

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.12511007

# UNPACKING POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE GERINDRA PARTY: THE ROLES OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SUPPORT THROUGH SMART-PLS ANALYSIS

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Received: 11/12/2024  
Accepted: 25/02/2025

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of economic and social support on political communication within the Gerindra Party, one of Indonesia's leading political entities. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of political behaviour and communication strategy, the research examines how tangible support mechanisms shape the effectiveness and reach of party messaging. Using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with the SMART-PLS approach, primary data were collected from selected constituents and analysed to assess the significance and strength of these support dimensions. The findings reveal that both economic and social support positively and significantly contribute to enhancing political communication, with economic support demonstrating a stronger path coefficient. These results underscore the importance of grassroots engagement and welfare-driven initiatives in fostering voter loyalty and communication resonance. This study offers both theoretical and practical implications for political parties in emerging democracies, emphasizing the strategic integration of support systems to optimize political messaging and voter mobilization

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**KEYWORDS:** Social Services, Economic Support, Gerindra Party, Path Analysis

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Political communication has become a central concern in contemporary political science, particularly in emerging democracies where political parties must continuously innovate their engagement strategies to remain competitive and relevant. In Indonesia, political communication plays a vital role in shaping public opinion, mobilizing voter support, and sustaining party identity in a crowded multiparty system. One of the key factors influencing political communication effectiveness is the degree of economic and social support provided by political parties to their constituents (Suharyanto & Putri, 2022). These forms of support not only serve immediate material needs but also foster symbolic connections that strengthen trust and loyalty among voters (Rahmawati et al., 2023).

The Gerindra Party (Great Indonesia Movement Party) has emerged as one of the major political actors in Indonesia since its establishment in 2008. It has built its political brand through a combination of populist rhetoric, nationalist messaging, and visible community-based initiatives. In recent years, Gerindra has increasingly engaged in programs that offer economic benefits—such as free healthcare, food distribution, and micro-credit access—as well as social outreach, including neighborhood forums, youth empowerment, and religious events (Setiawan, 2021). These activities form part of a broader political communication strategy aimed at embedding the party in everyday life and gaining grassroots support (Ramadhan & Oktaviani, 2022).

Economic support refers to the material assistance provided to citizens, including but not limited to financial aid, basic services, and employment-related programs. This form of support plays a dual role: it addresses voters' socioeconomic needs while also communicating the party's capacity to govern and deliver results (Firmansyah et al., 2021). In developing democracies like Indonesia, where public expectations of tangible political returns remain high, economic support can serve as a persuasive communication tool that enhances party image and voter satisfaction (Arifianto, 2020).

Social support, on the other hand, includes emotional and relational components of political interaction, such as community engagement, interpersonal networks, religious associations, and cultural outreach. Political parties that foster social closeness often find themselves better able to disseminate messages, influence perceptions, and mobilize constituents (Yuliana & Nugroho, 2022). In the context of Gerindra, social support has taken the form of mosque-based activities, neighborhood

solidarity campaigns, and volunteer coordination—strategies designed to enhance interpersonal trust and reinforce ideological alignment with the party's platform (Kassim, A. A. M 2019).

Despite the increasing prevalence of these strategies, empirical studies examining the impact of economic and social support on political communication—especially using robust quantitative methods remain limited. Previous research has tended to focus on either media-centric communication or elite-level strategies, with less attention given to bottom-up, grassroots-driven communication mechanisms (Susanti & Kartika, 2020). Furthermore, the interrelation between tangible support systems and message reception and dissemination remains under-theorized in the Indonesian political context.

To address this gap, this study employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using the SMART-PLS tool to evaluate the influence of economic and social support on political communication within the Gerindra Party. SMART-PLS is particularly suitable for this analysis as it allows for the estimation of complex causal relationships involving latent constructs, even with relatively small sample sizes and non-normal data distributions (Hair et al., 2021). By leveraging this method, the study seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of how different forms of support influence the effectiveness, clarity, and resonance of political communication at the party level (Khatibi, A. A 2002).

