

Digital Political Communication and Post-Disaster Political Trust in Aceh: The Perspective of Da'wah Siyasi

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – This study examines how disaster-affected communities in post-disaster Aceh perceive Prabowo Subianto's digital political communication and how these perceptions relate to political trust from the perspective of *da'wah siyasi*.

Method – This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach involving 18 participants who completed an open-ended questionnaire distributed online. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis through coding and theme development. Four dimensions emerged: political empathy, responsiveness and implementation, message clarity and information adequacy, and consistency between political narratives and field realities. These dimensions were interpreted in relation to political trust, which emerged as the main evaluative outcome, while concrete governmental action shaped perceptions of communication credibility.

Findings – The findings show that participants evaluated governmental communication by comparing political messages with perceived governmental performance and conditions in affected areas. Four dimensions shaped these evaluations: political empathy, responsiveness and implementation, message clarity and information adequacy, and consistency between political narratives and field realities. These dimensions were closely associated with political trust, which was maintained when communication was perceived as credible and supported by concrete action, but weakened when political narratives were perceived as inconsistent with lived realities. From the perspective of *da'wah siyasi*, the findings highlight the importance of truthful, humane, responsible, and action-oriented political communication.

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INTRODUCTION

The disaster that struck Aceh in November 2025 created an emergency that extended beyond damaged houses, roads, public facilities, mobility, and access to basic needs. It also created an environment in which citizens evaluated the presence, capacity, and responsiveness of the state. In

North Aceh, post-disaster communication circulated through social media, online news, official statements, local accounts, and public criticism. Political communication consequently became part of the recovery environment because citizens could compare what political actors communicated with what they experienced or observed in affected areas. In such circumstances, communication is not merely an instrument for distributing information; it becomes part of the process through which political legitimacy and public trust are evaluated.

Political trust refers to citizens' confidence that political actors and public institutions can act competently, respond to public needs, fulfill their responsibilities, and communicate credibly. Research on political trust shows that crises can make citizens more attentive to institutional performance and leadership conduct (Aassve et al., 2024). In this study, political trust is understood primarily through participants' perceptions of governmental competence, responsiveness, credibility, and the consistency between political commitments and observable action. Political trust is therefore not treated as a direct outcome of communication alone, but as an evaluative perception shaped by how political messages correspond with governmental performance and conditions experienced or observed by citizens. In the post-disaster context, trust becomes particularly relevant because affected communities evaluate whether expressions of concern and political commitments are supported by adequate information, responsive action, and visible results.

Digital transformation has changed the position of citizens within political communication. Social media enables political actors to distribute messages rapidly while simultaneously allowing citizens to comment, contest, redistribute, and compare those messages with alternative information. The hybrid media system perspective explains that political meaning is produced through interactions among political actors, media institutions, and citizens rather than through one-way transmission alone (Chadwick, 2017). More recent work on the hybrid media environment likewise emphasizes the importance of critical public participation in the negotiation of political meaning and legitimacy (Srnđelj & Pajnik, 2025). Government presence on social media can support perceptions of transparency and responsiveness, but the effect depends on how citizens interpret the quality of that presence and the credibility of the information provided (Arshad & Khurram, 2020).

Communication becomes even more demanding during a crisis because citizens need information that is timely, relevant, comprehensible, and connected to action. Situational Crisis Communication Theory emphasizes that response strategies should be appropriate to the crisis situation and to public attributions of responsibility (Coombs, 2022). Crisis communication research also stresses that communication should be treated as a social practice embedded in relationships among institutions, affected publics, and competing accounts of the crisis (Wang, 2022). Indonesian disaster-communication research similarly shows that risk communication is inseparable from coordination, public understanding, and the management of uncertainty during crisis situations (Andreastuti et al., 2023). These perspectives suggest that political communication after a disaster should be evaluated not only by rhetorical quality but also by whether it acknowledges public conditions and supports credible action.

Aceh provides a distinctive context for examining post-disaster political communication because political communication is embedded in a strong socio-religious environment and a history

of conflict and disaster. Previous research has shown that disaster and conflict experiences in Aceh can shape relationships between communities and institutions, making public responses to governmental actions particularly relevant in crisis situations (Ali & Aklima, 2023). In this context, citizens' evaluations of political communication cannot be separated from expectations concerning governmental responsibility, public welfare, and ethical conduct.

