



Borderline Trust: Dynamics of Political Public Confidence in an Indonesian Border Society

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Abstract. This study focuses on the dynamics of political trust in the border region of Indonesia-Malaysia (North Kalimantan). This article outlines the survey results encompassing legal institutions, the executive, legislative bodies, political parties, mass media, and religious leaders. The survey results indicate variations in the levels of public trust in these institutions. For instance, the police institution garners higher levels of trust compared to the judicial system. Local governments receive higher trust levels than the central government. However, trust in legislative institutions and political parties remains relatively low. These findings reflect a democratic deficit that could threaten political stability in border areas. Trust in mass media is also low, while religious leaders enjoy higher levels of trust. This underscores the significance of communication and the role of religious leaders in border regions. In conclusion, understanding the factors influencing political trust in border regions is key to maintaining political stability and bolstering local democracy.

Keywords: Political Trust, Border Region, Government Institutions, Democratic Deficit

1 Introduction

Border areas between countries often attract political, economic, and social attention. These regions serve as the convergence points of two different cultures, political systems, and social orders, creating unique dynamics that influence public trust in government and political institutions. Indonesia, with its geographical complexity and cultural diversity, provides an intriguing setting to comprehend the development of political trust in border regions.

Political trust is a central element in political and governance dynamics. Strong public trust in the government is vital in maintaining political stability, supporting policy implementation, and promoting healthy political participation. However, in border regions, factors such as security issues, economic disparities, and geographical challenges

can affect how political trust in the government evolves and changes over time. Numerous studies conducted in various border regions worldwide have offered essential insights into how factors like ethnicity, environment, economics, and border identity affect the level of political trust that people have in their governments.

Research by Wong and Lau [1] underscores the importance of understanding political trust in border regions and the impact of border tensions and cross-border mobility on public trust in the government. These factors significantly influence public perceptions of government performance in border regions. Additionally, an article by Zhu [2] explores political trust, particularly in the context of ethnic minorities in the border region between China and Vietnam. This study reveals how cultural and historical factors can influence political trust among ethnic minority groups in border regions. In Europe, Mazur and Skoczylas [3] discuss the levels of political trust in the border areas of Poland and Ukraine. Their research illustrates how history, ethnic identity, and political changes play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of the government in these border regions. The study by Sørensen and Torpe [4] deepens the understanding of the relationship between political trust and ethnic heterogeneity in the Danish border regions. This research offers a unique perspective in the European context, highlighting the complexity of factors influencing political trust in border regions. The study by Müller and Schmid [5] is a literature review examining trust beyond borders and ethnic diversity in cross-border cooperation. This study identifies important trends and findings in the literature on political trust in a border context. Environmental issues also have a significant impact on political trust. Zhou, Wang, and Li [6] investigate the relationship between trust in the government and economic development in China's border regions. This study demonstrates that environmental issues can influence the level of political trust among the public.

For the Indonesian context, research conducted by Yani [7] discusses political trust in Indonesia during the early days of the reform era. The article analyzes the levels of trust in institutions that support the democratization process in a critical period. The study found that while there was high trust in democratic institutions, there was low trust in political parties. Political trust was influenced by cultural and rational factors, with the performance of democratic institutions playing a significant role. This research supports the assumption that political trust in Indonesia is largely determined by the performance of democratic institutions and economic development. Lastly, a study by Hidayat et al. [8] focuses on measuring the level of trust among millennials in the Indonesian government. The study was conducted in ten cities on the islands of Sulawesi, Sumatra, Java, and West Nusa Tenggara. The results of Hidayat et al. [8] showed that the millennial generation in Indonesia trusts political institutions.

All the above studies provide valuable insights into political trust. The indicators used in this research are similar to those in the study by Hidayat et al. [8], but this research is focused on border regions, specifically in North Kalimantan Province, which shares a border with Malaysia. In this context, this article addresses the initial question of how far the level of public trust in the government and other political institutions, especially in border areas of Indonesia-Malaysia. This is important for understanding the factors that influence political trust in border regions.

2 Literature review

Trust is a challenging term to define precisely, but there is consensus that trust involves individuals making themselves vulnerable to others, groups, or institutions that can harm or betray them [9]. Trust can be conditional and given to specific individuals or institutions within particular domains. There is also the possibility of not trusting someone else. The assessment of trust can inspire actions, such as cautious behavior or uncooperative conduct when there is a lack of trust. Trust also possesses attributes such as a commitment to act in the interests of the trust giver and competence within the trust-given domain.

In the context of political trust, it is the belief that citizens have in government officials and political institutions to achieve specific outcomes, such as producing specific public policies and helping their institutions achieve their objectives honestly and within their authority. Political trust involves both empirical and normative expectations that these institutions regularly accomplish specific outcomes [10]. Political trust reflects evaluations of whether authorities and political institutions perform according to the normative expectations of the public [11]. Political trust is considered a vital component of civil culture necessary to ensure the stability of a democratic political system [12]. Political trust offers support to the political system that is accepted from its environment [13]. According to Loeber [14], there are three dimensions of political trust: trust in politicians (including government officials), trust in political institutions (including parliament and local councils), and trust in democracy.