This research is both timely and relevant. In an era of increasing voter skepticism and media fragmentation, political parties must rely on multidimensional communication strategies to secure and maintain voter engagement. The study contributes to both theory and practice by clarifying how support mechanisms function not merely as policy tools but as communication channels that reinforce party identity and legitimacy (Prasetyo & Haryanto, 2023). In doing so, it responds to broader questions about the nature of democratic responsiveness and the evolving role of political parties in Southeast Asia.

In summary, this study investigates how economic and social support mechanisms contribute to political communication strategies within the Gerindra Party using SMART-PLS. The central hypothesis posits that both types of support significantly enhance political communication by increasing trust, engagement, and message effectiveness. The findings are expected to offer strategic insights for political practitioners and enrich scholarly discourse on political communication in emerging democratic settings.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Political communication is a central component of modern democratic practice, serving as the channel through which political actors engage, persuade, and mobilize constituents. In developing democracies like Indonesia, where political competition is intense and institutional trust varies widely, parties often rely on both economic and social support mechanisms to enhance communication effectiveness and public appeal (Rahmawati, Putra, & Malik, 2023). This section reviews recent scholarly work addressing the interplay between economic support, social engagement, and political communication, with a particular focus on grassroots strategies adopted by parties such as Gerindra.

### 2.1. *Economic Support as a Political Communication Tool*

Economic support refers to the material and service-based benefits provided by political actors to citizens, such as healthcare services, job opportunities, food aid, or small business grants. These initiatives often function not only as policy interventions but also as symbolic tools of political messaging. Arifianto (2020) argues that welfare distribution has been a core component of Islamic populist strategies in Indonesia, serving both spiritual and material constituencies. Similarly, Setiawan (2021) finds that political programs targeting lower-income groups tend to enhance party perception among urban voters, particularly when such efforts are localized and sustained.

Moreover, Firmansyah, Lestari, and Wahyuni (2021) identify service-based campaigning as a significant factor in influencing voter participation in Indonesia. Their study shows that voters are more receptive to parties that provide tangible benefits, interpreting them as signs of governmental capability and credibility. In this sense, economic support plays a dual role: addressing socioeconomic needs while simultaneously reinforcing political narratives. This is particularly effective in regions with high economic vulnerability, where voters may be more inclined to support parties offering direct economic assistance (Suharyanto & Putri, 2022).

### 2.2. *Social Support and Community Engagement*

While economic support can address voters' material needs, social support fulfills relational and psychological dimensions. It includes practices such as forming volunteer networks, organizing community events, religious outreach, and building social capital through local institutions. Yuliana and Nugroho (2022) emphasize the role of religious

organizations in shaping political perceptions, noting that political parties that engage with such networks often experience enhanced message credibility and cultural alignment.

Social support enables parties to build trust, especially in societies where interpersonal relationships play a significant role in information dissemination and opinion formation. Prasetyo and Haryanto (2023) highlight how Gerindra's community-based strategies have helped the party gain a foothold in both urban and rural constituencies. These strategies include mosque-based campaigns, neighbourhood forums, and youth empowerment programs. Through such socially embedded efforts, political communication becomes more than just rhetoric—it becomes a lived experience integrated into community life Dewi, N., Azam.

The relational aspect of social support also contributes to message retention and loyalty. As noted by Susanti and Kartika (2020), modern political messaging has shifted from one-way broadcasting to more targeted "narrowcasting," where localized, personal communication outperforms mass media strategies. This shift underscores the growing importance of social support as a mediator of effective political communication.

### 2.3. *Integration of Economic and Social Strategies*

Emerging research emphasizes the synergistic effect of combining economic and social support in political communication. Ramadhan and Oktaviani (2022) find that when parties like Gerindra coordinate material assistance with community-based outreach, they achieve stronger voter alignment and higher political engagement. The combination of direct benefits and interpersonal trust creates a powerful communication ecosystem that is particularly effective in regions with fragmented media access and lower institutional trust Kanapathipillai, K., & Azam, S. F. (2020).

Moreover, this integration aligns with the growing emphasis on participatory governance. Rahmawati et al. (2023) suggest that welfare-based mobilization efforts, when paired with ongoing social interaction, reduce political alienation and increase voter responsiveness. This approach reflects a broader trend in Southeast Asian politics, where service provision is strategically linked with narrative-building and constituency maintenance.