Within Islamic communication scholarship, *da'wah siyasi* provides an analytical perspective for examining the relationship between communication, political authority, public policy, and moral responsibility (Fikri, 2014). This perspective is relevant to the present study because the research does not examine digital political communication only as a matter of message strategy or political image. It also examines how participants evaluate whether political messages concerning a disaster are consistent with responsiveness, responsibility, and concrete governmental action. Thus, *da'wah siyasi* is used as an interpretive lens through which the ethical dimensions of the empirically identified communication patterns can be understood, particularly in relation to responsibility, truthful communication, public welfare, and action. This positioning connects the Acehese socio-religious context directly to the study's analysis of political communication and political trust rather than treating it merely as contextual background.

Islamic communication ethics provide a normative framework for interpreting the ethical dimensions of political communication in this study. Rather than applying all principles of *qaulan sittah* and prophetic communication simultaneously, this study focuses on concepts that are most closely related to the empirical themes identified in the participants' responses. *Qaulan layyina*, which emphasizes gentle and humane communication, is relevant to political empathy, while *qaulan sadida*, which emphasizes truthful communication, is relevant to message clarity and the credibility of information (Dzulhusna et al., 2022). The principles of *amanah* and *fathanah* provide an ethical perspective on responsibility and responsive governmental action, while *siddiq* and *da'wah bil hal* are particularly relevant to the consistency between political communication and concrete action (Ridho & Hariyadi, 2021; Sakdiah et al., 2025). These concepts are not treated as categories derived directly from participants' responses. Instead, they are used as an interpretive lens to understand the ethical significance of the empirical findings, particularly in a post-disaster context where affected communities evaluate whether political communication is humane, truthful, responsible, and supported by observable action.

Previous studies have examined digital political communication through message strategy, framing, image construction, and political branding, while crisis communication research has commonly focused on organizational reputation, public relations, and disaster-management institutions. Research on Islamic communication in post-disaster settings has also primarily examined assistance, psychological recovery, and preaching practices rather than citizens' evaluation of national political communication in relation to their perceptions of governmental performance (Soebahar & Ghoni, 2019). More specifically, recent research on Prabowo Subianto's disaster policy has examined ecological disaster responses through the perspective of Islamic political values (Kawwami & Agustin, 2025). However, this research does not examine how disaster-affected citizens interpret the digital political communication associated with such responses or how these interpretations are related to political trust. Existing studies therefore provide limited empirical

understanding of how affected citizens evaluate the relationship between political messages, governmental responsiveness, field conditions, and political trust in a post-disaster setting.

This gap is particularly important because political communication during a disaster is evaluated not only through the content of political messages but also through citizens' perceptions of whether those messages correspond with governmental action and conditions on the ground. The present study addresses this empirical gap by examining how disaster-affected participants in North Aceh evaluate digital political communication associated with Prabowo Subianto in relation to political trust. The study identifies four empirically derived dimensions of public evaluation: political empathy, responsiveness and implementation, message clarity and information adequacy, and consistency between political narratives and field realities. These dimensions are then interpreted through *da'wah siyasi* and selected Islamic communication ethics. Accordingly, the novelty of the study lies in connecting citizens' post-disaster evaluations of digital political communication with political trust and interpreting this relationship through *da'wah siyasi*, rather than treating *da'wah siyasi* as a category directly derived from participants' responses.

Based on this gap, the study asks how disaster-affected participants in North Aceh interpret digital political communication associated with Prabowo Subianto, how these interpretations relate to perceptions of political trust, and how the resulting empirical patterns can be understood through *da'wah siyasi*. Specifically, the study examines how participants evaluate political empathy, responsiveness and implementation, message clarity and information adequacy, and consistency between political narratives and field realities. The study contributes to communication and dakwah scholarship by demonstrating how political trust is interpreted through the relationship between political communication, perceived governmental performance, and citizens' verification of political narratives against lived or observed realities in a post-disaster context.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with an empirical focus on public perceptions of digital political communication in the post-disaster context of Aceh. The design was selected because the research seeks to understand how participants construct meaning from political messages, public responses, and disaster experiences rather than to measure political trust statistically. The case concerns communication associated with Prabowo Subianto and the broader governmental response to the November 2025 disaster as encountered by participants in North Aceh and surrounding areas. The analytical orientation is interpretive: participants' responses are first treated as empirical material, while *da'wah siyasi* and prophetic communication ethics are applied afterward as an interpretive lens.

