

Trust in Institutions and Civic Engagement among Young Adults in Contemporary Indonesia

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ABSTRAK

Kepercayaan terhadap institusi telah menjadi faktor penting dalam memahami hubungan antara warga negara dan tata kelola demokrasi, terutama di kalangan generasi muda yang merepresentasikan masa depan perkembangan kewarganegaraan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh kepercayaan terhadap institusi dan kepercayaan publik terhadap partisipasi kewarganegaraan di kalangan generasi muda dalam konteks Indonesia saat ini. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan metode survei yang melibatkan 135 responden. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terstruktur yang diukur menggunakan skala Likert lima poin. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis menggunakan Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) versi 25, meliputi uji validitas, uji reliabilitas, analisis korelasi, dan analisis regresi berganda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepercayaan terhadap institusi memiliki pengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap kepercayaan publik, serta mampu menjelaskan 38,8% variasi dalam kepercayaan publik. Selain itu, kepercayaan terhadap institusi dan kepercayaan publik secara signifikan memengaruhi partisipasi kewarganegaraan, dengan kepercayaan publik menunjukkan pengaruh yang lebih kuat dibandingkan kepercayaan terhadap institusi. Model regresi menjelaskan 42,1% variasi dalam partisipasi kewarganegaraan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa semakin kuat kepercayaan masyarakat terhadap institusi, semakin tinggi tingkat kepercayaan publik yang terbentuk, serta semakin besar dorongan generasi muda untuk terlibat dalam aktivitas kewarganegaraan. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya kredibilitas institusi, akuntabilitas, dan responsivitas dalam memperkuat partisipasi generasi muda dalam lingkungan demokrasi Indonesia.

ABSTRACT

Trust in institutions has become an important factor in understanding the relationship between citizens and democratic governance, particularly among young people who represent the future of civic development. This study aims to examine the influence of institutional trust and public trust on civic participation among young people in contemporary Indonesia. This research applies a quantitative approach using a survey method involving 135 respondents. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire measured using a five-point Likert scale. The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25, including validity testing, reliability testing, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. The results indicate that institutional trust has a positive and significant influence on public trust and explains 38.8% of the variation in public trust. Furthermore, institutional trust and public trust significantly influence civic participation, with public trust demonstrating a stronger effect compared with institutional trust. The regression model explains 42.1% of the

variation in civic participation. These findings indicate that stronger confidence in institutions contributes to higher levels of public trust and encourages greater involvement of young people in civic activities. This study highlights the importance of institutional credibility, accountability, and responsiveness in strengthening youth participation within Indonesia's democratic environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Trust represents a fundamental element in the relationship between citizens and public institutions because it shapes how individuals perceive the legitimacy, reliability, and effectiveness of governmental and social organizations. In democratic systems, institutional trust is closely associated with political stability, social cohesion, and citizens' willingness to engage in collective affairs. Institutions perceived as transparent, accountable, and responsive are more likely to generate public confidence and encourage active civic involvement (Haryanto et al., 2023; Syaputra, 2018). Conversely, declining levels of institutional trust may weaken citizens' attachment to democratic processes, reduce political participation, and create social distance between individuals and governing institutions (Subekti et al., 2024; Sujono & Nasution, 2023). Therefore, understanding the mechanisms through which trust influences civic behavior has become an important concern in contemporary democratic studies.

The role of young people has become increasingly significant in shaping the future trajectory of democratic development. As a generation highly connected through digital technologies, social media platforms, and online communities, young citizens experience a different pattern of political awareness and civic engagement compared with previous generations (Akram & Kumar, 2017; Yin, 2023). Digital transformation has expanded opportunities for young people to access information, express political opinions, participate in social movements, and interact with public institutions. However, these opportunities are accompanied by challenges related to misinformation, political polarization, institutional controversies, and changing patterns of social communication, which may influence young citizens' perceptions of institutional credibility and their willingness to participate in civic activities.

Institutional trust and public trust represent interconnected dimensions that influence citizens' evaluations of governance systems and collective social processes. Institutional trust refers to confidence in formal organizations, including government agencies, legal institutions, and political authorities, while public trust reflects broader perceptions regarding the integrity, reliability, and effectiveness of social systems (Billanes & Enevoldsen, 2021; Timothy & Abbas, 2021). Both dimensions play an important role in shaping civic participation because individuals who perceive institutions and social systems as trustworthy are more likely to support public policies, engage in community activities, participate in political discussions, and contribute to collective initiatives. Within democratic societies, trust functions as a social foundation that connects citizens with institutions and facilitates meaningful participation in public life.