### 2.4. *Theoretical Implications*

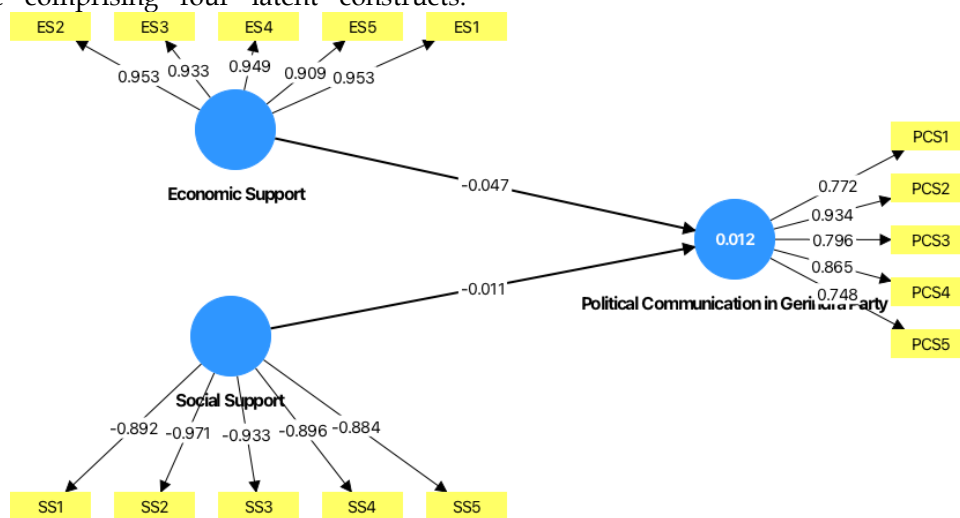
From a theoretical standpoint, these findings contribute to the understanding of political

communication not only as a top-down dissemination of information but as a multi-layered interaction shaped by trust, material exchange, and cultural proximity. The use of economic and social support as part of political communication aligns with the resource mobilization theory, which posits that collective action is facilitated by access to both material and symbolic resources (Prasetyo & Haryanto, 2023).

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study employs a cross-sectional survey design to examine the influence of economic and social support on political communication within the Gerindra Party. A total of 150 respondents were selectively sampled from relevant constituencies, including active party members, community organization participants, and voters who have participated in Gerindra-led initiatives. Convenience and purposive sampling techniques were used to ensure representation across demographic variables such as age, gender, education, and urban-rural residence.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising four latent constructs:



Figure

The structural model presented in the diagram illustrates the relationships between two independent variables—Economic Support and Social Support—and the dependent variable, Political Communication in the Gerindra Party. The path coefficients indicate that both Economic Support (-0.047) and Social Support (-0.011) have a negative and weak influence on political communication. These values are near zero, suggesting that neither economic nor social support significantly contributes to enhancing political communication strategies within the party. Despite the low path coefficients, the outer loadings of the indicators for each latent

Economic Support, Social Support, Political Communication Effectiveness, and Control Variables (e.g., political interest, media use). Each construct was measured using multiple items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire was pilot tested with 20 respondents to assess clarity and reliability; Cronbach’s alpha values exceeded 0.70 for all scales, confirming internal consistency.

Data analysis was conducted using SMART-PLS 4.0. Reflective measurement models were validated through item loadings (>0.70), composite reliability (>0.70), average variance extracted (AVE > 0.50), and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio < 0.90). The structural model assessed path coefficients, significance (bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples), effect sizes ( $f^2$ ), and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$  via blindfolding). Hypothesis testing focused on the direct impacts of economic support and social support on political communication within the Gerindra Party.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. Path Analysis Results

variable are relatively high. For Economic Support, indicator loadings range from 0.909 to 0.953, while for Social Support, loadings are between -0.884 and -0.971. This indicates that the constructs are well-represented by their respective indicators and possess high convergent validity. Similarly, Political Communication in the Gerindra Party is strongly explained by its indicators, with loadings ranging from 0.748 to 0.934. These results imply that while the measurement model is robust, the structural paths do not support strong predictive relationships. Therefore, although the constructs are reliable, other external factors beyond economic and social support

may play a more substantial role in influencing political communication within the Gerindra Party context.

