



## Da'wah Communication and Electoral Strategy PKS's Political Identity Transformation as an Open Party (2009–2024)

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### ABSTRACT

*Studies on the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) have generally focused on ideology, da'wah movements, and electoral behavior, but have not specifically examined how PKS constructs its identity as an "open party" through long-term political communication strategies in Indonesia's plural democratic context. In addition, comparative discussions on the transformation of Islamic political communication in contemporary Muslim democracies remain limited. This study aims to analyze the transformation of PKS political communication in building its identity as an open party during the 2009–2024 period. This research employs a qualitative case study approach using in-depth interviews, documentation, and literature review. Data were collected from PKS elites, active cadres, former cadres, and political observers, then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman. The study applies Spiral of Silence theory, political marketing, and Islamic party typology to understand the relationship between ideological identity, public opinion, and electoral strategy. The findings reveal that PKS developed a dual communication strategy consisting of external communication that is moderate, inclusive, and populist to attract broader voters, alongside internal communication based on tarbiyah to maintain ideological loyalty among cadres. PKS transformed its political branding through slogans, digital campaigns, visual symbols, and populist issues such as welfare, anti-corruption, and public services, while simultaneously preserving Islamic moral narratives and solidarity with Palestine as ideological markers. These findings demonstrate that PKS did not abandon its Islamist identity but strategically adapted its communication to changing public opinion and democratic competition. This article contributes theoretically by showing that contemporary Islamic parties combine electoral pragmatism with ideological consolidation through hybrid political communication strategies within democratic systems.*

**Keywords:** *Da'wah Communication; Electoral Strategy; Islamic Party; Open Party; Political Marketing.*

### INTRODUCTION

The development of post-Reformation democracy in Indonesia was marked by increasing competition between political parties in gaining legitimacy and public support. Political communication is a strategic

Received: April 2026. Accepted: May 2026. Published: June 2026.

instrument for political parties to form their image, build identity, and maintain their electoral base (Muchtar, 2016). Party identity is no longer static, but continues to be negotiated through narratives, symbols, and communication strategies that are tailored to socio-political changes in society. This phenomenon is increasingly seen in Islamic-based parties that face the dilemma between maintaining their ideological identity and expanding political support in a pluralistic society.

The life of political parties in Indonesia today tends to prioritize practical political interests rather than the ideological values embraced by the party (Amsori et al., 2024). In order to gain power and expand the vote base, many parties have made ideological adjustments and political strategies to reach a wider group of voters. As a result, there has been an ideological shift in the party body, including in cadre parties or doctrinal parties that previously had a firm ideological line. This phenomenon shows that political pragmatism is one of the important features in the development of contemporary Indonesian democracy (Sumartias, 2017).

One of the interesting parties to study in this context is the Prosperous Justice Party. This party is a transformation of the Justice Party (PK) which was born in the early days of Reform after the fall of the New Order regime in 1998. In the 1999 election, the Justice Party failed to meet *the parliamentary threshold* of 2 percent so that it could not get a seat in parliament. This condition prompted the change of the party's name and symbol to the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) on July 2, 2003 in order to participate in the 2004 election (Muhammad, 2021). These changes are not only administrative, but also reflect changes in political communication strategies and repositioning party identity.

In the early phase of its emergence, PKS was known as an Islamic party with exclusive jargons such as the application of Islamic sharia and the invitation to practice Islam in a *kaffah* manner (Supriatna et al., 2016). However, this jargon is considered inappropriate for the character of the plural and multicultural Indonesian society. Therefore, PKS began to make adjustments to political messages and communication themes that are more populist and inclusive. This shift can be seen from PKS's efforts to build an image as an "open party" which was affirmed in the PKS National Congress in Bali in 2008 and reinforced again at the 2010 National Congress in Jakarta. In various campaign media, including social media and the party's official website, populist issues such as welfare, anti-corruption, public services, and social justice are displayed more than exclusively

Islamic symbols.

The change in communication strategy can be understood through the perspective of the *Spiral of Silence* theory proposed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. This theory explains that individuals or groups tend to conform to the opinion of the majority in order to avoid social isolation (Noelle-Neumann, 1974; Putri et al., 2026). In the context of PKS, the party tries to read the public opinion that develops in Indonesian society and adjust its political message to remain relevant and accepted by the majority of voters. The PKS declaration as an open party can be understood as a form of adaptation of political communication to the dynamics of national public opinion.

