direct general elections have become a necessity to improve public welfare at the regional level, preventing deviations in the implementation of regional autonomy by local elites. " ...above all, however, local government is a fundamental institution because of its educational effect on the mass of ordinary citizens." (Warren, 2006). Elections create opportunities for regional development, improve public services (*local accountability*), and democratic governance can accelerate economic development based on local communities (*local responsiveness*). However, all these actions are meaningless if not driven by

independent participation and empowerment processes. Voter turnout in Madiun City in the 2019 presidential and DPD elections was 79.4%, while participation in the DPR RI, Provincial DPRD, and City DPRD elections was 78.85%. For the 2024 elections, this will be a challenge for the Madiun City Election Commission (KPU) to match or exceed the voter turnout achieved in 2019.

2. METHOD

This study used a mixed qualitative and quantitative method. Quantitative data in the form of numbers were used to strengthen the qualitative data in the form of descriptions. This study used primary data sources, namely the results of in-depth interviews, observation and documentation, and secondary data obtained through a survey of the community in Madiun City. Informants in this study were the Chairperson of the Madiun City General Elections Commission (KPU) and the Commissioners of the Madiun City General Elections Commission (KPU) division of Socialization, Voter Education and Human Resources, while respondents who filled out the questionnaire via Google Form were the Madiun City community who were the targets of the socialization. The Google Form questionnaire was distributed through WhatsApp groups and other social media. Qualitative data analysis was carried out inductively including data transcription, coding and triangulation. Meanwhile, quantitative data analysis used non-parametric methods, namely data from the questionnaire results were then presented in a table containing community acceptance figures. This research was conducted in Madiun City, especially interview data collection was conducted at the Madiun City General Elections Commission (KPU) office.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Communication Strategy

Communication strategy proposed by Dan O'hair (2009) uses three main areas, namely; situational knowledge, goal setting, and communication competence (Chotijah, 2018). In dealing with communication problems, planners are faced with several issues, especially in the use of available communication resources to achieve certain desired goals. Rogers (1982) defines communication strategy as a plan made to change someone's behavior on a large scale through new ideas. In a specific sense, communication strategy is the best combination of all communication elements starting from the communicator, message, media, recipient to influence (effect) designed to achieve optimal communication goals, because the selection of communication strategy is the most crucial thing and requires

precision in the communication strategy planning process. Strategy in communication is a way to organize the implementation of communication operations to be successful. Communication strategy is essentially planning *and* management *to* achieve a goal and as a way to achieve that goal, the strategy does not function as a roadmap that only shows direction, but must also show its operational tactics. Therefore, based on the theoretical explanation above, communicators must first develop a communication strategy when communicating so that the message they convey can reach the intended target. Communication is the process of conveying a message in the form of symbols or codes from one party to another with the effect of changing attitudes or actions (Cangara, 2008).

An effective communication strategy requires a two-way process involving clear communication through appropriate channels and tailored to the characteristics of each recipient, making it easy to trust. When this is done, organizations easily gain public trust (Wood, et al, 2011). One theory that can be used to describe policy communication strategies to the public is Structurating Activity Theory. This theory was developed from an integration of structuration theory and CHAT. Structurating Activity Theory is interesting because it can provide an explanation regarding the communicative construction of policy knowledge. This theory can also identify various knowledge-building processes that depend on and produce various forms of knowledge (Canary, et al, 2011).

During the campaign process, there is a communication process to convey existing reflections in society through the construction of public opinion itself, which informs the strategic decisions that have been designed and campaign communications (McGregor, 2011). When related to organizational systems, such as the General Elections Commission (KPU) in developing communication policies, there is a clear system-building process that includes a structural perspective that explains the communicative formulation policy. (Canary, et al, 2011). SAT theory pays attention to the relationship between the mediating elements of the activity system and the process of structuring the mediated activity, by facilitating integration into the relationship between the system and structural contradictions (Canary, et al, 2011). This can be seen, for example, from the existence of the KPU as an organization in general has policies and understanding how the organization communicates these policies is very important for organizational stakeholders.