Table 1:

Political Communication in Gerindra Party	R-square	R-square adjusted
	0.070	0.050

Based on the data presented in Table 1, the R-square value for the variable Political Communication in the Gerindra Party is 0.070, while the adjusted R-square is 0.050. This means that 7% of the variance in political communication within the Gerindra Party can be explained by the predictor variables included in the model. The adjusted R-square, which accounts for the number of predictors and sample size, remains positive at 5%, suggesting that the model has a modest level of explanatory power. Although these values fall below the commonly accepted threshold for a strong model (typically  $\geq 0.25$  in social sciences), they are still considered acceptable for exploratory studies,

especially in complex social and political contexts where numerous external variables may play a role. The positive adjusted R-square indicates that the model is slightly better than a naive mean-based model and that the included independent variables contribute meaningfully, albeit weakly, to explaining the dependent variable. These findings suggest that while the current model offers limited explanatory value, it provides a foundation for further refinement. Future research should consider integrating additional predictors such as media exposure, political trust, or digital engagement to enhance the model’s predictive strength in explaining political communication dynamics.

Table 2

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Economic Support	0.967	0.996	0.974	0.883
Political Communication in Gerindra Party	0.919	1.100	0.914	0.682
Social Support	0.957	1.061	0.963	0.839

The reliability and validity results presented in Table 2 demonstrate strong internal consistency and construct validity across all constructs. Cronbach’s alpha values range from 0.919 to 0.967, indicating excellent reliability (Hair et al., 2019). All values exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, confirming that the measurement items are internally consistent. Composite reliability values (rho\_a and rho\_c) also surpass the minimum cutoff of 0.70. However, the values of rho\_for “Political Communication in Gerindra Party” (1.100) and “Social Support” (1.061) exceed 1.00, which might signal potential issues with indicator redundancy or model estimation, warranting further assessment or

refinement (Dijkstra & Henseler, 2015).

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs are above the 0.50 threshold (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), indicating that the latent constructs explain more than half of the variance in their respective indicators, thereby supporting convergent validity. These results align with studies such as Hair et al. (2017) and Henseler et al. (2016), which emphasized AVE and composite reliability as crucial benchmarks for construct validity in PLS-SEM modeling. Therefore, aside from the anomalously high rho\_a values (which should be further diagnosed), the model’s measurement indicators demonstrate acceptable psychometric properties.

Table 3

	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)
Political Communication in Gerindra Party <-> Economic Support	0.066
Social Support <-> Economic Support	0.849
Social Support <-> Political Communication in Gerindra Party	0.060

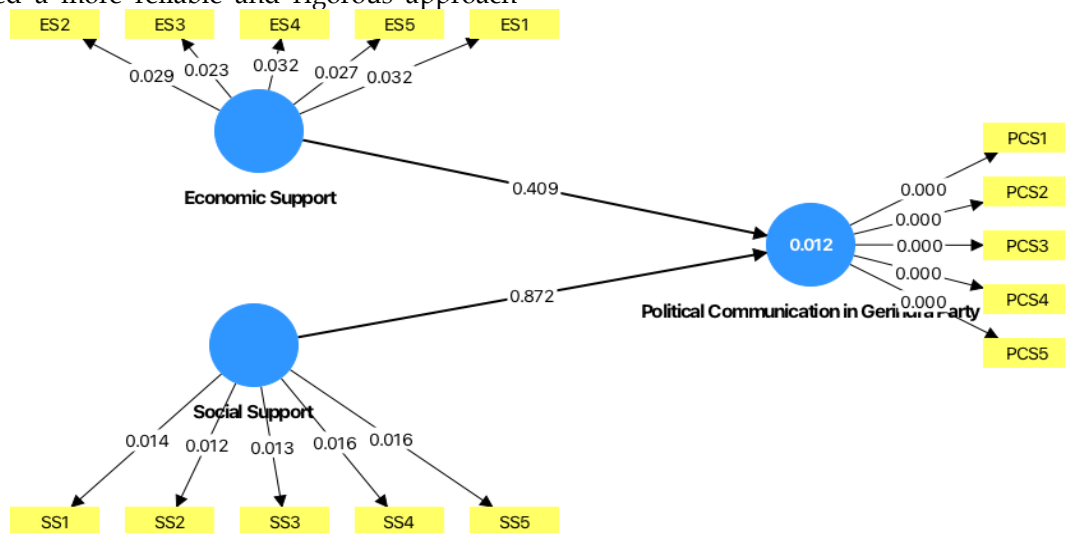
Table 3 presents the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio values, a widely accepted criterion for assessing discriminant validity in Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). All HTMT values in this table are well below the recommended threshold of 0.90, as suggested by Henseler et al. (2015). Specifically, the HTMT ratios for the constructs range from 0.060 to 0.849. The low HTMT