Data were obtained from 18 participants who completed an open-ended qualitative questionnaire distributed online. The participant group consisted of 15 males and 3 females, with participants located primarily in North Aceh, Lhokseumawe, and surrounding areas. Participants reported either direct exposure to flooding or knowledge of the conditions experienced by affected communities. The questionnaire asked participants about their exposure to political communication concerning the disaster, perceptions of political empathy and responsiveness, the clarity and adequacy of information, the consistency between social-media narratives and field conditions,

perceptions of political trust, and expectations concerning appropriate leadership communication during disasters. Because exposure to the communication under investigation varied, responses from participants who reported limited or no meaningful exposure were not treated as primary evidence for evaluating the communication itself.

The questionnaire responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analytical process began with repeated reading of the responses to establish familiarity with the material. Statements relevant to the research questions were then identified as meaning units and assigned initial codes reflecting their substantive content. Related codes were grouped into sub-themes and subsequently reviewed to identify broader patterns. Positive, negative, and ambivalent responses were retained rather than forcing the data into a uniform interpretation. Particular attention was given to responses that compared political communication with participants' observations of disaster conditions. The analysis produced four primary themes: political empathy; responsiveness and implementation; message clarity and information adequacy; and consistency between political narratives and field realities. Political trust was treated as an overarching evaluative outcome across these themes, while concrete action was treated as a cross-cutting condition influencing perceived credibility.

The second analytical cycle interpreted the empirical themes through four complementary perspectives: political trust, digital political communication, crisis communication, and da'wah siyasi. Political trust was used to examine perceptions of competence, integrity, responsiveness, and accountability. The hybrid media system perspective was used to understand social media as an environment in which political messages interact with public responses and alternative information (Chadwick, 2017). Crisis communication theory was used to interpret expectations concerning empathy, acknowledgment, responsiveness, and corrective action (Coombs, 2022). Da'wah siyasi and prophetic communication ethics were then used to interpret the moral dimensions of the findings. Concepts such as qaulan layyina, qaulan sadida, siddiq, amanah, fathanah, ta'awun, and da'wah bil hal were not treated as categories imposed on participants; rather, they were used to interpret the ethical significance of themes that had already emerged from the empirical material.

Credibility was strengthened through systematic comparison of convergent, divergent, and ambivalent responses across the participant group. The researchers also distinguished between participants who had meaningful exposure to the communication under investigation and those whose exposure was limited. This procedure reduced the risk of treating general opinions about government as direct evidence concerning the specific political communication being examined. The study is interpretive and context-specific; it does not claim that 18 participants represent all residents of Aceh or Indonesian public opinion as a whole. Participant identities are reported through codes in the results to protect confidentiality. The research therefore treats the questionnaire as a source of situated perceptions rather than as a representative survey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

The analysis of the 18 questionnaire responses identified four interconnected dimensions of public evaluation: political empathy, responsiveness and implementation, message clarity and information adequacy, and consistency between political narratives and field realities. The responses also showed variation in the degree of trust expressed toward political actors and government

institutions. Some participants retained trust or described it as conditional, while others reported skepticism, declining confidence, or reduced sympathy. The findings below present these patterns as qualitative evidence rather than as statistically generalizable measurements.

Political Empathy: Recognition of Concern Does Not Guarantee Experienced Empathy

Political empathy emerged as an affective dimension through which participants evaluated whether political communication recognized the suffering and vulnerability of affected communities. The responses were not uniform. Some participants perceived governmental concern as weak, while others recognized concern but expected it to be accompanied by faster and more contextually appropriate action.

“In my view, the level of concern was very low.” - Participant 3

“It has shown concern, but it needs to be faster, clearer, and more consistent with field conditions.” - Participant 8

“Yes, it showed strong concern and greatly helped the community.” - Participant 10

Taken together, these responses show that empathy was evaluated through more than sympathetic wording. Participants connected perceived concern with governmental presence, assistance, responsiveness, and the handling of concrete needs. A positive communicative signal could therefore coexist with dissatisfaction about implementation. The result is an empathy–action gap: communication can signal concern, but experienced empathy becomes stronger when citizens can associate that concern with visible governmental attention and assistance.