Political trust is needed for political institutions to function effectively and promote the public good because political trust can enhance government effectiveness and produce positive social outcomes. Political trust is also a reason why we have various types of institutions. Trust in democracy, political parties, and specific officials is necessary for governments to function effectively and produce positive social outcomes. For example, countries with higher political trust have higher-quality governments that encourage governments to spend more money on social policies and improve other outcomes. Political distrust can complicate government functions and impede citizens from obtaining better policies.

3 Research Methods

This study employs a quantitative method and quantitative descriptive data analysis to provide in-depth insights into the concept of political trust in border areas. The research was conducted in five regencies/cities in North Kalimantan Province because this province is a border region between Indonesia and Malaysia. Data collection techniques involved surveys, which included 700 residents from North Kalimantan distributed across five regencies/cities. The total population in North Kalimantan Province is 701,814 people (Central Statistics Agency of North Kalimantan Province-BPS, 2023). The research sample was determined using the Slovin formula. This research used a 99% confidence level and a sampling error of 3.78%, resulting in a minimum sample size of 699 respondents. The study rounded this number to 700 respondents.

This research employs quantitative descriptive analysis to analyze data using a frequency table method to analyze and then describe the collected data. Quantitatively, data description is analyzed based on the frequency values or scores of each answer alternative in the questionnaire, which provides percentages and average answer scores from the respondents for each indicator, with the interpretation intervals as follows:

- 1) High Trust = 76% - 100%
- 2) Trust = 51% - 75%
- 3) Low Trust = 26% - 50%
- 4) No Trust = 0% - 25%

4 Results

Table 1. Trust on law enforcement institutions

Responses	Institutions (%)		
	Court Institution	Police Institution	Attorney Institution
High Trust	14,86%	17,43%	16,14%
Trust	48,43%	44,86%	45,57%
Low Trust	31,71%	32,57%	33,57%
No Trust	5,00%	5,14%	4,71%

Source: primary data processed, 2023

Table 1 shows that there is variation in the level of trust among the border area's residents regarding each institution. The police have a slightly higher level of trust (17.43%) compared to the court institution (48.43%) and the Attorney Institution (16.14%). This research is consistent with the findings of Hidayat et al. [8] regarding millennials, which show positive results for the police. A relevant concept here is that the level of political trust can be influenced by perceptions of the performance and integrity of specific institutions [15]-[16]. Factors such as transparency, accountability, and personal experiences with these institutions can play a role in shaping the level of trust [17].

Table 1 also provides information that the Judiciary/court is the institution with the lowest level of trust (31.71%). This could reflect public perceptions of challenges or weaknesses in the judicial system, such as the speed of legal proceedings, accessibility, or a sense of unfairness in the courts [18]-[19]. An important concept here is that judicial institutions are often seen as guardians of justice in the political system, and low trust in them can significantly impact overall political trust [20]-[21]-[16].

Table 2. Trust on executive branch of government

Responses	Institutions (%)		
	Central Govern- ment	Provincial Govern- ment	Regency/City Government
High Trust	16,00%	17,29%	16,14%
Trust	46,57%	46,29%	45,86%
Low Trust	32,29%	32,29%	32,86%
No Trust	5,14%	4,14%	5,14%

Source: primary data processed, 2023

Table 2 lists the levels of public trust at various government levels, including the Central Government, Provincial Government, and Regency/City Government. This provides an overview of political trust in the border area. High trust in the executive institution is at the provincial level (17.29%), while low trust and no trust are also recorded in significant numbers.

Comparing trust in the Regency/City Government to trust in the Provincial Government suggests that residents' perceptions of local government and the provincial level are quite similar. This indicates that local governments (provincial and regency/city) closer to the people receive higher trust. This is different from the findings of Hidayat et al. [8], which showed that millennials have higher trust in the central government. Factors such as governance performance, transparency, and responsiveness of local governments can play a role in shaping high levels of trust. Perceptions of the government's ability to handle local issues and provide public services can affect trust levels [21]. High trust in the government can increase public participation in the political and administrative processes. Conversely, low trust can hinder participation and affect support for government policies [16].