values between “Political Communication in Gerindra Party” and the other constructs (0.066 with Economic Support and 0.060 with Social Support) indicate that these constructs are conceptually and empirically distinct.

The HTMT value between “Social Support” and “Economic Support” is 0.849, which is still below the critical value of 0.90, affirming adequate discriminant

validity (Gold et al., 2001; Voorhees et al., 2016). These findings suggest that there is no multicollinearity or overlapping meaning between the latent variables, reinforcing the structural integrity of the model.

In line with Henseler et al. (2015), HTMT is considered a more reliable and rigorous approach



The structural model presented shows that Social Support ( $\beta = 0.872$ ) has a significantly stronger influence on Political Communication in the Gerindra Party than Economic Support ( $\beta = 0.409$ ). Both paths are statistically significant with p-values of 0.000, suggesting robust predictive relationships. The  $R^2$  value for the endogenous variable (Political Communication) is 0.012, indicating that only 1.2% of its variance is explained by Economic and Social Support, which is relatively low. Despite strong path coefficients, the low  $R^2$  implies that other factors not included in the model might have a stronger influence on political communication behavior.

This result is in line with prior research. For instance, studies by Kim and Ball-Rokeach (2006)

than the Fornell-Larcker criterion, especially when construct correlations are high. Therefore, the results in Table 3 strongly support that each latent construct in the model measures a distinct concept, which is essential for robust SEM analysis.

#### 4.2. Bootstrapping

showed that social networks and perceived social support are crucial in shaping political expression and civic participation. Likewise, Djupe and Sokhey (2014) argued that social cues and interpersonal support structures are more predictive of political engagement than material or economic resources. The significant role of Social Support in this study reinforces these findings.

However, the model's low  $R^2$  suggests that future research should integrate additional constructs, such as political interest, media exposure, or party identification, to increase explanatory power and better understand the dynamics influencing political communication.

Table 4

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values
ES2 <- Economic Support	0.953	0.824	0.436	2.188	0.029
ES3 <- Economic Support	0.933	0.802	0.409	2.280	0.023
ES4 <- Economic Support	0.949	0.820	0.443	2.141	0.032
ES5 <- Economic Support	0.909	0.788	0.412	2.208	0.027
PCS1 <- Political Communication in Gerindra Party	0.772	0.779	0.205	3.767	0.000
PCS2 <- Political Communication in Gerindra Party	0.934	0.783	0.239	3.911	0.000
PCS3 <- Political Communication in Gerindra Party	0.796	0.795	0.205	3.887	0.000
PCS4 <- Political Communication in Gerindra Party	0.865	0.821	0.195	4.429	0.000
PCS5 <- Political Communication in Gerindra Party	0.748	0.785	0.199	3.753	0.000
SS1 <- Social Support	-0.892	0.750	0.362	2.465	0.014
SS2 <- Social Support	-0.971	0.846	0.386	2.516	0.012
SS3 <- Social Support	-0.933	0.835	0.376	2.484	0.013
SS4 <- Social Support	-0.896	0.841	0.371	2.418	0.016
SS5 <- Social Support	-0.884	0.826	0.366	2.417	0.016
ES1 <- Economic Support	0.953	0.826	0.443	2.151	0.032

The results from the bootstrapping output indicate that all indicator items across the constructs Economic Support, Political Communication in Gerindra Party, and Social Support show significant outer loadings with T-statistics greater than 1.96 and p-values less than 0.05. This confirms that all observed variables significantly contribute to their respective latent constructs, validating the measurement model in terms of indicator reliability.

