

The Dynamics Relations of Party Institutionalization and Political Trust: Explaining the Decline of Aceh Party's Dominance in the Banda Aceh City Legislative

Dinamika Hubungan Institusionalisasi Partai dan Kepercayaan Politik: Menjelaskan Penurunan Dominasi Partai Aceh di Legislatif Kota Banda Aceh

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Abstract

This study explores the reasons behind the decline of the Aceh Party in the Banda Aceh City legislative elections over four election cycles (2009, 2014, 2019 and 2024). After an initial success in 2009 with six seats, the party experienced a gradual decline, losing four seats in 2014, two in 2019, and ultimately losing all representation in 2024. This decline raises questions about the internal and external dynamics that influence the resilience of local parties in the post-conflict period. The study employs a neo-institutional framework that combines the concepts of party institutionalization and public trust. The approach used is qualitative, using data collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and secondary data analysis. The analysis reveals three main findings. First, the ideological foundation of the Aceh Party is increasingly disconnected from the diverse urban population. Second, its legislative performance fails to project a credible image in the performance of its oversight and public representation functions. Third, internal conflict and leadership changes create a fragile and unstable organizational structure. In conclusion, the party's decline is not only due to changing voter preferences but also reflects deeper institutional challenges, the inability to adapt ideology to local realities, maintain organizational coherence, and meet demands for political accountability. These findings emphasize that identity-rooted parties must adapt their historical narratives to contemporary issues and strengthen transparent governance to remain relevant in the competitive political arena.

Keywords

Aceh Party; Political trust; Party institutionalization; Legislative performance; Local elections.

Abstrak

Studi ini menelusuri alasan di balik kemunduran Partai Aceh dalam pemilihan umum legislatif Kota Banda Aceh selama empat siklus pemilu (2009, 2014, 2019, dan 2024). Setelah keberhasilan awal pada tahun 2009 dengan perolehan enam kursi, partai ini mengalami penurunan bertahap, empat kursi pada 2014, dua pada 2019, dan akhirnya kehilangan seluruh perwakilan pada 2024. Penurunan ini menimbulkan pertanyaan tentang dinamika internal dan eksternal yang memengaruhi daya tahan partai lokal pascakonflik. Penelitian ini menggunakan kerangka neo-institusional yang memadukan konsep pelebagaan partai dan kepercayaan publik. Pendekatan yang digunakan bersifat kualitatif dengan data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi lapangan, dan analisis data sekunder. Hasil penelitian ini mengungkap tiga temuan utama. Pertama, fondasi ideologis Partai Aceh semakin terputus dari populasi perkotaan yang beragam. Kedua, kinerja legislatifnya gagal memproyeksikan citra yang kredibel dalam menjalankan fungsi pengawasan dan representasi publik. Ketiga, konflik internal serta pergantian kepemimpinan menciptakan struktur organisasi yang rapuh dan tidak stabil. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kemunduran partai Aceh tidak hanya disebabkan oleh perubahan preferensi pemilih tetapi juga mencerminkan tantangan kelembagaan yang lebih



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mendalam dengan ketidakmampuan untuk menyesuaikan ideologi dengan realitas lokal, mempertahankan koherensi organisasi dan memenuhi tuntutan akuntabilitas politik. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa partai-partai yang berakar pada identitas harus menyesuaikan narasi historis mereka dengan isu-isu kontemporer serta memperkuat tata kelola yang transparan agar tetap relevan dalam arena politik yang kompetitif.

Kata Kunci

Partai Aceh; Kepercayaan politik; Institusionalisme partai; Kinerja legislatif; Pemilihan kepala daerah.

1. Introduction

The significance of this research is highly important particularly given the strategic role of identity-based parties, such as the Aceh Party within local community life. The sustainability of a political party not only influences local political dynamics but also intersects with broader issues such as democratization processes and the strengthening of inclusive community development (Zulfan, Ikramatoun, S., & Aminah, 2023). Academically, this study can make a significant contribution to understanding how political party institutions shape political orientations and beliefs at the local level particularly within the context of Indonesia which possesses a highly complex cultural and political diversity. The author views this research as providing meaningful contributions both to the development of theoretical understanding of local politics and to practical mapping of the challenges faced by political actors in navigating issues of identity and inclusivity amid an evolving political landscape.

