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The Role of Interpersonal Communication and Corporate Image in Enhancing Public Trust

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to develop hypotheses related to factors that influence public trust. The approach used in this literature review is descriptive qualitative. The data collection technique used is literature study or reviewing relevant previous articles. The technique used in this literature review is Comparative Analysis. The data used in this descriptive qualitative approach were obtained from previous studies relevant to this study and sourced from academic online media such as Thomson Reuters Journal, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Scopus Q2-Q4 Emerald, Elsevier, Sage, Web of Science, Sinta 2-5 Journal, DOAJ, EBSCO, Google Scholar, Copernicus, and digital reference books. The results of this literature review are: 1) Interpersonal communication plays a role in enhancing public trust; and 2) Corporate image plays a role in enhancing public trust.

Keywords: Public Trust, Interpersonal Communication, Corporate Image

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, public trust in an organization is indeed a strategic asset that significantly influences its sustainability and long-term reputation. Digital transformation has reshaped corporate reputation into e-reputation, emphasizing the need for organizations to proactively manage their online presence in the multifaceted digital landscape (Grebe, 2024). Trust and reputation, although often considered intangible, are crucial for organizational success, influencing stakeholder perceptions and decision-making processes across various sectors, including commercial, educational, and government institutions (Bratus & Sydorov, 2024).

Organizations today face significant challenges in maintaining public trust due to communication crises, inconsistent information, and a weakened corporate image. Image crises, as seen in the DACIA case, arise when public perceptions diverge from reality, often due to miscommunication or misunderstanding, leading to debates about the organization's honesty and legality. This is exacerbated by a broader crisis of public trust, where institutional distrust and skepticism toward the information ecosystem prevail, requiring organizations to break the spiral of distrust through effective communication (van der Meer et al., 2024).

Effective interpersonal communication is crucial in rebuilding public trust, as it promotes openness, empathy, supportive attitudes, and equality, which are essential for creating harmonious relationships with stakeholders. Interpersonal communication is vital in

organizational settings, where it strengthens mutual trust and fosters a positive organizational culture, thereby enhancing productivity and stability (Febrianti et al., 2024). In health crises, communication strategies emphasizing transparency, empathy, and two-way communication are crucial for restoring public trust, as demonstrated by successful case studies such as Johnson & Johnson's Tylenol crisis management (Liu & Duarte, 2023).

The simultaneous interrelationship between interpersonal communication, corporate image, and public trust is a multifaceted area that has been explored through various lenses in the literature. Interpersonal communication is crucial in building trust within organizations, as it fosters a positive organizational culture and collective identity, which are essential for achieving common goals (Febrianti et al., 2024). Trust in communication is a critical issue, especially in the context of declining trust in social institutions, and has been explored at different levels, including social, institutional, and interpersonal. Public relations (PR) significantly influences public trust, particularly in the public service sector, by enhancing the government's image and promoting open and transparent communication (Azhary et al., 2024). Overall, these studies collectively underscore the complex relationship between communication, corporate image, and public trust, highlighting the need for integrated strategies to enhance these elements simultaneously.

Research on business communication and public relations is crucial for theoretical advancement and practical application in building and maintaining public trust in modern business environments. The integration of corporate social responsibility into public relations strategies, as seen at PT Surya Sembada, underscores the importance of transparent communication and digital platforms in shaping public perception and fostering trust among stakeholders (Lisdiantini et al., 2024). Similarly, the role of public relations in customs emphasizes the need for media engagement and policy outreach to strengthen community relations and maintain a positive organizational image (Wulansari & Claretta, 2024).

The objectives of this article are: 1) To analyze the role of interpersonal communication in enhancing public trust; 2) To analyze the role of corporate image in enhancing public trust.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature review design. The purpose of this approach is to explore and synthesize previous findings related to factors that influence public trust, particularly interpersonal communication and corporate image. Research data were obtained from secondary sources in the form of international and national academic publications, such as Scopus, Web of Science, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Elsevier, Emerald (Q2–Q4), Sage, Thomson Reuters, DOAJ, EBSCO, Copernicus, Google Scholar, and Sinta 2–5 journals. In addition to articles, additional sources in the form of digital books and policy documents were also used to enrich the analysis.