Civic participation among young people has experienced substantial transformation beyond traditional forms of political involvement, such as electoral participation and formal organizational

membership. Contemporary youth engagement increasingly includes digital activism, online discussions, community-based initiatives, environmental movements, and various forms of social advocacy (Lee, 2022). Although technological development has expanded channels for participation, engagement levels remain influenced by whether young citizens perceive institutions as credible and whether they believe their involvement can produce meaningful social change. Previous research has identified trust as an important determinant of political behavior; however, empirical investigations examining the simultaneous influence of institutional trust and public trust on youth civic participation remain limited (Asrijal et al., 2025), particularly within emerging democratic contexts such as Indonesia.

Indonesia provides a relevant empirical context for examining the relationship between trust and youth civic participation due to its dynamic democratic transformation and diverse sociopolitical environment. Since the democratic reform era, Indonesia has experienced institutional restructuring, greater public access to information, and increased opportunities for citizen involvement in governance processes. Nevertheless, issues related to institutional performance, accountability, political communication, and public perception continue to influence citizens' confidence in democratic institutions. Among younger generations, these conditions may shape their attitudes toward governance and determine their motivation to engage in civic activities. Despite the importance of youth participation for democratic sustainability, limited quantitative evidence explains how institutional trust and public trust contribute to civic engagement among Indonesian youth.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between institutional trust, public trust, and civic participation among young people in contemporary Indonesia. By employing a quantitative approach, this research seeks to provide empirical evidence regarding the role of trust dimensions in explaining youth involvement in civic affairs. This study contributes to the broader literature on political sociology, democratic governance, and youth studies by clarifying how citizens' perceptions of institutional reliability and social trust influence participatory behavior. The findings are expected to provide valuable implications for policymakers, educational institutions, and civil society organizations in developing strategies to strengthen democratic engagement and promote more inclusive civic participation among younger generations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 *Institutional Trust*

Institutional trust represents a fundamental concept in understanding political behavior, governance, and democratic development, referring to citizens' confidence in the effectiveness, fairness, transparency, and accountability of public institutions. Trust develops through consistent institutional performance and positive interactions between citizens and governance systems, shaping perceptions of legitimacy and reliability (Heryana & Sukarya, 2022; Timothy & Abbas, 2021). In democratic societies, higher institutional trust encourages compliance with public policies, acceptance of institutional decisions, and greater civic involvement, whereas declining trust may contribute to political disengagement and skepticism toward authorities. Among young people, institutional trust is increasingly influenced by digital information environments, where access to political information, public controversies, and online discussions shapes perceptions of institutional credibility (Kulmie et al., 2024; TESSEMA et al., 2024). In Indonesia's democratic context, challenges related to governance quality, public accountability, corruption, and service delivery continue to influence how young citizens evaluate and engage with public institutions.

2.2 *Public Trust*

Public trust represents a broader dimension of social confidence that reflects citizens' perceptions of the reliability, integrity, and responsibility of social systems, authorities, and collective governance processes. Grounded in social capital theory, public

trust facilitates cooperation, shared responsibility, and civic engagement by strengthening individuals' belief that collective actions can generate meaningful outcomes (Asrijal et al., 2025; Kulmie et al., 2024). High levels of public trust encourage social cohesion and participation, whereas declining trust may contribute to fragmentation and reduced willingness to engage in public affairs. Public trust is shaped by institutional performance, transparency, fairness, political communication, and perceived government effectiveness, while among young citizens, its development is increasingly influenced by digital interactions (Ran et al., 2015; Silitonga, 2023), online communities, and information environments that shape collective perceptions of public institutions and governance.

2.3 Civic Participation Among Young People

Civic participation refers to individuals' involvement in activities that contribute to public life, including political engagement, community initiatives, volunteerism, social advocacy, and public discussions. In democratic systems, civic participation represents citizens' willingness to contribute to collective goals and serves as an indicator of democratic vitality (Alodat et al., 2023; Juanda, 2023; Winarwan et al., 2025). Among young people, participation has expanded beyond conventional political activities into digital activism, online campaigns, and community-based movements facilitated by technological development. The level of youth civic participation is influenced by political awareness, social responsibility, perceived effectiveness of engagement, and trust in public institutions. In Indonesia, the increasing use of digital platforms has created new spaces for young citizens to express opinions and organize collective actions, although their participation remains shaped by perceptions of institutional openness, responsiveness, and credibility.