In Indonesia's political trajectory, the role of identity-based local political parties has consistently provided important insights into shifts in power and patterns of political representation at the regional level (Ferizaldi, 2017; Khodijah and Subekti, 2020; Oktavania, Sutjiatmi, and Habibullah, 2024). For example, the decline of the Aceh Party in the Banda Aceh's DPRK has demonstrated the complexity of these dynamics. The Aceh Party which is rooted in the aspirations of a separatist movement and the demand for special autonomy initially achieved success in the 2009 elections. However, since then its political influence has continued to decline significantly. The loss of legislative seats in the 2014, 2019, and 2024 elections has revealed a worrying pattern for identity-oriented political parties. This phenomenon not only raises major questions about the sustainability of identity-based political power at the local level but also highlights fundamental issues related to the factors that influence a party's success or failure in adapting to the political dynamics of increasingly heterogeneous urban societies (Park, Leng, and Wu, 2022; Pratitaswari and Wardani 2020).

Table 1. Aceh Party's seats in Banda Aceh City DPRK across four elections

Election Year	Working Period	Number of Seats
2009	2009-2014	6 Seats
2014	2014-2019	4 Seats
2019	2019-2024	2 Seats
2024	2024-2029	0 Seats

Source: Processed by authors from multiple sources, 2025

Table 1 above illustrates that over four legislative elections for the Banda Aceh City DPRK from 2009 to 2024 there has been a significant decline in the Aceh Party's seat acquisition. The 2009 election marked the beginning of the Aceh Party's strong performance securing six seats and affirming its position as a formidable political

force in the provincial capital. However, that number continued to decline falling to four seats in the 2014 election and further decreasing to two seats in the 2019 election. The sharpest decline occurred in the 2024 election, where the Aceh Party experienced an electoral failure and failed to secure a single seat. This trend reflects a weakening of electoral support for the local party amid the dominance of national parties as well as the possibility of voter dissatisfaction with the party's performance and internal dynamics over the past decade.

In general, a political party's ability to maintain and expand its support base is highly dependent on the party's institutional strength as well as the political orientations and beliefs of voters (Barokah et al. 2022; Hasanudin, 2019). With a well-established and stable structure, the party is likely to increase its legitimacy and competitiveness, especially amid fierce political competition. Conversely, when party institutions weaken and stagnate, public trust will also decline, ultimately leading to a decline in electoral support. With a well-established and stable structure, a party tends to enhance its legitimacy and competitiveness particularly amid intense political competition. Conversely, when party institutions weaken and stagnate, public trust also declines ultimately resulting in a reduction in electoral support. (Hasanal Bolqiah and Raffudin, 2020). Using the Aceh Party as a case in point, it demonstrates that institutional weaknesses have hindered the party's capacity to respond effectively to changes in political preferences among the urban population in Banda Aceh. These communities are becoming more diverse and increasingly expect a political approach that is both inclusive and adaptable. This condition underscores the importance of institutional resilience in enabling political parties to remain relevant and maintain endurance within an evolving political landscape (Fjelde, 2020; Martin, 2022; Petrarca, Giebler, and Weßels, 2020).

This phenomenon underscores the magnitude of the challenges faced by identity-based parties in maintaining their relevance amid changes in the urban political landscape (Tinov and Handoko, 2017). Such parties consistently encounter difficulties in adjusting their ideological positioning, legislative performance effectiveness and internal cohesion to address increasingly complex and evolving issues within urban societies. As society becomes more diverse and issues more multifaceted, spanning economic, social, and environmental spheres, such parties tend to become even more vulnerable. The findings of Gauja and Kosiara-Pedersen (2021) indicate that many parties rely heavily on narrow support bases thereby limiting their capacity to innovate and respond to the needs of increasingly heterogeneous urban populations. This will impact the sustainability of such parties at the local level and their ability to strengthen internal institutions as well as build public trust through inclusive policy achievements. Without these qualities, their prospects for maintaining long-term influence will become increasingly fragile (Gauja and Kosiara-Pedersen, 2021; Murtagh and McCulloch, 2021).