Data collection procedures were conducted through literature searches using keywords such as public trust, interpersonal communication, and corporate image. Articles published within the last ten years were prioritized to ensure the findings remain relevant. Selection was made through reading titles, abstracts, and full texts to ensure compliance with inclusion criteria, while duplicate and irrelevant articles were excluded. Data analysis was conducted using comparative analysis, which involves comparing and synthesizing findings across studies to identify consistent patterns, differences, and research gaps. The credibility of the results was maintained through data triangulation, by comparing findings from various databases and types of publications and verifying the consistency of the results with frequently cited literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on the problem background and problem formulation above, the results of this study are as follows:

Public Trust

Public trust is the belief of the community in the integrity, competence, and consistency of an individual, institution, or organization in carrying out its functions and roles. In the context of business communication and public relations, public trust is not merely an emotional attitude but also the result of a rational assessment of an entity's track record, transparency, and accountability. Public trust is formed through repeated interactions, where the public perceives honesty in the delivery of information, consistency between words and actions, and the ability of the organization to meet promised expectations. For example, a company will gain public trust if the products advertised are truly consistent with the quality received by consumers. Public trust is dynamic; it is easily lost when an organization fails to fulfill its promises, but it is difficult to rebuild once lost. Therefore, in communication management, maintaining consistency in organizational behavior and building a positive reputation are key to maintaining public trust (Wulansari & Claretta, 2024).

The indicators or dimensions of the public trust variable include: 1) Integrity: Describes the extent to which an organization or individual is considered honest, consistent, and adhering to moral principles in their actions. Good integrity builds public trust that the organization is trustworthy; 2) Competence: Demonstrates an organization's ability to provide services or products in accordance with its promised expertise. The public will trust an organization if it can demonstrate real professional capacity and expertise; 3) Consistency: Refers to the consistency of an organization's actions over time. The public will find it difficult to trust an organization that frequently changes its stance or is inconsistent in its communication and policies; 4) Transparency: Related to an organization's openness in communicating information, both about its successes and failures. Transparency makes the public feel involved and reduces the potential for suspicion (Azhary et al., 2024).

Public trust has been studied by several researchers, including: (Liu & Duarte, 2023), (Atikasari et al., 2020), (Atikasari et al., 2020).

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging messages directly between two or more individuals, enabling emotional connections, mutual understanding, and the development of closeness. In both social and business relationships, interpersonal communication plays a vital role as it forms the foundation for harmonious relationships, whether between employees and supervisors, organizations and business partners, or companies and the broader community. This form of communication can be verbal (words, tone of voice) or nonverbal (facial expressions, body language, eye contact). The effectiveness of interpersonal communication is measured by the extent to which the message conveyed is understood in accordance with the sender's intent, as well as the achievement of constructive feedback. Good interpersonal communication is characterized by empathy, openness, honesty, and active listening skills (Maitrianti, 2021).

The indicators or dimensions found in the interpersonal communication variable include: 1) Openness: Describes the attitude of sharing information, being honest, and not hiding important things in communication. Openness facilitates the formation of healthy relationships; 2) Empathy: The ability to put oneself in another person's position so that messages can be conveyed and received with understanding. Empathy enhances closeness and mutual trust in communication; 3) Supportive attitude: Demonstrated through behavior that encourages positive communication, does not blame, and is able to create an atmosphere conducive to discussion; 4) Equality: Refers to interactions that are equal without excessive domination. Interpersonal communication is effective when both parties feel valued and have an equal position in the conversation (Dewi & Kuswinarno, 2024).