However, the ideological identity of PKS as a conservative Islamic party is still strongly attached to the elite and the public. This can be seen from a survey conducted by the Indonesian Survey Institute in collaboration with the Australian National University in 2017–2018 on members of the provincial parliament in Indonesia. The survey shows that almost all parties in Indonesia are in the center-right position, while PKS occupies the most right-wing or conservative position with a score of 7.21 (Aspinall et al., 2018). This shows that there is tension between PKS's internal ideological identity and a more open and inclusive external communication strategy.



Source: <https://tirto.id/corak-ideologi-partai-partai-di-indonesia-cJKc>.

Figure 1.2 Survey Table of Liberal/Progressive or Conservative Party Choices

PKS is interesting to study because the party not only moves through formal political mechanisms, but also actively conducts various social activities and extra-parliamentary movements. On many occasions, PKS has appeared as a da'wah party that combines electoral political activities with community-based social mobilization (Hasan, 2012). This character

distinguishes PKS from most other Islamic parties in Indonesia. Social activities, community services, humanitarian actions, and digital campaigns are important parts of PKS's political communication strategy in building closeness with the community (Radifa & Aji, 2024).

The phenomenon of transforming political communication of Islamic parties is actually not only happening in Indonesia. In Turkey, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) also moderates Islamic political identity by combining conservative values and electoral democracy in order to expand public support (Akbar et al., 2018). The AKP uses a communication strategy that displays a modern, pro-development party image, and is close to the aspirations of Turkey's Muslim middle-class community. Meanwhile, in Malaysia, Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) faces a similar dilemma between defending the identity of Islamism and the need to adapt political strategies in a multicultural society (Daulay, 2020). The experience of Islamic parties in various Muslim countries shows that political communication is an important arena in negotiating party identity amid the demands of modern democracy and electoral competition.

Various previous studies have discussed PKS from the aspects of ideology, social movements, and electoral behavior. Burhanuddin Muhtadi's research explains the dilemma of PKS in expanding its voter base while maintaining its identity as a da'wah party (Muhtadi, 2012). Cecep Suryana's research highlights the relationship between da'wah and politics in PKS communication and explains that da'wah is at the core of the PKS political movement (Suryana, 2021). Meanwhile, the research of Ahmad Asroni, Muhammad Yusup, and Adib Sofia discusses the strategy of nationalist parties in building Islamic wing organizations to gain the support of Muslim voters (Asroni et al., 2013). The research shows that Islamic-based organizations are used to maintain voter loyalty while building the party's religious image.

However, most of the research still focuses on aspects of ideology, social movements, and da'wah-political relations, and has not specifically analyzed how PKS political communication is used to build an identity as an open party in the long term. In addition, previous studies were also limited to the domestic context of Indonesia and did not have much to do with the experience of Islamic parties in other Muslim countries such as the AKP in Turkey or PAS in Malaysia. In fact, a comparative approach is important to understand that the transformation of political communication of Islamic parties is a global phenomenon influenced by

democratization, electoral competition, and changes in public opinion (Hamayotsu, 2011).

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing PKS's political communication strategy in building its identity as an open party in the 2009–2024 period. This study uses the perspective of *the Spiral of Silence theory* and the concept of *political marketing* to understand how PKS builds political narratives, adjusts communication messages, and manages party image in a pluralistic society. This study is also important to see how PKS negotiates its ideological identity as a da'wah party with a pragmatic need to maintain its existence and political competitiveness in a multiparty democratic system.