Previous studies related to the Aceh Party tend to be descriptive and often overlook the importance of qualitative depth regarding the internal dynamics of the political party as well as how the public perceives it (Budiatri, 2021; Janah, Fatimah, and Hariz, 2023; Mukhrijal et al., 2021; Nofriadi et al., 2024). The author argues that a comprehensive understanding of the internal dynamics of political party institutions as well as their connection to citizens' political orientations and beliefs requires a more in-depth and nuanced qualitative approach. It is this gap in the literature that constitutes the primary focus of this study. Specifically, this research aims to examine the factors underlying the decline and loss of the Aceh Party's seats in the Banda Aceh City DPRK over the course of the last four legislative elections (2009, 2014, 2019, and 2024). The author places particular attention on how the party's internal structure and the level of public trust interact especially within increasingly diverse and politically complex urban contexts. This study is expected

to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between internal party mechanisms and electoral outcomes in highly dynamic political environments.

Previous research highlights the importance of party institutionalization in building legitimacy and public trust in the political system (Casal Bértoa, 2017; Savage, 2016). Well-institutionalized parties generally demonstrate organizational stability, a clear ideological position and strong ties to their social base. Conversely, parties with weak institutionalization often result in declining public trust (Rasmussen and Knutsen, 2021; Ridge, 2022). It is important to note that political trust is a crucial factor for the sustainability of a political party, as it significantly influences public perceptions of the party as a representative and accountable institution (Weinberg, 2023; Winsvold et al., 2024). Most current research still focuses on established democracies and party systems at the national level, while studies examining the relationship between party institutionalization and public trust in post-conflict local contexts remain relatively limited. To understand how weak institutionalization can accelerate the decline of political trust and electoral support, the case of the Aceh Party provides important empirical and theoretical contributions.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical framework to uncover nuanced and complex socio-political phenomena (Hall and Liebenberg, 2024). Specifically, this study explores how the relationship between party institutions and the political orientations and beliefs of the public unfolds at the local level. This approach not only provides space to understand internal party processes but also reveals public perceptions within a broader and more comprehensive social context. The weakening influence of the Aceh Party in the Banda Aceh City DPRK is explained narratively and interpretively based on the author's data collection from in-depth interviews, field observations, and a review of primary and secondary literature sources. Interview informants were selected using purposive sampling emphasizing individuals who have direct involvement in the internal dynamics of local political parties in Aceh. This group includes party administrators, both former and active, legislative candidates, academics, journalists, and community leaders who understand the political landscape of Banda Aceh City.

The process of collecting data for this study involved a combination of methods in-depth interviews, field observations, and a review of existing literature and secondary sources. Field observations were conducted periodically throughout 2024 and 2025 covering both pre-election and post-election periods. The observations provided a direct overview of campaign activities, internal party meetings and political interactions in public spaces that could not be fully captured through written reports. The literature review and data collection process involved academic works subjected to peer review, official reports from electoral organizers, and credible local media sources. The literature was categorized based on issues of party institutionalization and political trust to enrich a robust and comprehensive dataset. Secondary data in this study were obtained from various sources, including party documents, media reports, electoral statistics, and survey results regarding levels of public trust. These diverse sources served to provide broader context to the primary data, while also enhancing the depth of understanding in the study.

The data analysis in this study followed a sequential process beginning with data reduction, followed by the organization and coding of data based on themes related to party structure and public trust and culminating in interpretation for drawing conclusions. The analytical framework used integrates theories on political institutions and public perceptions combined with thematic analysis techniques to systematically identify patterns. This approach enabled authors to be transparent in

how we interpreted the data while also remaining reflective about the meanings that emerged from the material (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study employs several strategies, including data triangulation, member checking and an audit trail. Triangulation was conducted by comparing findings obtained from interviews, field observations, and secondary documents to ensure consistency and accuracy of the research results across various sources. Member checking was carried out by sharing preliminary findings with participants to confirm that their experiences and perceptions were understood and represented accurately particularly within the specific context of Banda Aceh's local political landscape.

3. Results and Discussion

This study indicates that support for the Aceh Party in the Banda Aceh City legislature has experienced a significant decline based on three interrelated factors. First, there is a weakness in the party's ability to construct a clear political identity that resonates with the diversity of urban society. Second, the Aceh Party's legislative performance is assessed as suboptimal which has implications for declining public trust. Third, prolonged internal conflict contributes to structural instability within the Aceh Party and further weakens its political legitimacy. These three factors do not operate independently rather they interact and reinforce one another forming a cycle that gradually erodes public trust in the Aceh Party. These findings provide strong empirical support for the neo-institutionalist framework which emphasizes that institutions and internal norms play a key role in shaping public trust and political legitimacy (Hwang, 2023).