Interpersonal communication has been studied by several researchers, including: (Febrianti et al., 2024), (Memah et al., 2023), (Yuliantini et al., 2022).

Corporate Image

Corporate image is the perception, view, or mental picture formed in the public's mind about an organization or company, arising from the accumulation of experiences, communication, and interactions between the public and the company. Image is not only determined by the quality of products or services provided, but also by reputation, social responsibility, communication style, and management behavior. Corporate image is often considered an intangible asset with strategic value, as it can influence consumer trust, investor appeal, and competitive position in the market (Meutia et al., 2021).

The indicators or dimensions within the corporate image variable include: 1) Product or Service Image: Public perceptions of the quality, reliability, and uniqueness of the products or services offered by the company. High-quality products create a positive image; 2) Employee or Human Resource Image: How employees are perceived as representatives of the company. Friendly, professional, and competent service builds positive public perceptions; 3) Social Responsibility Image: Related to the extent to which the company is considered to care about the environment and society. Consistent CSR activities will strengthen a positive image; 4) Corporate Identity Image: Includes symbols, logos, designs, and values emphasized by the company. A strong identity helps the public recognize and evaluate the company well (Anggraini & Mulyani, 2022).

Corporate image has been studied by several researchers, including: (Ricardo, 2021), (Syahwi & Pantawis, 2021), (Yuwono & Erika, 2020), (Yurindera, 2022).

Discussion

Based on the problem statement, research findings, and relevant previous studies, the discussion in this study includes:

1. Analysis of the role of interpersonal communication in enhancing public trust

Based on the literature review and relevant previous research, it was found that interpersonal communication plays a role in enhancing public trust.

To increase public trust through interpersonal communication, every company or organization must do the following: 1) Openness: Explain transparency and honesty. This involves a willingness to share relevant information, both positive and negative, without hiding facts. Open companies demonstrate that they have no hidden motives, thereby creating a sense of security for the public; 2) Empathy: Demonstrating the ability to understand and feel what others are feeling. In an organizational context, this means listening to complaints, feedback, or concerns from the public sincerely and providing responses that show the company cares. Empathy builds strong emotional bonds and demonstrates that the company views the public not just as a target market, but as individuals with value; 3) Supportive attitude: Emphasizing support and assistance. This attitude is evident when a company proactively helps customers or the community in resolving issues. This can take the form of responsive customer service, providing clear information, or support in crisis situations; 4) Equality: Affirming sameness and fair treatment. Organizations that practice equality treat every individual or group with respect, regardless of their social status, background, or role. Thus, everyone feels valued and respected, which is an important foundation for building trust.

If every company or organization can consistently apply these four aspects of interpersonal communication, it will increase public trust, which includes: 1) Integrity: Demonstrating honesty and high ethics. When a company consistently acts openly and fairly, the public will see that the company has integrity; 2) Competence: Describing the company's ability to perform its tasks well. Through supportive communication, companies show that they are competent and reliable in solving problems; 3) Consistency: Demonstrating uniformity of actions over time. When companies consistently show empathy and a supportive attitude in their interactions, the public will see that the company is reliable; 4) Transparency: Emphasizing openness and honesty in sharing information. Through openness, companies

directly build transparency. This creates trust because the public feels they have sufficient information to make informed decisions.

The results of this study align with previous research conducted by (Astuti & Armadi, 2024), (Islam et al., 2025), which states that interpersonal communication plays a role in enhancing public trust.

2. Analysis of the role of corporate image in enhancing public trust

Based on a literature review and relevant previous research, it was found that corporate image plays a role in enhancing public trust.