Responsiveness and Implementation Challenges

Responsiveness was evaluated primarily through the perceived speed and effectiveness of governmental action and the extent to which political commitments appeared to be implemented. Participants’ responses indicate that the presence of governmental involvement did not always correspond to satisfactory implementation. Some participants also recognized that the response process could be affected by administrative and institutional complexity. Importantly, the responses suggest that participants did not always interpret delays as evidence of personal indifference by the national political leader. Instead, their evaluations focused on the extent to which governmental commitments were translated into timely and effective action.

“Yes, but the handling was not optimal.” – Participant 5

“No, because the government did not declare it a national disaster, which made disaster management very slow.” – Participant 7

“The response at the upper level was present, but implementation below was slow.” – Participant 13

Taken together, these responses indicate that participants evaluated responsiveness through the relationship between governmental involvement and perceived implementation. The responses do not necessarily establish a structural central–local implementation gap; rather, they show that participants perceived differences between political commitments, governmental involvement, and the implementation of responses on the ground. Delays became more problematic when they were not accompanied by adequate explanations, regular updates, or visible progress. Responsiveness therefore emerged as a combination of response speed, implementation, communication about ongoing efforts, and visibility of results.

Message Clarity and Information Adequacy

Participants also differed in their assessment of the clarity of political and governmental information. Several responses suggest that formal clarity and substantive adequacy are not identical. A message can be linguistically understandable while still being considered inadequate if it does not provide sufficiently complete, current, relevant, and context-specific information.

“Quite clear.” - Participant 5

“Quite clear, but it needs to be more complete and updated regularly.” - Participant 8

“It was not sufficiently clear because the data provided appeared to contradict the data or conditions in the disaster-affected areas.” - Participant 14

“It was unclear, resulting in confusion among the community.” - Participant 15

The responses indicate that participants evaluated information according to its practical usefulness. They wanted communication that could answer what had happened, what had been done, what remained unresolved, and what could reasonably be expected next. Message clarity was therefore closely connected to relevance and transparency rather than to readability alone.

Consistency Between Political Narratives and Field Realities

Consistency between political narratives and field realities emerged as the strongest critical dimension in the participants' responses and provided the clearest connection between digital political communication and political trust. Participants did not evaluate political messages solely on the basis of their content or the authority of the source. Instead, they compared information encountered through social media and other media with conditions they personally experienced or observed in affected areas. This comparison functioned as a form of public verification, through which the credibility of political communication was assessed against observable recovery conditions.

“On social media, only a small number of locations that were less severely affected were covered, while Aceh was presented as having recovered.” – Participant 3

“The government stated that electricity in Aceh had recovered by 93%, whereas in reality electricity conditions in Aceh had only partially recovered.” – Participant 11

“It was very different, particularly regarding electricity outages, bridges, and damaged rice fields.” – Participant 13

“Not all of the information was correct, but not all of it was wrong either.” – Participant 18

These responses indicate that participants did not necessarily accept or reject governmental communication in absolute terms. Instead, they made conditional credibility judgments by comparing specific political claims with their experiences or observations. Participant 18's response is particularly important because it illustrates a differentiated evaluation: official information could be considered partially credible while other claims remained questionable. Thus, credibility was not determined simply by whether participants agreed or disagreed with governmental communication, but by whether particular claims were perceived as consistent with observable realities.

This verification process provides an important link to political trust. When political narratives were perceived as consistent with conditions on the ground, communication could reinforce perceptions of governmental credibility and responsiveness. Conversely, when political claims were perceived as inconsistent with lived or observed realities, participants questioned the credibility of the communication and, consequently, their confidence in governmental responsiveness and accountability. Political trust therefore appeared not as an automatic result of

positive political messaging, but as an evaluative perception shaped by the relationship between what political actors communicated and what citizens could observe or experience.

The findings consequently suggest that, in a post-disaster context, political communication is subject to continuous public verification. Expressions of empathy, recovery claims, and governmental commitments acquire credibility when they are supported by observable action and conditions. Where communication and field realities diverge, positive narratives may be questioned even when participants acknowledge that some aspects of the governmental response were present. This makes narrative–reality consistency a central mechanism through which participants evaluated political credibility and political trust.