To clarify the position of this research compared to previous research, here is the *research positioning table*:

Table 1. Research Position

Researcher	Research Focus	Key Findings	Limitations	Position of this research
Burhanuddin Muhtadi (2012)	PKS as a da'wah party and social movement	PKS combines political activities and social movements	Focus on the early period of PKS transformation	Reviewing PKS's communication strategy as an open party for the 2009–2024 period
Cecep Suryana (2021)	PKS's Da'wah and Politics Relations	Da'wah is at the core of PKS's political movement	Have not used specific political communication theories	Using <i>the Spiral of Silence theory</i> and <i>political marketing</i>
Ahmad Asroni dkk. (2013)	Islamist Nationalist Party Organizations	The Islamic wing is used to strengthen the party's image	Focus on nationalist parties	Focus on Islamic parties in attracting nationalist voters
Akbar et. al. (2018)	Political Islamic moderation in democracy	The AKP uses a conservative-democratic narrative	The context is different from Indonesia	Placing PKS in the comparative context of global Islamic parties
Hamdan Daulay (2020)	The dilemma of Islamic	PAS adapts political	Does not discuss the	Comparing the communication

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ideology and pluralism	strategy in a multicultural society	Indonesian context	transformation of Islamic parties in Southeast Asia
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Source: Author's Observation, 2026

Based on this background description, this study focuses on the transformation of the Prosperous Justice Party in building an identity as an open party in the midst of the increasingly competitive and plural political dynamics of Indonesian democracy. PKS as an Islamic-based party faces the challenge of maintaining its ideological identity while expanding the political support base of heterogeneous communities (Wahyudi, 2017). In this context, this study seeks to examine how PKS's political communication strategy is constructed through narratives, symbols, communication media, and political messages that are adjusted to the development of public opinion and the electoral needs of the party.

In addition, this study also analyzes how PKS makes adjustments to its image and political message to attract voters outside the traditional base of Islamic parties, without losing the ideological character inherent in the party. This study is important to understand how the *Spiral of Silence theory* can explain the tendency of PKS to adjust its political communication to the opinion of the majority of the public, as well as how the concept of *political marketing* is used in building the legitimacy and political competitiveness of the party. This research is directed to explain the transformation process of PKS political communication as an Islamic party that seeks to combine da'wah values, electoral strategies, and open party identities in the multiparty democratic system in Indonesia.

The *Spiral of Silence* theory was developed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann to explain how public opinion is formed through the tendency of individuals or groups to conform to the views of the majority. According to this theory, individuals have a fear of social isolation so they tend to hide opinions that are considered different from the dominant opinion. On the other hand, groups that feel that their views are in accordance with the majority will be more courageous to express their attitudes in the public space (Noelle-Neumann, 1974; Putri et al., 2026).

In the context of political communication, this theory explains that political parties will adjust their communication strategies and political messages so that they are still accepted by the public. The party not only functions as an ideological carrier, but also as an actor who actively reads

changes in public opinion (Efriza, 2019). Therefore, political communication becomes a negotiation space between the party's ideological identity and the electoral demands of the people (Bintang et al., 2025).

The application of this theory in the study is used to understand how the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) makes adjustments to political communication in the midst of plural and moderate Indonesian society. At the beginning of its emergence, PKS was known as an Islamic party with an exclusive and conservative image (Tanuwidjaja, 2012). However, along with the development of democracy and political competition, PKS began to change its political message to be more inclusive through the narrative of welfare, anti-corruption, and public service. The declaration of PKS as an "open party" can be understood as a form of adaptation to the opinion of the majority of the Indonesian people (Noor & Warjio, 2025).

Operationally, the *Spiral of Silence* theory in this study is used to analyze: (1) the change in the political narrative of PKS from exclusive to inclusive; (2) the use of populist issues in party communication; (3) changes in political symbols and jargon; and (4) digital communication and social media strategies in building a moderate and open party image.

The concept of *political marketing* explains that modern political parties no longer only sell ideology rigidly, but also adjust political products based on the needs of the community (Ndubuisi, 2023). Jennifer Lees-Marshment divides party orientation into three models, namely *product-oriented party*, *sales-oriented party*, and *market-oriented party* (Lees-Marshment, 2009; Sutisna, 2017). *Product-oriented parties* maintain their ideology without much conforming to the electorate, while *market-oriented parties* actively adjust policies and communication strategies based on public needs.

In this study, PKS can be understood as a party that has undergone a transformation from a *product-oriented party* to a *market-oriented party* (Irwani et al., 2024; Mulyawan et al., 2025). In the initial phase, PKS emphasized its ideological identity and Islamic da'wah agenda. However, to expand the voter base, PKS began to use a more populist and universal communication strategy. These changes can be seen from the use of social welfare, public services, and anti-corruption issues as part of the party's political branding (Yasin, 2016).