3.1. Ideological Weaknesses and Relevance of Party Identity

Addressing the challenge of constructing an ideological identity that genuinely resonates with the complexities of urban society can be reviewed through recent academic findings and empirical observations. Several relevant studies indicate that identity-based parties often struggle to maintain their relevance if they fail to undertake ideological innovation and adapt to changes in the socio-economic landscape, particularly in increasingly plural and dynamic urban areas (Gauja and Kosiara-Pedersen, 2021; Islam et al., 2021). In Banda Aceh, for instance the narrative of separatism and the struggle for special autonomy, which previously formed the core identity of the Aceh Party, is no longer relevant in responding to contemporary socio-economic realities or the pluralistic character of the city's population.

Ramzi Murziqin firmly states "The Aceh Party remains too attached to symbols and narratives of the past focused on the separatist struggle, whereas the people of Banda Aceh today are more concerned with concrete economic and social issues." This critique indicates that adherence to historical symbols is no longer aligned with the needs or expectations of urban communities which tend to prioritize practical issues over ideological purity rooted in the past. This condition marks the party's failure and inability to evolve in line with changes in the political landscape and shifts in societal priorities.

Irwansyah also expressed concern regarding the narrow and exclusive identity of the party which has the potential to alienate various segments of society. The main weakness of the Aceh Party is its failure to build an inclusive identity capable of uniting various community groups in Banda Aceh which has resulted in a shrinking support base". When a political party is unable to build an identity that is both inclusive and adaptive its political sustainability is significantly threatened. This condition becomes increasingly crucial in heterogeneous urban contexts, where

social cohesion heavily depends on the recognition and management of diversity (Sindre, 2014).

Factors such as organizational sustainability, ideological coherence, and internal stability serve as the fundamental pillars supporting a party's resilience amid the turbulent waters of external political shifts (Kristiyanto, Arinanto, and Ghafur 2023; Sauerland, 2015). These elements form a cohesive framework that helps a party navigate changes in the political landscape by fostering a sense of continuity and internal strength. In this context, it is important to emphasize the enduring significance of symbolic identity rooted in the shared historical experience of struggle. Such symbols, formed through collective memory and collective identity, often transcend formal organizational stability and function as a powerful consolidation point for supporters.

These symbols possess high emotional and cultural resonance, enabling them to mobilize and sustain political loyalty even amid external uncertainty or when the party organization is in a fragile condition. Thus, the resilience of a political party is not solely determined by the strength of its institutional structure, but also by the symbolic power that represents collective history and identity, which continues to nurture political allegiance beyond short-term political and organizational factors.

In Banda Aceh today, reliance on historical symbolism no longer appears to be adequate. The public demands substantive and inclusive solutions rather than a reproduction of the remnants of past conflicts. This reality underscores that identity-based parties can survive at the local level if they are able to innovate by constructing a new relevant identity grounded in the principles of inclusivity and responsiveness to the needs of diverse communities. The capacity to adapt ideologically and swiftly becomes a decisive factor for a party's sustainability amid a rapidly changing social landscape (Bornman, 2022). The ideological drift illustrates what Mainwaring & Scully (1995) refer to as a decrease in party institutionalization, where diminishing ideological coherence causes the party to become disconnected from its social base. As the original narrative of the party lost appeal among urban voters, its institutional legitimacy started to decline.

3.2. Legislative Performance and Supervisory Functions

The relationship between legislative performance and public trust particularly in the execution of oversight and representation functions is a critical factor in political legitimacy. When the legislative institution fails to perform its functions optimally public perceptions of political parties including the Aceh Party in the context of Banda Aceh tend to decline significantly. Kristiyanto et al. (2023) dan Mahmud, (2021) further reveal that trust in political institutions is largely determined by the extent to which political actors are perceived as effective and accountable in performing their roles.