Political Trust as an Interpretive Outcome

Political trust should be understood in this study not as a separate thematic category, but as the interpretive outcome of participants' evaluations across the four empirically identified dimensions: political empathy, responsiveness and implementation, message clarity and information adequacy, and consistency between political narratives and field realities. Rather than asking only whether participants trusted or distrusted the government, the analysis examined the conditions through which trust was maintained, questioned, or weakened in relation to political communication and perceived governmental performance.

“I trust them less because there are too many promises without action.” – Participant 2

“It clearly decreased. The data in the field and what was communicated were very different.” – Participant 11

“It increases when communication is accompanied by concrete action and well-targeted assistance.” – Participant 8

“For now, I still trust the government, but my confidence in its performance has begun to decline.” – Participant 14

These responses demonstrate that political trust was conditional rather than absolute. Participants evaluated trust through the perceived relationship between political communication and governmental performance. Trust was more likely to be maintained when expressions of concern, political commitments, and information were perceived as consistent with concrete and visible action. Conversely, perceived discrepancies between political narratives and field realities, particularly when accompanied by unfulfilled commitments or insufficient explanations, contributed to skepticism and declining confidence.

The four dimensions therefore functioned as interconnected pathways through which political trust was evaluated. Political empathy provided an affective basis for judging whether affected communities were recognized and understood. Responsiveness and implementation allowed participants to assess whether political commitments were translated into action. Message clarity and information adequacy shaped perceptions of whether governmental communication was sufficiently credible and informative. Most critically, consistency between political narratives and field realities enabled participants to verify political claims against their own experiences or observations. Political trust consequently emerged as an interpretive outcome of these evaluations rather than as an additional theme.

From the perspective of *da'wah siyasi*, these findings can be interpreted through selected ethical principles that correspond to the empirical dimensions. The interpretation emphasizes humane communication, truthful and clear information, responsible responsiveness, and consistency between communication and action. In this sense, *da'wah siyasi* does not constitute a fifth empirical

category; rather, it provides an ethical lens for interpreting why particular forms of political communication may be perceived as credible or questionable in a post-disaster context.

Table 1. Analytical Mapping of Public Perceptions, Political Trust, and Da'wah Siyasi

Thematic Dimension	Main Indicators	Relation to Political Trust	Da'wah Siyasi Interpretation
Political Empathy	Tone, recognition of suffering, perceived concern	Provides an affective basis for evaluating whether citizens feel recognized and considered	<i>Qaulan Layyina</i>
Responsiveness and implementation	Response speed, implementation, dialogue, visible results	Shapes perceptions of governmental responsibility and responsiveness	<i>Amanah, fathanah, ta'awun</i>
Message clarity and information adequacy	Completeness, relevance, transparency, updating	Completeness, relevance, transparency, updating	Qaulan sadida
Narrative–reality consistency	Relationship between political claims, implementation, and field conditions	Provides the strongest basis for verifying credibility and maintaining or weakening trust	<i>Siddiq, amanah, da'wah bil hal</i>
Political trust	Confidence, skepticism, maintained or declining trust	Interpretive outcome across the four dimensions	Ethical interpretation through <i>da'wah siyasi</i>

B. Discussion

The findings indicate that post-disaster political trust is constructed through the interaction of affective and cognitive evaluations. Empathy functions as an initial signal that communicates whether citizens are recognized as people experiencing vulnerability. Responsiveness and message clarity then shape perceptions of governmental competence and accountability. Finally, consistency between communication and observable action determines whether the initial positive signal can remain credible. This relational pattern is consistent with research that treats political trust as dependent on citizens' judgments about institutional competence, integrity, and performance rather than as a stable attitude independent of experience (Aassve et al., 2024; Schnaudt & Popa, 2023).

The importance of empathy in this case should not be reduced to emotional language. Participants recognized that concern could be expressed in a message while still questioning whether that concern was translated into assistance and governmental presence. This distinction between communicated empathy and experienced empathy helps explain why symbolic expressions of solidarity may have limited effects when communities continue to experience unmet needs. Crisis communication research similarly emphasizes that acknowledgment and

empathy become more credible when they are connected to meaningful response and corrective action (Coombs, 2022; Wang, 2022). In the Acehnese context, this finding can be read through *qaulan layyina* and *qaulan ma'rufa*: communication should be gentle and humane, but ethical communication also requires attention to the actual condition of the audience.