There are 6 important elements that influence how organizational activities can be achieved. (1) the object is the focus of a system activity; (2) the subject includes the person or group that provides the perspective for analysis; (3) the mediation resources used to

achieve the activity; (4) the rules for completing the activity; (5) the community includes the people involved, and (6) the division of labor (Canary, et al, 2011). For example, the organizational policy carried out by the KPU has various work systems that involve many parts to be able to realize a communication strategy program that is acceptable to the community. SAT theory is a theory for applied research in the field of communication that can be applied in various contexts, in addition to the research methods used are also diverse, ranging from qualitative with interviews, to mixed quantitative and qualitative *methods* (Taylor, 2022).

3.2. Strategic Management

Implementation of public outreach should be designed with sound strategic management. Strategic management, in principle, is an organization's ability to adapt to the future, which is generally short- and medium-term (Ibrahim, 2008). This is crucial for the General Elections Commission (KPU) to determine the direction it needs to take to ensure the success of the regional elections. Strategic communication management can also reduce potential misunderstandings during implementation. To address these issues, a system for ensuring the quality of messages and continuous improvement *in* the 2024 general election outreach activities, while still considering health protocols, is required.

Gasperz stated that *continuous improvement* is one way to control ongoing processes to achieve quality improvement. Therefore, the principle is that the implementation process should be viewed as a continuous improvement process, starting from ideas, program development, and finally implementation in the community. Then, based on the implementation results, they are collected again to refine the ideas or program (Gasperz, 2000).

Several years ago, Walter Shewhart proposed an analysis called the Deming Cycle to systematically increase community participation (Sari, et.al, 2021). In management science, there's a concept called *problem-solving*, which is summarized as the PDCA concept: P for *plan*, D for *do*, C for *check*, and A for *act*. This continuous cycle is used to improve strategic management. Therefore, there are constant improvements in each process to achieve the main goal (Poerwanto, 2023). The PDCA process can be briefly explained as follows:

1. Plan

Word "*plan*" means refers to the goals and processes that will be used to achieve them. This planning can also be used to identify goals and identify any obstacles.

Plans also serve to focus on a goal and then describe the process to be followed from start to finish.

2. *Do*

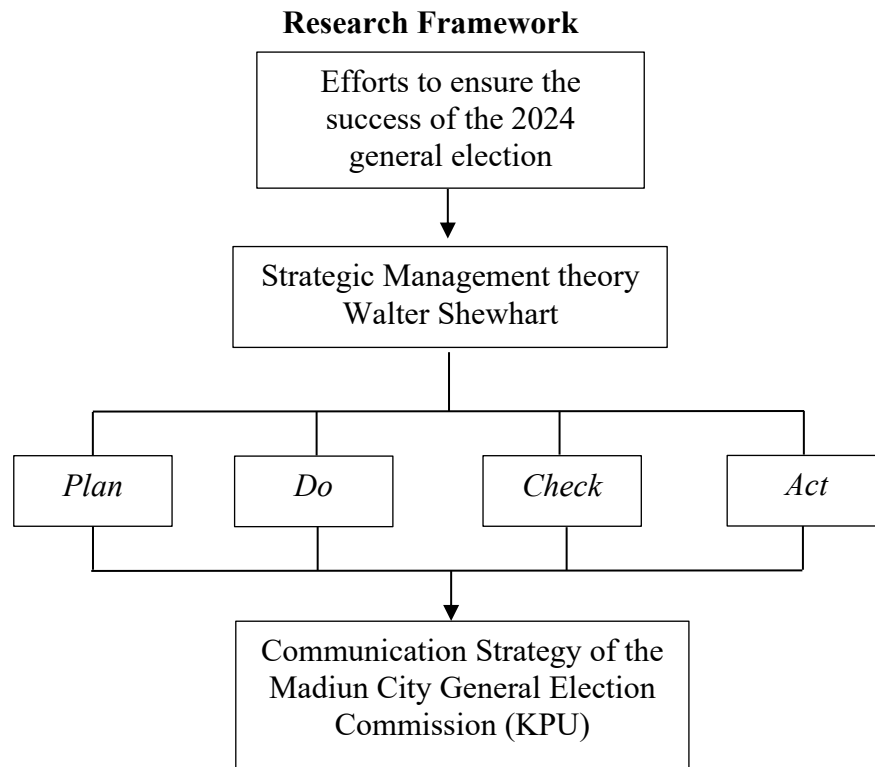
word "*Do*" means to carry out. "Do" can be interpreted as planning a predetermined process. Implementing the "*Do*" *concept* minimizes delays and consistently adheres to planned activities.