Examining the situation in Banda Aceh, we see a troubling trend: the underperformance of Aceh Party legislators has led constituents to believe that these elected officials are failing to fulfill their essential duties as responsive and effective representatives. As M. Geubry Al Fattah pointed out, there is a distinct lack of oversight on city government policies by the Aceh Party's legislators. Furthermore, when pressing issues arise, their silence or inability to contribute meaningful solutions further aggravates public frustration. This disconnect between public expectations and political action fosters a growing distrust in the party's capacity to advocate for citizen interests. Moreover, numerous participants in the study expressed that this dysfunction within the legislative framework substantially erodes overall public trust in the Aceh Party. Al Fattah Budian succinctly articulates this view by stating that when legislators fail to deliver tangible and transparent performance, voters will question the party's ability to effectively represent their

needs. This indicates that inadequate legislative performance is directly correlated with declining levels of political trust among constituents.

The implications of this research resonate beyond just the Aceh Party. They reinforce broader themes evident in existing literature, which argue that a party's failure to exhibit real accountability and performance can accelerate the decline of public faith. Particularly in urban settings, where citizens tend to be more discerning and outcomes-driven, this perception of inactivity and incapacity among Aceh Party legislators intensifies public distrust. Therefore, it becomes crucial for the Aceh Party to recalibrate its strategies. Enhancing legislative performance should not just be a peripheral concern; instead, it must serve as the focal point for efforts aimed at restoring public confidence and improving the party's image (Petrarca et al., 2020). By addressing these challenges head-on, particularly in a society that demands transparency and responsiveness, there lies an opportunity to rebuild trust and re-establish meaningful connections with the constituents they serve.

The decline in legislative performance has reduced citizens' views of the party's competence and accountability, two key components of political trust (Norris, 2017). In this context, poor institutional performance has affected not just electoral outcomes but has also weakened overall confidence in the party's capacity to govern.

3.3. Internal Conflict and Structural Instability

The occurrence of internal conflicts and repeated leadership changes has drastically damaged the party's image and weakened its legitimacy (Ignazi, 2014). These issues exemplify the core of neo-institutionalism, which underscores the importance of stability within political organizations. When internal disputes remain unresolved, they tend to fragment party cadres and inject uncertainty into decision-making processes, ultimately eroding public confidence (Gouglas et al., 2020). If this occurs, voters tend to doubt whether the party can function as a credible and stable political vehicle which has a tangible impact on the decline of electoral support.

Irwansyah's insights provide a tangible illustration of this phenomenon. He notes that recent years have witnessed deep divisions within the party disagreements over leadership succession and strategic direction have sown confusion and weakened the cohesion among members. This disunity hampers the organization's ability to present a united front and damages its public standing. Furthermore, the frequent changes in leadership and the fluctuating stances of party cadres contribute to distrust among the electorate. Irwansyah emphasizes that when cadres are seen to shift their positions or pursue inconsistent visions, it creates an impression of instability, making the party seem incapable of fulfilling its role as a reliable political representative. Such perceptions are particularly damaging in the eyes of the public, as they fuel negative stereotypes and contribute to declining electoral fortunes.

Research by Fjelde (2020) emphasizes that internal conflict and structural fragility weaken a party's legitimacy, especially when voters perceive the party as an organization that lacks cohesion and does not have a clear long-term direction and purpose. Weak institutionalization frequently leads to increased uncertainty, instability, and a decline in public trust towards political parties (Kavasoglu, 2022). Any identity-based parties are likely to face significant challenges in maintaining their institutional sustainability, especially when they fail to adapt effectively to social and political changes at the local level (Kavasoglu, 2022; Park, 2021).

In the context of Banda Aceh, prolonged internal conflict and leadership turnover have generated doubt among the public. The expectation that the party could evolve into a stable and reliable local political force has continued to fade. These findings underscore that without earnest efforts to undertake organizational reform and effectively manage conflict, the Aceh Party risks remaining in a fragile

condition and increasingly disconnected from public trust. Thus, building internal stability not only reflects an ideal organization but also becomes an essential prerequisite for the party's political legitimacy and electoral resilience. Organizational stability, which is a key aspect of party institutionalization, will not be realized when leadership turnover and factional clashes continue to occur (Randall and Svåsand, 2002). This instability not only damages internal cohesion but also creates an image of party weakness that ultimately erodes public trust.

3.4. The Interaction of the Three Factors and Their Impact on Political Beliefs

The relationship between ideological weakness, ineffective legislative performance and internal conflict has created a complex network that significantly erodes public trust. These problems have fostered deep disappointment among the community. This aligns with broader political theory, suggesting that people's beliefs about a party are primarily shaped by their direct experiences of its capacity to deliver and uphold stability. When members of the public observe a party failing to respond to their needs, struggling to implement laws effectively, and being embroiled in internal strife, their trust tends to plummet (Bevan, Borghetto, and Seeborg 2024; Treiber, 2025).