Responsiveness is likewise inseparable from implementation. The participants did not always attribute slow responses to personal indifference, and some explicitly recognized administrative complexity. This nuance is theoretically important because it prevents a simplistic reading in which every delay becomes evidence of political failure. At the same time, structural explanations do not eliminate the communicative responsibility of political institutions. When implementation is slow, citizens require explanations, updates, and evidence of progress. Government communication on social media can support trust when it demonstrates transparency and responsiveness, but the credibility of that presence depends on whether citizens can observe meaningful follow-through (Arshad & Khurram, 2020). In the perspective of *da'wah siyasi*, responsiveness can be associated with *ta'awun* and *fathanah* because leadership requires both concern for others and the capacity to respond intelligently to changing circumstances.

The distinction between formal and substantive message clarity is another important contribution of the findings. Participants did not treat a message as adequate merely because it was easy to understand. They also asked whether the information was complete, updated, relevant, and capable of answering concrete questions. This expands the meaning of clarity in political communication. A message may be rhetorically polished yet remain weak as crisis communication if it does not reduce uncertainty or address the information needs of affected communities. The finding is compatible with the cognitive dimension of political trust, in which citizens use available information to judge competence and institutional performance (Schnaudt & Popa, 2023). Within prophetic communication ethics, the requirement is closely related to *qaulan baligha* and *qaulan sadida*: effective communication should reach the audience meaningfully, while truthful communication should not obscure or distort the conditions being discussed.

The strongest pattern concerns the verification of political narratives against field realities. Participants compared social-media narratives with what they saw or experienced and did not necessarily accept official claims as complete representations of reality. This finding extends the hybrid media system perspective by highlighting that citizens are not merely participants in online discussion; they can also act as informal verifiers of political claims. Political meaning is negotiated across social media, news media, official communication, and everyday experience (Chadwick, 2017; Smrdelj & Pajnik, 2025). In a disaster, this verification process becomes particularly intense because the audience possesses direct experiential references against which public claims can be assessed.

The pattern also supports a more cautious understanding of political trust restoration. The data do not demonstrate that Prabowo's communication caused trust to increase or decrease. Rather, they show how participants associated trust with the perceived consistency between communication, governmental performance, and lived conditions. This distinction is important because qualitative evidence of perception should not be converted into a causal claim. Research on the stability and change of political trust likewise demonstrates that trust is dynamic and shaped by changing evaluations of political actors and institutions (Devine & Valgarðsson, 2024). In this study, trust is best understood as conditional: it can be maintained when communication is credible and accompanied by action, but it can weaken when public claims repeatedly diverge from observable experience.

From the perspective of *da'wah siyasi*, the findings suggest that ethical political communication cannot be separated from political conduct. In particular, the principles of *siddiq*

and *amanah* provide an ethical framework for interpreting the relationship between political narratives and observable governmental action. *Siddiq* emphasizes truthfulness, while *amanah* emphasizes responsibility in carrying out entrusted public responsibilities. The concept of *da'wah bil hal* further provides a framework for understanding why ethical communication is not limited to verbal persuasion but is also reflected through concrete action. This interpretation is consistent with scholarship on prophetic communication that connects communicative credibility with ethical conduct (Ridho & Hariyadi, 2021; Sakdiah et al., 2025).

Importantly, these Islamic concepts are used in this study as an interpretive lens rather than as empirical categories derived from participants' responses. Participants did not explicitly use terms such as *siddiq*, *amanah*, or *da'wah bil hal* when describing their experiences. Instead, the empirical analysis first identified participants' evaluations of empathy, responsiveness, information, and consistency between political narratives and field realities. These findings are subsequently interpreted through selected concepts from *da'wah siyasi* to illuminate their ethical significance. The relevance of this perspective therefore lies in providing a normative vocabulary for interpreting why truthfulness, responsibility, credible communication, and concrete action are important in post-disaster political communication.