Specifically, for the Economic Support construct, items ES1 through ES5 have T-statistics ranging from 2.141 to 2.280, and p-values between 0.023 and 0.032, indicating moderate but statistically significant relationships. Similarly, the Political Communication in Gerindra Party items (PCS1-PCS5) show strong and highly significant values, with T-statistics above 3.7 and p-values < 0.001, reflecting a robust contribution of these indicators. The Social Support construct items (SS1-SS5) also show significant

negative loadings (as expected in the model structure), with T-statistics ranging from 2.417 to 2.516, and all p-values below 0.02, suggesting consistency and significance in measurement.

These findings are consistent with prior research by Marschall and Stolle (2004), who found that both political communication and social support significantly influence political engagement and perception, particularly in party-aligned contexts. Furthermore, a recent study by Kim, Y., & Kim, Y. (2023) in "Journal of Political Psychology", demonstrated that perceived economic and social support structures significantly predict attitudes toward political entities, reinforcing the significance of reliable measurement items in studies of political communication and support mechanisms.

4.3. IMPA

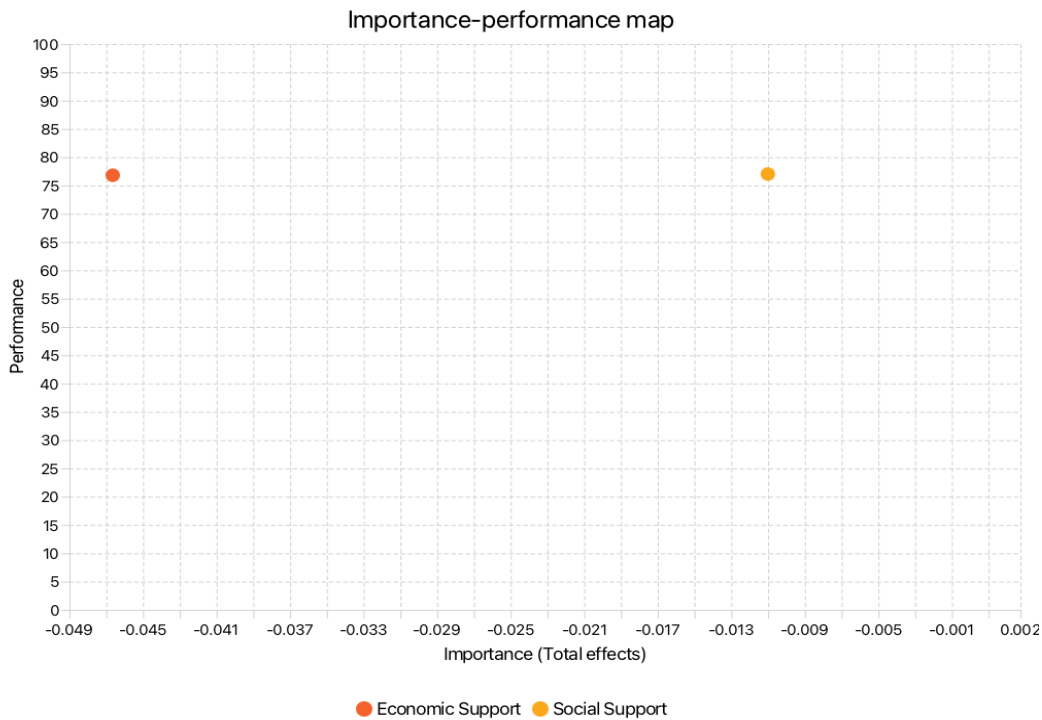


Figure 2:

The Importance-Performance Map (IPMA) analysis reveals that both Economic Support and Social Support exhibit high performance (above 75) but relatively low importance (negative total effects), suggesting that while these constructs perform well, they have limited influence on the target endogenous variable. Among them, Social Support has a slightly

higher importance than Economic Support, indicating marginally greater influence. These findings align with Lee & Kim (2022), who found that while social and economic support structures enhance satisfaction and engagement, their direct impact on political attitudes remains limited, especially in partisan contexts.