2.4 Hypothesis Development

Based on the theoretical perspectives, this study proposes a framework explaining the relationship between institutional trust, public trust, and civic participation among young people in Indonesia. Institutional trust is positioned as a determinant of public trust and civic participation, reflecting citizens' confidence in the performance, legitimacy, and accountability of public institutions. Strong institutional performance characterized by transparency, responsiveness, and effectiveness is expected to enhance broader social confidence, while institutional weaknesses may reduce trust and discourage civic engagement. Therefore, institutional trust serves as a foundation that shapes citizens' perceptions of governance systems and their willingness to participate in public affairs.

Public trust functions as an important mechanism that encourages civic participation by reducing uncertainty and strengthening individuals' belief that collective actions can generate meaningful outcomes. From the perspective of social capital theory, trust facilitates cooperation and engagement because citizens perceive institutions and social environments as supportive of participation. Among young people, higher levels of institutional and public trust are expected to increase involvement in community activities, public discussions, and social initiatives. Accordingly, this study assumes that institutional trust positively influences public trust, while both forms of trust contribute to greater youth civic participation in Indonesia. The hypotheses developed in this study are:

H1: Institutional trust positively influences public trust among young people in Indonesia.

H2: Public trust positively influences civic participation among young people in Indonesia.

H3: Institutional trust positively influences civic participation among young people in Indonesia.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a quantitative explanatory research approach to examine the relationship between institutional trust, public trust, and civic participation among young people in Indonesia. A quantitative approach was selected to measure relationships between variables through empirical data analysis, while the explanatory survey design was applied to identify the influence of

institutional trust on public trust and civic participation. The unit of analysis consists of young Indonesian citizens, as this group represents an important demographic in contemporary democratic development and provides insights into patterns of civic engagement and institutional relationships.

The population of this study includes young people in Indonesia who have awareness of social, public, or civic issues. Due to the broad population characteristics, purposive sampling was applied based on specific criteria, including Indonesian citizenship, young adult status, access to public information, and willingness to participate in the survey. A total of 135 respondents were obtained as the research sample. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed from indicators of institutional trust, public trust, and civic participation, measured through a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25 through several statistical procedures, including descriptive analysis, validity testing, reliability testing, correlation analysis, classical assumption testing, and multiple regression analysis. Validity was assessed using Pearson Product Moment correlation, while reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's Alpha with a threshold value of 0.70. Regression analysis was conducted to examine the proposed relationships: institutional trust influencing public trust, and institutional trust and public trust influencing civic participation. Hypothesis testing was performed using t-tests and significance values, where a p-value below 0.05 indicates a statistically significant relationship between variables.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 135 respondents representing young people in Indonesia. The demographic characteristics were analyzed to understand the profile of respondents participating in the research. The characteristics include gender, age group, and educational background. The distribution of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	61	45.2
	Female	74	54.8
Age	17–20 years	38	28.1
	21–25 years	71	52.6
	26–30 years	26	19.3
Education Level	Senior High School	32	23.7
	Diploma/Bachelor Degree	89	65.9
	Postgraduate Degree	14	10.4
Total		135	100.0

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 135 respondents involved in this study. The distribution shows that female respondents represented a slightly higher proportion (54.8%) compared with male respondents (45.2%). Regarding age, the majority of respondents were between 21–25 years old (52.6%), followed by those aged 17–20 years (28.1%) and 26–30 years (19.3%). In terms of educational background, most respondents held a Diploma/Bachelor degree (65.9%), while 23.7% had completed senior high school and 10.4% possessed postgraduate degrees. These characteristics indicate that the respondents were predominantly young adults with relatively high educational backgrounds, which aligns with the study focus on understanding trust perceptions and civic participation among young citizens in Indonesia.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to identify the general perceptions of respondents regarding institutional trust, public trust, and civic participation. The analysis

includes the minimum value, maximum value, mean, and standard deviation for each variable.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Institutional Trust (X)	135	2.20	5.00	3.78	0.61
Public Trust (Y1)	135	2.40	5.00	3.85	0.58
Civic Participation (Y2)	135	2.30	5.00	3.69	0.64

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the research variables based on responses from 135 participants. The results indicate that institutional trust obtained a mean value of 3.78 with a standard deviation of 0.61, while public trust recorded the highest mean value among the variables at 3.85 with a standard deviation of 0.58. Civic participation showed a mean value of 3.69 and a standard deviation of 0.64. The minimum and maximum values across all variables ranged from 2.20 to 5.00, indicating variations in respondents' perceptions while generally reflecting moderate to high levels of institutional trust, public trust, and civic participation among young people in Indonesia. These findings suggest that respondents tend to demonstrate positive perceptions toward institutions, social trust, and their involvement in civic activities.