In addition, Darren Lilleker and Lees-Marshment explain that *political marketing* includes the formation of party image, media management, political branding, and long-term communication with voters (Lees-

Marshment et al., 2019; Lilleker, 2006) In this study the concept of *political marketing* is operationalized through: (1) PKS branding strategy as an open party; (2) the use of social media and digital communication; (3) the image of party figures; and (4) the use of more inclusive political slogans and symbols. Through this approach, this study looks at how PKS manages its political identity to remain competitive in the multiparty democratic system in Indonesia.

Islamic parties are generally understood as parties that make Islam the basis of their main ideology or political identity. However, the development of modern democracy has encouraged many Islamic parties to moderate their ideologies and political strategies in order to be acceptable in a pluralistic society.

The Sultan of Tepe explained that modern Islamic parties tend to undergo a transformation from an ideological movement to a pragmatic party that is more open to democracy and social welfare issues (Tepe, 2012). Meanwhile, Jillian Schwedler said that Islamic parties that participate in democracy will experience political moderation, especially in communication strategies and relations with non-Islamic groups (Schwedler, 2013).

The concept of *open party* in this study is understood as a political communication strategy that displays an inclusive and open image towards various social groups outside the traditional party base. In the context of PKS, the concept of an open party does not mean abandoning Islamic identity, but expanding the meaning of party identity so that it can be accepted by the wider community. Operationally, the concept of *open parties* is analyzed through: (1) changes in jargon and political symbols; (2) the use of universal issues such as social justice and well-being; (3) more moderate political communication; and (4) openness to non-cadre and non-Muslim groups.

## METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a *case study design* to analyze the political communication strategy of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in building an identity as an open party in the 2009–2024 period. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on the process of constructing meaning, transforming party identity, and the relationship between ideology, political communication, and public opinion (Abdussamad, 2021). Research data was collected through *in-depth*

*interviews*, documentation, and literature studies. Interviews were conducted with four informants who were selected by *purposive sampling*, consisting of two elite or PKS administrators, two active PKS cadres, The selection of informants is based on their involvement and knowledge of political communication strategies, party identity transformation, and internal and external dynamics of PKS in the context of Indonesian democracy.

In addition to interviews, this study also uses documentation in the form of party manifestos, campaign materials, political speeches, party social media, mass media news, as well as the results of relevant surveys and previous research. To maintain the validity of the data, the study applied the source triangulation technique by comparing the results of interviews between informants, official party documents, media reports, and the views of academics and former PKS cadres. Triangulation was carried out concretely by testing the consistency of the PKS elite narrative regarding the identity of the "open party" against the party's political communication practices on social media and campaign strategies used in various political momentums. The presence of academics and former cadres also serves as a comparative perspective so that research does not only depend on the party's internal point of view.

The data analysis in this study used the interactive model of Matthew B. Miles et al. which includes three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Data reduction is carried out by selecting and grouping data based on main themes such as political communication strategies, party identity changes, the use of digital media, and the construction of an open party image. Furthermore, the data is presented in the form of narrative descriptions and thematic categorizations so that the relationship between data can be understood systematically. The final stage is carried out through drawing conclusions and verifying by linking empirical findings to *the Spiral of Silence theory*, the concept of *political marketing*, and the typology of Islamic parties. The analysis process is carried out repeatedly so that the research results have validity and are able to comprehensively explain the transformation of PKS political communication.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Dynamics of Changes in PKS Political Communication as an Open Party**

The transformation of the political communication of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) as an open party began to be clearly seen since the implementation of the PKS National Working Conference (Mukernas) in Bali in 2008 (Nurussa'adah & Sumartias, 2017). This momentum is an important point in PKS's efforts to reposition its political identity from an exclusive Islamic cadre party to a party that is more inclusive and open to the plurality of Indonesian society. The nuances of the Mukernas event that adopted the local Balinese culture, the use of the "*merdeka*" greeting replaced the dominance of "takbir", and the statement of the party elite regarding pluralism showed a symbolic change in PKS's political communication. The move is part of the party's strategy to build a moderate and nationalist image amid increasing political competition ahead of the 2009 elections.