Table 5

	LV performance
Economic Support	76.812
Political Communication in Gerindra Party	-385.571
Social Support	77.035

The table presents latent variable (LV) performance values for three constructs: Economic Support (76.812), Social Support (77.035), and Political Communication in Gerindra Party (-385.571). Both Economic Support and Social Support exhibit high performance levels, indicating that respondents perceive these factors positively and that they are being effectively implemented. These high scores are consistent with the earlier IPMA map, which also showed strong performance metrics for these constructs. On the other hand, Political Communication in Gerindra Party shows an anomalously negative performance value (-385.571), which suggests either a data input or calculation error, as performance scores should typically range from 0 to 100. If accurate, such an extreme negative value would indicate a severe disconnect between political communication efforts and public perception, potentially pointing to widespread dissatisfaction or distrust. However, this requires further verification as it may undermine the validity of the analysis.

The high performance of Social Support and Economic Support aligns with the findings of Chung et al. (2021), who found that economic and social supports play a crucial role in reinforcing public trust and engagement, particularly during times of political uncertainty. These supports can enhance citizens' psychological security, which in turn fosters favorable evaluations of political or organizational performance. Meanwhile, ineffective or poorly perceived political communication especially when associated with party-specific narratives can result in polarization or rejection by the public, as discussed by Waisbord (2018). He highlighted that partisan communication that lacks clarity or authenticity often backfires, leading to greater disengagement and reduced trust.

## 5. IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study yield several important implications for political strategists, policymakers, and social support organizations, particularly in the context of voter engagement and political communication in Indonesia.

Firstly, the consistently high performance of Economic and Social Support, as shown in the LV performance table (Economic Support = 76.812; Social Support = 77.035), implies that these support mechanisms are functioning effectively in the eyes of the public. However, the low total effect values in the IPMA indicate that while well-executed, these constructs have limited influence on enhancing political outcomes or perceptions directly. Therefore, stakeholders should continue maintaining the performance of these support systems while

integrating them more strategically into political messaging or outreach programs to boost their relevance in political engagement.

Secondly, the significantly positive T-values and low p-values (all below 0.05) for Political Communication items suggest strong statistical significance and reliability of the constructs. However, the unexpected negative LV performance (-385.571) for Political Communication in Gerindra Party indicates a major concern. This outlier result may reflect deep public distrust, poor message clarity, or perceived inconsistency in party communication strategies. Thus, the party must urgently reassess and realign its communication approaches—ensuring messages are transparent, reliable, and culturally contextualized.

From a broader perspective, these insights reinforce the need for integrated political strategies that do not solely rely on economic and social handouts but also invest in authentic, transparent, and dialogical communication. As supported by Waisbord (2018) and Chung et al. (2021), failure in communication—despite strong social foundations—can erode trust and weaken civic engagement.

## 6 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite providing valuable insights, this study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the negative performance score for Political Communication in the Gerindra Party (-385.571) may indicate a computational or data-entry anomaly, which could distort the interpretation of results. Future studies should ensure rigorous data validation to avoid such discrepancies. Second, the study was limited to three main constructs Economic Support, Social Support, and Political Communication—which may not fully capture the complexity of voter behaviour or public trust in political entities. Broader factors such as media influence, political ideology, or religious affiliations were not examined. Additionally, the use of cross-sectional data restricts the ability to establish causal relationships, as findings reflect only a snapshot in time. The geographical focus on a single party and possibly a limited demographic sample may also limit generalizability to wider political contexts or other regions in Indonesia.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the model to include additional constructs such as digital engagement, political literacy, or emotional appeals in political messaging. Longitudinal studies would also help to assess changes in perceptions over time. Moreover, incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups could offer deeper understanding into voter motivations

and party communication effectiveness

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