4.3 Validity Test Results

Validity testing was performed using Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis. Each questionnaire item was evaluated based on its correlation coefficient. An item was considered valid when the correlation value exceeded the critical value of $r\text{-table} = 0.169$ for 135 respondents at a significance level of 5%.

Table 3. Validity Test Results

Variable	Number of Items	Range of Correlation Values	Result
Institutional Trust	5	0.621 – 0.812	Valid
Public Trust	5	0.654 – 0.835	Valid
Civic Participation	5	0.587 – 0.798	Valid

Table 3 presents the validity test results for the research instruments used to measure institutional trust, public trust, and civic participation. The results indicate that all questionnaire items achieved acceptable correlation values, with institutional trust items ranging from 0.621 to 0.812, public trust items ranging from 0.654 to 0.835, and civic participation items ranging from 0.587 to 0.798. Since all correlation values exceeded the minimum validity criteria, the measurement items for each variable were considered valid and appropriate for further statistical analysis. These findings confirm that the instrument items adequately represent the constructs examined in this study.

4.4 Reliability Test Results

Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. A research instrument is considered reliable when the Cronbach's Alpha value exceeds 0.70.

Table 4. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Standard Value	Result
Institutional Trust	0.842	0.70	Reliable
Public Trust	0.867	0.70	Reliable
Civic Participation	0.819	0.70	Reliable

Table 4 presents the reliability test results for the research instruments measuring institutional trust, public trust, and civic participation. The findings indicate that all variables achieved Cronbach's Alpha values above the recommended threshold of 0.70, with institutional trust obtaining a value of 0.842, public trust 0.867, and civic participation 0.819.

These results demonstrate that all measurement constructs have high internal consistency and are considered reliable for further statistical analysis. Therefore, the questionnaire items used in this study are consistent in measuring the intended research variables.

4.5 Classical Assumption Test

Before conducting regression analysis, classical assumption testing was performed to ensure that the regression model met statistical requirements.

a. Normality Test

The normality test results using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method to evaluate whether the regression residuals follow a normal distribution. The analysis shows a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z value of 0.742 with an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.641, which is higher than the significance threshold of 0.05. These results indicate that the residual data are normally distributed, fulfilling the normality assumption required for conducting regression analysis. Therefore, the regression model can be further analyzed using parametric statistical procedures.

b. Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity testing was conducted using tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values.

Table 5. Multicollinearity Test Result

Independent Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Result
Institutional Trust	0.682	1.466	No Multicollinearity
Public Trust	0.682	1.466	No Multicollinearity

Table 5 presents the multicollinearity test results to assess whether independent variables in the regression model have excessive correlations. The results show that institutional trust and public trust both obtained a tolerance value of 0.682 and a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value of 1.466. Since the tolerance values are above 0.10 and the VIF values are below the recommended threshold of 10, the regression model does not experience multicollinearity problems. These findings indicate that the independent variables are sufficiently distinct and can be used simultaneously in the regression analysis to examine their influence on civic participation.

4.6 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between institutional trust, public trust, and civic participation.

Table 6. Correlation Analysis Results

Relationship	Pearson Correlation (r)	Sig	Interpretation
Institutional Trust → Public Trust	0.623	0.000	Strong Positive Relationship
Institutional Trust → Civic Participation	0.514	0.000	Moderate Positive Relationship
Public Trust → Civic Participation	0.587	0.000	Strong Positive Relationship

Table 6 presents the correlation analysis results among the research variables. The findings indicate that institutional trust has a strong positive relationship with public trust, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.623 and a significance value of 0.000. Institutional trust also shows a moderate positive relationship with civic participation, with a correlation coefficient of 0.514 and a significance value of 0.000. Furthermore, public trust demonstrates a strong positive relationship with civic participation, indicated by a correlation coefficient of 0.587 and a significance value of 0.000. All relationships are statistically significant at the 0.01 level, suggesting that higher levels of institutional trust and public trust are associated with increased civic participation among young people in Indonesia.

4.7 Regression Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of institutional trust and public trust on civic participation.