3. *Check*

The English word "*check*" means "evaluation." Evaluations primarily focus on targets and processes, referring to implementation verification. Checking involves two aspects: monitoring and evaluation, which allows for identification of weaknesses and planning for improvement.

4. *Act*

Act means follow-up, namely a comprehensive evaluation of targets and processes. If implementation is found to be less than perfect, then follow-up can involve modifying plans, revising processes, or policies. Furthermore, it's also necessary to monitor changes by periodically controlling and measuring processes.



The 2024 election stages began on June 14, 2022, with the ongoing phase continuing until June 21, 2023, which is updating voter data. This voter data recapitulation will continue to ensure accurate and precise data is obtained. The Madiun City General Elections Commission (KPU) is socializing the election stages through official social media platforms such as its website, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Public acceptance of social media platforms varies across platforms. The Madiun City KPU's target for the 2024 election is a voter participation rate of 77%. The Madiun City KPU has mapped out the potential for increased participation, as the trend of elections as a people's celebration has been consistently promoted from the initial stages to the present. In this regard, the Madiun City KPU is socializing with an invitation to the wider community to come to Polling Stations (TPS) while still wearing masks and maintaining physical distance.



Figure 1: Political Parties Participating in the 2024 Election

Quantitative results were obtained through a survey of the Madiun City community, targeted by the Madiun City General Elections Commission (KPU) for the 2024 Election. The survey was distributed online using Google Forms through WhatsApp groups and other social media platforms. Data analysis was conducted non-parametrically and presented as a frequency distribution to illustrate the level of public acceptance of the KPU's communication strategy.

Admission Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very Accepting	68	34
Accept	92	46
Just Accept	28	14
Less Accepting	12	6

Table 1. Level of Public Acceptance of the Madiun City KPU Communication Strategy

Based on Table 1, the majority of respondents were in the accepting and very accepting categories, indicating that the Madiun City KPU's communication strategy was positively received by the public. The findings of this study indicate that the Madiun City KPU's communication strategy contributed significantly to building public acceptance and trust in the 2024 General Election. This can be analyzed by linking Walter A. Shewhart's communication theory with the concept of public trust.

Socialization of election stages according to the stages and flow in accordance with General Election Commission Regulation no. 3 of 2022 concerning the Stages and Schedule for the Implementation of the 2024 General Election. The election stages that took place from July 14, 2022 began with *the launch* of the 2024 simultaneous election stages to the wider public. *The launch* introduced by the Madiun City KPU to the public was carried out at Paseban Bantul Square and broadcast via YouTube. Optimizing each election stage is one of the supporting factors for information received by voters and maximizing every media owned by the Bantul KPU as a socialization medium.

"Socialization is generally carried out through events if there are stages, but if the education voters outside the election stages also work to educate voters. But if socialization is related to the election stages, so if the socialization tips are more Lots follow rhythm or channel stages Which currently ongoing or walk. The 2024 election stages have begun on June 14, 2022 or 20 months before day h collection voice. On 14 June 2022 General Election Commission Madiun City Already do launching or launching the stages of the 2024 simultaneous elections, namely informing the wider public that oh this the start elections 2024 already We starting date June 14 then." (Interview with Rohani, Commissioner of the Madiun City KPU division Socialization, Education Voters and Human Resources, November 4, 2023)

From the perspective of Walter A. Shewhart's communication theory, the communication process is understood as a continuous cycle through the stages of planning, implementation, evaluation, and improvement. The Madiun City General Elections Commission (KPU) has implemented this cycle by designing election socialization messages, disseminating them through various communication channels, and conducting evaluations based on public response. Qualitative and quantitative data show that the use of various communication channels—both face-to-face and digital—reflects the continuous improvement process emphasized by Shewhart. Public feedback serves as the basis for improving communication strategies, making election messages more easily understood and accepted by the public. Furthermore, high levels of public acceptance imply increased public trust. Public trust is formed when the public perceives election organizers as transparent, accountable, and responsive institutions. The clear and consistent communication strategy of the Madiun City KPU has strengthened positive public perceptions of the integrity of the 2024 Election.