To enhance public trust through corporate image, every company or organization must do the following: 1) Product or service image: This relates to the public's perception of the quality, reliability, and innovation of the products or services offered. Companies that consistently deliver high-quality products will build public trust that they are able to fulfill their promises; 2) Image of employees or human resources: This includes how employees interact with the public and how professional they are. Competent, friendly, and honest employees will reflect a positive image of the company, which will ultimately increase public trust; 3) Social responsibility image: This is the public's view of the company's commitment to social and environmental welfare. Companies that are active in CSR activities demonstrate their concern for the community, which can foster public trust and support; 4) Corporate identity image: This is how the public identifies and distinguishes the company from its competitors. This includes the company's logo, slogan, vision, and mission. A clear and authentic corporate identity can build pride and loyalty among the public, which in turn will increase trust.

If every company or organization can consistently implement these four aspects of corporate image, it will increase public trust, which includes: 1) Integrity: Reflects honesty and high ethics. When a company consistently carries out its social responsibilities and has a clear corporate identity, the public will view it as an organization with integrity; 2) Competence: Describes the company's ability to perform its tasks well. A high-quality product image and a professional employee image show the public that the company has strong competence; 3) Consistency: Shows uniformity over time. When a company consistently produces quality products or services and maintains a positive employee image, the public will see that the company is reliable; 4) Transparency: Emphasizes openness and honesty in sharing information. A clear and authentic corporate identity image, as well as a commitment to social responsibility, can build a perception of transparency because the public feels that the company is not hiding information.

The results of this study are in line with previous studies conducted by (Febiana & Nugraha, 2025), (Putri & Wijaya, 2024), which state that corporate image plays a role in increasing public trust.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the problem statement, relevant previous studies, and the results and discussion of the above research, the following are the conceptual framework:

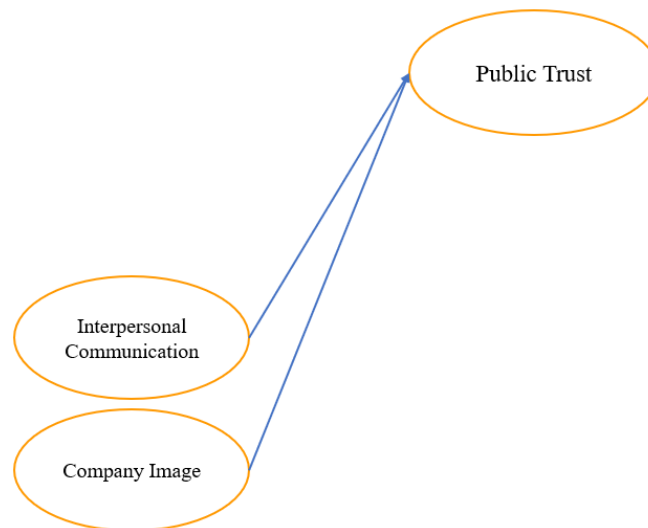


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on Figure 1 above, interpersonal communication and corporate image play a role in enhancing public trust. In addition to the independent variables mentioned above that influence the dependent variable (public trust), there are other variables that influence public trust, including:

- 1) Competence: (Heryanto et al., 2025), (Sumerdana & Heryanda, 2021), (Wahyuni & Budiono, 2022).
- 2) Information Transparency: (Wardani & Susilowati, 2020), (Nurimansjah & Kamal, 2022), (Azka & Najicha, 2022).
- 3) Organizational Integration: (Sudirman et al., 2021), (Basith et al., 2024), (Wahyudi, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, the conclusion of this scientific article is:

1. The role of interpersonal communication in increasing public trust is through openness, where organizations demonstrate transparency and honesty. Empathy helps organizations understand and respond to public needs sincerely, building strong emotional bonds. With a supportive attitude, organizations show that they care and are ready to help. And with equality, organizations treat every individual fairly and with respect.
2. The role of corporate image in enhancing public trust is by building a positive and strong image, a company can increase public trust. This is achieved through high-quality and reliable products or services, which demonstrate the company's competence. The image of professional and friendly employees or human resources reflects the integrity of the organization. The image of social responsibility demonstrates the company's commitment to society and the environment, building consistency in their values. Finally, a clear and authentic corporate identity creates transparency.

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