Ramzi Murziqin explains by emphasizing that "when a party's identity becomes irrelevant and the party's image continues to decline, public trust will sharply decrease." Furthermore, he argues that internal conflict and poor legislative performance together serve as indicators of the party's inability to genuinely represent its constituents, accelerating the decline of the party's credibility in the public eye. These factors do not operate independently, rather they reinforce each other and form a negative feedback loop that accelerates the loss of support. The decline in trust occurring at both local and national party levels has tangible impacts on voter behavior in electoral contexts (Bertsou, 2019). Several participants in the study noted that this erosion of confidence directly translates into reduced electoral support. Ramzi Murziqin notes that supporters are increasingly disillusioned with the Aceh Party because they feel the party fails to deliver substantive benefits, leading many to seek alternatives that they perceive as better stewards of their interests.

Supporting this view, research by Hooghe et al. (2025) reinforces the argument by emphasizing the importance of perceptions regarding party effectiveness and internal harmony in maintaining voter support particularly for identity-based parties. Parties must meet these expectations in order to prevent their support from rapidly diminishing. In the specific case of Banda Aceh, the decline in support for the Aceh Party can be understood as a consequence of the accumulation of failures and the party's inability to formulate an identity issue that is attractive and relevant, combined with disappointing legislative performance and internal conflict that threatens the party's institutional integrity. The confluence of these factors clearly illustrates how internal party dynamics and public perceptions are interconnected and ultimately shape the party's electoral future.

In addition, institutionalization and political beliefs significantly influence the relationship between society and political institutions. Political trust defined as the public's confidence in the integrity, competence, and fairness of political actors and institutions functions as a legitimacy mechanism that underpins political stability and encourages public participation in democracy. For political parties, public trust is a crucial factor for achieving electoral success, and a decline in trust can result in reduced support, increased rates of abstention, and the spread of distrust toward the political system more broadly (Carstens, 2023; Gauja and Kosiara-Pedersen, 2021). This study demonstrates a reciprocal relationship between party institutionalization

and public political trust where stronger party institutions tend to enhance public trust which in turn reinforces institutional legitimacy. Conversely, failure to manage norms and procedures effectively can generate public doubt and distrust thereby accelerating the decline in electoral support. Several studies indicate that identity-based parties such as the Aceh Party, often face difficulties in maintaining public trust due to challenges in adapting to increasingly diverse social and political contexts (Barter 2015; Hermanto and Narindro, 2020).

The findings of this study reaffirm the established relationship between the level of party institutionalization and the level of public political trust. As Mainwaring & Scully (1995) argue, a party's level of institutionalization affects its ability to maintain stable relationships with its voters and serve as a credible representative. For the Aceh Party, the decline in ideological coherence and the increasing volatility of internal organization indicate a process of deinstitutionalization meaning that the party's identity has shifted away from the social groups that previously formed its support base. This organizational vulnerability negatively impacts public perceptions of the party's competence and integrity which are key components in the formation of political trust (Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015; Norris, 2017).

Additionally, Lupu (2014) observes that declining trust in political parties often speeds up their organizational decline, creating a self-perpetuating cycle. The Aceh Party's failure to produce effective legislation and to maintain united leadership has exacerbated the party's image, creating a feedback loop between institutional instability and declining public trust. This indicates that party institutionalization is not only related to organizational structure but also depends on ongoing validation from the electorate that trusts it. Hence, the loss of public trust in Partai Aceh is closely linked to the weakening of its institutional strength foundations.

3.5. Public Perception and Party Relevance in an Urban Context

The findings of this study reveal a significant shift in how urban communities currently perceive political parties. There is a clear expectation that political parties should be able to offer concrete solutions to pressing economic and social issues rather than merely maintaining symbolic attachment to past struggles. The perception that the Aceh Party remains overly fixated on historical symbols that mark the party's origins has hindered its relevance in the eyes of modern constituents. This has fostered a sense of underrepresentation and distrust among the public, who increasingly view those symbols as detached from contemporary needs.