Table 3. Trust on legislative branch of government

Responses	Institutions (%)		
	National house of representatives	Regional legislative assembly	Local legisla- tive assembly
High Trust	10,43%	12,14%	11,57%
Trust	34,14%	34,14%	34,29%
Low Trust	43,43%	43,14%	41,86%
No Trust	12,00%	10,57%	12,29%

Source: primary data processed, 2023

Survey data in Table 3 about the levels of public trust in legislative institutions at three different levels, namely the People's Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI), Provincial Legislative Councils, and District/City Legislative Councils reveal serious challenges in building political trust in the border area. Low

political trust at all three levels of legislative institutions reflects a significant democratic deficit, i.e., dissatisfaction with the performance and representation of legislative institutions [16]. Border area residents (North Kalimantan) feel that these institutions are ineffective in representing their interests. Only about 10.43% of the public has high trust in DPR RI, 12.14% in Provincial Legislative Councils, and 11.57% in District/City Legislative Councils. The majority express low trust (43.43% in DPR RI, 43.14% in Provincial Legislative Councils, and 41.86% in District/City Legislative Councils).

The research shows that such a democratic deficit can damage collective identity and influence the stability of democracy [22]. Dissatisfaction with legislative institutions can threaten political stability in border areas that already face additional challenges related to cross-border integrity and national security. Therefore, it is crucial to enhance transparency, accountability, and public participation in the legislative process in border regions [23]. Efforts to improve the performance of legislative institutions and rebuild public trust are key to strengthening local democracy and maintaining stability in the border area.

Table 4. Trust on political parties

Responses	Institutions (%)
	Political Parties
High Trust	10,14%
Trust	30,43%
Low Trust	42,14%
No Trust	17,29%

Source: primary data processed, 2023

Data in Table 4 shows that public trust in political parties in North Kalimantan is relatively low. Only about 10.14% of the public has high trust, while the majority (59.57%) state that they have little or no trust in political parties. This reflects significant dissatisfaction with the performance of political parties in representing public interests. Political parties play a crucial role in the political system as intermediaries between the public and the government. Dissatisfaction with political parties can threaten political stability and government effectiveness in border areas like North Kalimantan.

Studies by Hidayat et al. [8] and Yani [7] indicate that public trust in political parties remains low. This can affect political participation and democracy in the region. To improve political trust, political parties need to reform in terms of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to the needs of the public [15]. Additionally, increasing public participation in the local and national political process becomes essential. Through active participation, the public can feel that their aspirations are being heard and represented by political parties. The border context of North Kalimantan adds additional dynamics to the formation of political trust. Factors such as economic growth, border issues, and cross-border policies can influence public perceptions of political

parties. Therefore, understanding the local and border context is crucial to comprehending the level of political trust in this region.

Table 5. Trust on mainstream media and religious leaders

Responses	Institutions (%)	
	Mainstream media	Religious leaders
High Trust	13,71%	16,29%
Trust	41,86%	51,86%
Low Trust	36,71%	28,29%
No Trust	7,71%	3,57%

Source: primary data processed, 2023

The survey data on public trust in mass media and religious leaders in the border region of North Kalimantan reveals several important aspects related to political trust in this context. The low level of trust in mass media, with only about 13.71% of respondents having very high trust and 14.86% having trust, indicates significant communication challenges in this border region. Border area residents have limited access to various sources of information, and unreliable mass media can complicate efforts to convey objective and accurate information about political and social issues. On the other hand, higher trust levels in religious leaders, with approximately 16.29% of respondents having very high trust and 51.86% having trust, may also reflect the significant role played by religion in the daily lives of North Kalimantan residents. In this context, religious leaders are often seen as authoritative figures who play a significant role in guiding and influencing the beliefs of the community [24].

However, it is essential to note that the low level of trust in mass media can be a serious issue in efforts to build an informed and politically active community. Mass media plays a crucial role in delivering information and facilitating healthy political dialogue [25]. Therefore, the low level of trust may require further attention in efforts to strengthen the democratic deficit and political trust in the border region of North Kalimantan. Additionally, the low level of trust in mass media and religious leaders may also reflect the communication challenges faced by the government or other institutions in reaching and interacting with the border community. Efforts to improve public trust in media and religious leaders must consider the unique context and social dynamics in the region.

5 Conclusion

The results of this research provide in-depth insights into the levels of political trust in border regions between countries, such as in North Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. The survey findings reveal variations in the levels of trust in institutions like the legal system, executive, legislative, political parties, media, and religious leaders. Higher levels of trust in the police and local government highlight the importance of these

institutions' performance and responsiveness in gaining public trust. However, low levels of trust in the legislative institutions and political parties reflect a democratic deficit that could threaten political stability. The low trust in the media complicates efforts to build an informed community, while religious leaders play a significant role in influencing people's beliefs.

In the context of border regions, unique social and political dynamics pose particular challenges in establishing and maintaining political trust. Therefore, serious efforts are needed to enhance the transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of political institutions and the media. Increasing public participation in the political process is key to building strong political trust. This means understanding the local and border region context is crucial in comprehending the levels of political trust, especially in areas like North Kalimantan. In the quest to improve political trust, it is essential to address the unique communication challenges in border regions. Consequently, this article underscores the significance of understanding and tackling democratic deficit issues and efforts to strengthen democratic trust in regions with distinct social and political dynamics.

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