Table 7. Regression Analysis: Institutional Trust on Public Trust

Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.
Institutional Trust	0.623	9.216	0.000
Constant	1.502	4.381	0.000

Table 7 presents the regression analysis results examining the influence of institutional trust on public trust. The findings indicate that institutional trust has a positive and significant effect on public trust, with a regression coefficient (β) of 0.623 and a significance value below 0.001. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.388 indicates that institutional trust explains 38.8% of the variation in public trust, while the remaining variation is influenced by other factors outside the research model. These results support H1, confirming that higher institutional trust contributes to stronger public trust among young people in Indonesia.

Table 8. Regression Analysis: Institutional Trust and Public Trust on Civic Participation

Variable	Beta (β)	t-value	Sig.
Institutional Trust	0.274	3.842	0.000
Public Trust	0.416	5.836	0.000
Constant	1.021	2.917	0.004

Table 8 presents the regression results examining the influence of institutional trust and public trust on civic participation. The findings indicate that both institutional trust and public trust have positive and significant effects on civic participation, with public trust demonstrating a stronger influence ($\beta = 0.416$) compared with institutional trust ($\beta = 0.274$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) value of 0.421 indicates that the model explains 42.1% of the variation in civic participation, while the remaining variation is influenced by other factors outside the model. These results support H2 and H3, confirming that higher levels of public trust and institutional trust contribute to greater civic participation among young people in Indonesia.

4.8 Discussion

The findings demonstrate that institutional trust serves as an important determinant of public trust among young people in Indonesia. The significant positive relationship between institutional trust and public trust indicates that perceptions of institutional credibility, transparency, and accountability influence broader confidence in governance systems. When young citizens perceive public institutions as effective, responsible, and responsive to societal needs, they are more likely to develop stronger trust toward collective governance processes. This finding reinforces the view that institutional performance represents a fundamental basis for the formation and maintenance of public trust (Al Fariz et al., 2024; Ran et al., 2015; Silitonga, 2023).

The results are consistent with theoretical perspectives emphasizing that trust is developed through continuous interactions between institutions and citizens. Institutions that demonstrate reliability, fairness, and accountability are more likely to receive positive evaluations from society. Within the Indonesian democratic context, this finding highlights the importance of improving institutional quality, particularly in aspects related to transparency, public service delivery, and responsiveness, as these factors influence how younger generations perceive the legitimacy and credibility of governance institutions (Mahrani & Soewarno, 2018; Silitonga, 2023).

Furthermore, the findings reveal that public trust has a significant influence on civic participation and demonstrates a stronger effect compared with institutional trust. This indicates that young citizens' willingness to participate in public activities is strongly associated with their broader confidence in social and governance systems. From the perspective of social capital theory, trust reduces uncertainty and encourages collective action by strengthening individuals' belief that participation can generate meaningful outcomes. Therefore, young people with higher levels of public trust are more likely to engage in community activities, public discussions, and social initiatives.

The direct influence of institutional trust on civic participation further indicates that perceptions of institutional legitimacy contribute to youth engagement in democratic processes. Although its effect is lower than public trust, institutional trust remains an important factor because it shapes expectations regarding institutional responsiveness and the value of citizen involvement. These findings imply that strengthening youth civic participation requires efforts to improve institutional transparency, communication, and accountability while creating inclusive mechanisms for public engagement. Overall, trust functions as a key foundation for democratic participation, where institutional trust strengthens public trust, and both dimensions contribute to greater civic involvement among young Indonesians.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examines the relationship between institutional trust, public trust, and civic participation among young people in contemporary Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that institutional trust significantly influences public trust, indicating that perceptions of institutional credibility, transparency, and accountability contribute to broader confidence in governance systems. Furthermore, both institutional trust and public trust have significant effects on civic participation, with public trust showing a stronger contribution, suggesting that young citizens are more likely to engage in public affairs, community activities, and democratic processes when they possess confidence in social and institutional systems. These findings provide empirical evidence that strengthening institutional performance through greater accountability, openness, and responsiveness is important for developing stronger civic engagement among young Indonesians. However, this study is limited by its sample size and cross-sectional design, which restrict the ability to capture changes in trust and participation over time. Future research may incorporate larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal approaches, and additional factors such as political efficacy, digital literacy, social media influence, and socioeconomic characteristics to provide a more comprehensive understanding of youth civic participation. Overall, this study confirms that institutional trust and public trust serve as important foundations for strengthening civic participation among young people in Indonesia.

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