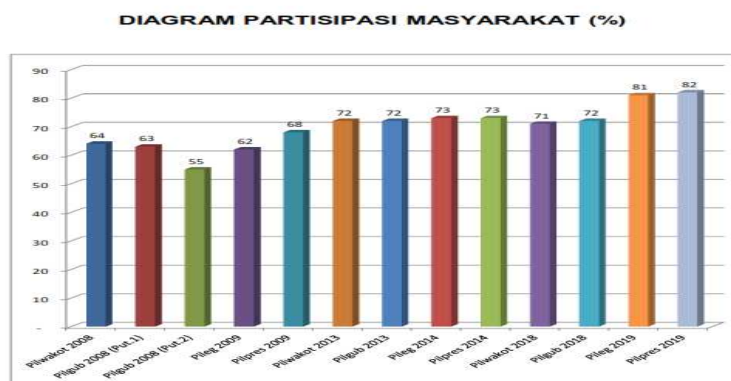


Figure 2: Diagram of Public Participation in the 2024 Election

The qualitative research results were obtained through in-depth interviews with the Chairperson of the Madiun City General Elections Commission (KPU) and the KPU Commissioners in the Socialization, Voter Education, and Human Resources Divisions, supported by observations and documentation of the 2024 Election socialization activities. The findings indicate that the KPU's communication strategy was systematically designed to adapt to the social characteristics of the local community. This strategy includes face-to-face socialization, community-based voter education, utilization of official social media, and collaboration with community leaders and educational institutions.

Informants emphasized that the principles of information transparency and message consistency are the primary foundations for building public trust. Field observations indicated that the public was relatively active in outreach activities and demonstrated a better understanding of election stages and voter rights and obligations. However, this study also identified challenges in the form of differences in political and digital literacy levels among the public, which impacted the effectiveness of message delivery, particularly among older adults and those with limited access to technology.

Madiun City General Elections Commission (KPU) through the Sosdiklih Permas and SDM divisions conducted *a training of trainers for the OSIS election for SMA/SMK/MA/SMP/MTs* throughout Madiun City, through the E-Pemilos system. This

series of events lasted for eight days and was attended by 25 SMAs with representation of two students and one accompanying teacher. The involvement of students and teachers is important as an effort to educate voters among teenagers, that the positive contribution through E- Pemilos is expected to be a means of instilling responsibility related to duties and political literacy since adolescence, preparing youth who are not apathetic to choose leaders starting from school. The Madiun City General Elections Commission in this case has the task of providing education or literacy both through the media and in the learning bench through this E-Pemilos.

Collaboration is important for the Madiun City KPU as a form of commitment to build synergy with various parties, the collaboration of the Madiun City KPU through the HR division and community participation with regional apparatus organizations (OPD) including Bakesbangpol and Diskominfo conducted e-pemilos *training of trainers for the OSIS election committee*. This effort is a strategic step for the Madiun City KPU to increase active involvement from both government elements and school institutions as an educational space for first-time voters, including aspects of digitalization of elections through IT sophistication and to avoid apathy towards the election process even at the school level.

4. CONCLUSION

Madiun City Election Commission has collaborated as a form of synergy with B a kohumas (Public Relations Coordination Agency) Which consists of on from various type agency like disability organizations , To the police, crew media, PKK , K arang Ta runa, and mass organizations. The hope This socialization can be carried out by many parties, the Madiun City KPU only acts as a driving force For Conducting outreach through relevant media channels. Optimizing information dissemination to voters, particularly through this synergy, is an effort to build strategic networks to support voter turnout.

The strategy implemented by the Bantul KPU is to create educational programs and agendas related to positive content, including content on social media ethics . In the midst of the rapid flow of information in the digital era like today, competitions and information related to the OSIS election agenda, the Madiun City KPU is holding *a training of trainers* for the OSIS election for SMA/SMK/MA/SMP/MTs throughout Madiun City through the E-Pemilos system. This agenda is a form of digital literacy through social media accounts owned by the Madiun City KPU , including YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and the website .

Collaboration and synergy are key to the successful dissemination of information for all stages of the 2024 election, across government, election organizers, the public, and voters. All elements of society, the mass media, universities, and all relevant stakeholders have strategic roles to play in supporting election participation, according to their respective capabilities. This is done to ensure voter participation meets or even exceeds the national target through the optimization of information and media literacy efforts carried out by the Madiun City General Elections Commission (KPU). Election organizers, in this case the KPU, need to have and optimize an IT team focused on creatively optimizing media content and visuals.

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