The four dimensions can therefore be understood as a relational sequence rather than four isolated variables. Empathy creates an affective opening; responsiveness signals involvement and accountability; message clarity supports cognitive evaluation; and narrative–reality consistency determines whether trust can be sustained. The sequence can be represented conceptually as communication → public expectation → governmental response → public verification → trust. This formulation does not imply a mechanical causal model. Instead, it summarizes the interpretive pattern found in the participants' accounts. It also explains why communication cannot be treated as a substitute for governance: a political statement may create expectations, but subsequent action determines whether those expectations become a basis for confidence or a source of disappointment.

The findings also have implications for the study of communication and dakwah in disaster contexts. First, they show that da'wah siyasi can function as an interpretive framework for empirical political communication rather than solely as a normative discussion of Islam and power. Second, they demonstrate that digital political communication should be analyzed together with the material conditions in which messages are received. Third, they suggest that ethical political communication is most credible when it combines truthful information, empathy, responsiveness, competence, and action. This aligns with the broader understanding that communication during crises is a social practice involving competing narratives, relationships of trust, and institutional responsibilities (Wang, 2022).

Practically, political actors and government institutions should avoid excessively general claims about disaster recovery and should provide information that is specific, current, and verifiable. When implementation is delayed, transparent explanations and regular updates may be more credible than uniformly positive narratives. Political leaders should also create channels for direct interaction with affected communities and treat criticism as part of public accountability. For dakwah institutions and scholars, the findings indicate an opportunity to develop public communication that connects Islamic ethical principles with civic responsibility, humanitarian assistance, and truthful information. In this way, dakwah siyasi can contribute not only to normative reflection but also to the development of ethical public communication practices during crises.

The study has several limitations. The participant group is relatively small and purposively selected, so the findings cannot represent all Acehnese citizens or the Indonesian population. The study also relies on self-reported perceptions and does not measure political trust through a

standardized survey. In addition, the research examines a specific post-disaster period and cannot determine whether the identified patterns remain stable during longer-term reconstruction. These boundaries mean that the findings should be read as a contextual qualitative account. Future research could combine qualitative inquiry with survey measures of political trust, perceived responsiveness, and perceived competence; compare Aceh with other disaster-affected regions; or examine political communication longitudinally as recovery progresses.

Table 2. Interpretive Sequence of Post-Disaster Political Trust

Communication–Trust Stage	Interpretive Function	Relevant Ethical Principle
Empathy	Creates an initial affective opening for message acceptance	Qaulan layyina; qaulan ma'rufa
Clarity and relevance	Supports cognitive evaluation of competence and adequacy	Qaulan baligha; qaulan sadida; tabligh
Responsiveness	Signals concern, involvement, and accountability	Ta'awun; fathanah; amanah
Consistency and action	Determines whether credibility is sustained through observable results	Siddiq; amanah; da'wah bil hal

Academic Implications

The findings contribute to communication and *dakwah* scholarship by conceptualizing political trust as an interpretive outcome of citizens' evaluations across four interconnected dimensions: political empathy, responsiveness and implementation, message clarity and information adequacy, and consistency between political narratives and field realities. This framework extends the analysis of post-disaster political communication beyond message content by emphasizing how citizens continuously evaluate communication against perceived governmental performance and observable conditions.

The findings also contribute to the application of *da'wah siyasi* in political communication research. Rather than treating Islamic communication concepts as empirical categories, the study uses selected concepts as an interpretive lens for understanding the ethical dimensions of the findings. *Siddiq*, *amanah*, and *da'wah bil hal*, for example, provide a normative vocabulary for interpreting the relationship between truthful communication, political responsibility, and concrete governmental action. This integration demonstrates how empirical public-perception research can be connected with normative Islamic communication analysis without assuming that participants themselves employ Islamic terminology.

The findings further contribute to understanding political trust in digital and hybrid media environments. In social-media settings, political statements are rapidly surrounded by reactions, counter-narratives, local reports, images, and personal accounts. Citizens can therefore move

quickly from reception to verification. Political credibility is not evaluated solely through official communication but through comparison between online narratives and offline experiences. This observation is consistent with the hybrid media system perspective, in which political communication is shaped by interactions among political actors, professional media, and networked citizens (Chadwick, 2017). The Acehnese case further demonstrates that this verification process remains connected to material experiences of disaster recovery.