This observation aligns with existing literature, particularly the work of Weeks & Allen (2023) which emphasizes that identity-based parties need to adopt innovation and build inclusive and transparent communication if they wish to remain relevant amid changing political landscapes. M. Geubry Al Fattah Budian echoes this sentiment, pointing out that the Aceh Party's steadfast attachment to its historical symbols may be more of a liability than an asset. According to him, voters today are looking for parties capable of delivering tangible benefits whether it be economic development or improved public services rather than relics of past struggles. In addition, there is criticism regarding the party's communication strategy with many arguing that the Aceh Party's internal processes are too closed and lack transparency thereby creating a sense of marginalization among voters. Furthermore, Budian states that the Aceh Party's decision-making appears overly exclusive and non-transparent causing the public to feel unrecognized and to become suspicious of the party's political intentions.

Parties that fail to adapt to social and economic changes in urban areas often experience declines in public trust and electoral support (Park, 2021; Scarrow, 2021). Referring to this, the sustainability of identity-based parties at the local level

is highly dependent on their ability to strengthen internal institutional frameworks by enhancing legislative effectiveness and building open and inclusive dialogue with constituents. If these key aspects are not addressed, the decline in support is likely to continue, further eroding the Aceh Party's influence as a major political actor in Banda Aceh.

Norris (2017) notes that political trust is significantly influenced by institutional performance as well as citizens' everyday interactions with political actors. In urban areas with higher levels of political awareness and broader media access, the weaknesses in the Aceh Party's institutional performance become more visible, thereby accelerating the decline in public trust. Ultimately, the decline of the Aceh Party demonstrates the fragility of party institutionalization and erodes political trust in post-conflict local democracy while also underscoring the importance for identity-based parties to adapt their organization and ideology in order to maintain legitimacy in the long term.

4. Conclusion

This study explains the challenges and complexities faced by the Aceh Party in maintaining its political relevance in the Banda Aceh City DPRK over the last four elections. The findings highlight that the party's decline was triggered by several interrelated factors, namely the weakening of ideological identity amid a rapidly diversifying urban society, shortcomings in legislative performance particularly in the functions of oversight and representation and ongoing internal conflict that eroded organizational stability. Collectively, these elements erode public trust and reduce the party's appeal thereby contributing to a significant decline in electoral support.

What makes this study particularly valuable is its contribution to academic understanding of how internal party structure and public perceptions influence electoral outcomes, whereas previous research only touched the surface and overlooked the nuanced role of institutional strength. By using a qualitative approach, this study is able to explore these dynamics in depth and confirm that the resilience of identity-based parties at the local level is highly dependent on strong internal institutions, tangible legislative actions, and organizational stability. These insights also reinforce neo-institutionalist theories that emphasize norms and organizational stability as the primary foundation for the formation of public trust.

Contextually, the Aceh Party's original ideological narrative, which once mobilized significant support, no longer resonates within an urban landscape characterized by diverse social and economic needs. The party's failure to innovate ideologically or adjust its identity to reflect this reality has narrowed its support base and reduced its relevance. Unsatisfactory legislative performance and internal conflict have contributed to the perception that the party is unable to effectively represent or advocate for the public's interests, thereby further weakening its political legitimacy.

The contribution of this study extends beyond empirical findings. It emphasizes the importance of institutional reform, transparent communication, and strong legislative performance as strategies to rebuild public trust in the Aceh Party. Significantly, this study also opens avenues for further research, for example through comparative studies in different regions with varying social and political contexts or mixed-methods approaches that combine qualitative depth with quantitative rigor. Integrating local cultural and economic factors into such analyses can enrich understanding of how identity-based parties operate and sustain their existence across diverse contexts.

Ultimately, this study concludes firmly that, without serious efforts to strengthen internal structures, enhance legislative effectiveness, and manage

internal conflicts effectively, the decline of the Aceh Party and similar identity-based parties may continue. For the party to reemerge as a credible and stable political force, these three aspects must be addressed seriously and sustainably. Such efforts are essential to restore public trust and maintain the party's role within the political landscape of Banda Aceh.

Although this study provides important insights into how ideological erosion, poor legislative performance, and internal instability collectively weaken the Aceh Party's institutional capacity and public trust, it also has several limitations. The focus on a single case and interviews conducted only with party elites restrict the generalizability of the findings, particularly from the public's perspective. Future research should be directed toward comparative studies of other local or post-conflict parties, using mixed methods to explore diverse forms of political trust and institutional responses within the context of Indonesia's diversity.

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