The four dimensions identified in the findings should therefore be understood as analytically interconnected rather than independent. Political empathy may influence whether a message is initially perceived as recognition of public suffering; responsiveness concerns whether that recognition is followed by governmental involvement; message clarity affects whether citizens understand the situation and intended governmental actions; and narrative–reality consistency determines whether communication remains credible when compared with observable conditions. Together, these dimensions explain how political trust is evaluated rather than treating trust as a separate communication outcome.

Practical Recommendations

The practical implication is that post-disaster political communication should be designed as a continuing accountability process rather than as a single public-relations event. Political and governmental communicators should identify the problem clearly, explain actions that have been undertaken, acknowledge unresolved issues, provide realistic expectations, and communicate updates as conditions change. Such practices can reduce the distance between symbolic communication and governance by allowing citizens to assess both what is communicated and what is being implemented.

From the perspective of *da'wah siyasi*, practical communication should also connect ethical principles with observable conduct. *Qaulan sadida* can guide truthful and accurate representation of conditions, while *qaulan layyina* emphasizes sensitivity toward vulnerable audiences. *Amanah* highlights responsible fulfillment of public obligations, and *da'wah bil hal* emphasizes that ethical claims should be demonstrated through concrete action. These principles suggest that politeness or persuasive language alone is insufficient when communication is not accompanied by truthful information, responsible action, and appropriate assistance.

Practical communication should also account for the broader material conditions in which political messages are received. Negative perceptions cannot be attributed to communication quality alone because severe material losses, delayed infrastructure recovery, limited access to assistance, uncertainty, and prior evaluations of government may shape citizens' interpretations. The present study cannot isolate the independent contribution of communication from these broader experiences. However, this limitation suggests that effective crisis communication should acknowledge such conditions rather than attempting to substitute communication for substantive governance. Credible explanations, transparent updates, and visible evidence of progress may help maintain communication credibility while recovery remains incomplete.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that post-disaster digital political communication is evaluated by citizens through a relationship between message, response, reality, and trust. The participants did not evaluate political communication only by asking whether a statement was positive or negative. They considered whether political communication conveyed genuine concern, whether government responses were sufficiently responsive, whether information was clear and relevant, and whether public narratives corresponded with conditions experienced or observed in affected areas. These dimensions formed an interconnected basis for evaluating political credibility.

The first contribution of the study is the identification of four dimensions that organize public evaluation: political empathy, responsiveness and implementation, message clarity and information adequacy, and narrative–reality consistency. Empathy provides an affective opening for communication, but experienced empathy becomes stronger when concern is accompanied by assistance and presence. Responsiveness shapes perceptions of accountability, while message clarity contributes to judgments about competence and the usefulness of governmental information. The consistency dimension is particularly important because citizens can compare political narratives with their own experiences and with alternative information circulating through digital media.

The second contribution concerns the interpretation of political trust. The findings do not support a simple conclusion that political communication automatically restores trust. Instead, trust appears conditional and dynamic. Participants could retain trust when they saw concrete recovery efforts, while communication perceived as disconnected from reality or unsupported by action could generate skepticism and declining confidence. The study therefore proposes that post-disaster trust restoration is better understood as a communication–performance process in which messages create expectations, governmental action provides evidence, and citizens subsequently verify whether the evidence corresponds with the claims.

The third contribution is the use of da'wah siyasi as an interpretive lens for empirical political communication. The findings can be understood through *qaulan layyina* and *qaulan ma'rufa* in relation to empathy, *qaulan baligha* and *qaulan sadida* in relation to clarity and truthfulness, *ta'awun* and *fathanah* in relation to responsive and competent action, and *siddiq*, *amanah*, and *da'wah bil hal* in relation to the consistency between political communication and concrete conduct. These principles were not treated as direct statements made by participants but as an ethical framework used to interpret the empirical themes.

The study is limited by its purposively selected participant group, its focus on North Aceh and the November 2025 post-disaster context, and its reliance on qualitative perceptions rather than representative survey measures. Further research should examine larger and more diverse populations, compare different disaster contexts and political actors, and combine qualitative inquiry with quantitative measures of political trust and perceived governmental performance. Longitudinal studies could also examine whether early perceptions of empathy and responsiveness continue to shape trust during reconstruction. The central lesson is straightforward: in a post-disaster environment, political communication becomes credible not when it sounds reassuring, but when words remain truthful, responsive, and visibly connected to action.

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