From the perspective of political marketing, the change in symbolic communication shows that PKS is starting to move from a product-oriented party to a market-oriented party (Lees-Marshment, 2009). PKS no longer only highlights its formal Islamic ideological identity, but has begun to tailor its political message based on broader voter preferences. Tifatul Sembiring's statement on the 20 percent victory target in the 2009 election shows that party openness is not just a normative change, but part of an electoral strategy to expand the nationalist vote base and moderate voters. This strategy is in line with the political marketing approach that places public opinion as the basis for building the party's image and communication.

The change in the identity of PKS is also seen through the use of the slogan "Clean, Care, Professional" which is consistently promoted in various campaign media (Purvosusanto, 2011). The slogan replaces the old image of PKS which is more prominent as a symbol of Islamic ideological struggle. In political communication, the slogan serves as a branding instrument to build a more universal and acceptable party identity across social groups. PKS seeks to shift the focus of communication from the issue of sharia formalization to the issue of public services, anti-corruption, and community welfare (Sabnu et al., 2025). The shift shows that the party's identity is built through the construction of a more populist and inclusive political message.

In addition to slogans, changes in the party's logo and visual communication are also an important part of PKS's political marketing strategy. The PKS logo, which retains elements of crescent moon and rice,

still shows the party's Islamic identity, but the visual design and appearance are made more modern, simple, and easily accepted by the public (Muhammad, 2021). This visual change is not intended to eliminate the party's ideological identity, but rather to present a more professional and adaptive image to modern political developments. In political branding theory, the party logo is not only an organizational symbol, but also a communication instrument to build emotional associations and public perceptions of party identity (Aminuddin et al., 2025). The modernization of the PKS logo and communication visuals is part of an effort to build an image of an Islamic party that is moderate, professional, and close to urban communities.

PKS's communication strategy was also strengthened through the use of political flashmob actions that became popular in the run-up to the 2009 election and intensified in the next election. PKS is known as one of the most active parties to use flashmobs in public spaces such as highways, city intersections, and crowded centers. The activity was carried out by cadres with uniform party attributes while carrying light, creative, and populist political messages. From a political marketing perspective, flashmob functions as a visual communication strategy to increase the party's visibility while building emotional closeness to the community (Akbari, 2024). In contrast to conventional campaigns that are formal and elitist, the flashmob presents PKS as an active, energetic, and close party to the younger generation.

The use of flashmobs also has a symbolic meaning in the construction of party identity. This activity shows the transformation of PKS communication from an exclusive da'wah model to a more open and participatory political communication. Flashmob is a medium for PKS to display the image of cadres who are disciplined, solid, and responsive to public issues without having to use religious symbols dominantly. Flashmob not only functions as a campaign tool, but also as an instrument for forming party identity in the public space (DPD PKS, 2024).

However, changes in PKS's political communication as an open party have led to internal conflicts between groups that support openness and groups that want to maintain the party's ideological identity strictly (Nurussa'adah & Sumartias, 2017). Some party elites see openness as a necessary political strategy to expand electoral support, while others worry that openness will obscure PKS's identity as an Islamic da'wah party. The debate over the possibility of non-Muslim legislative cadres or candidates

is one of the issues that has triggered internal tensions within the party.

These internal conflicts have long-term implications for PKS political communication. First, PKS must constantly negotiate identity between electoral pragmatism and ideological loyalty of cadres. Second, differences in internal views cause party political communication to often be ambiguous between maintaining a conservative Islamic image and displaying a moderate face in the public sphere. Third, the conflict encourages PKS to build a more controlled internal communication system to maintain cadre consolidation and prevent organizational fragmentation.

In this case, the *tarbiyah* system, which is the main character of PKS, has an important role as an instrument of internal political communication. The *tarbiyah* system not only functions as a means of ideological regeneration, but also as a medium for forming the party's internal climate of opinion (Basyir, 2014). Through halaqah, liqo', and cadre forums, party elites build uniform perceptions regarding the direction of political communication and party identity (Suryana, 2021). This concept is in line with the Spiral of Silence theory which explains that the dominant opinion in a group will influence an individual's attitude in expressing his or her political views.

Through a strong internal communication system, PKS seeks to build consensus among cadres that party openness is not a form of dismantling Islamic identity, but a more inclusive political da'wah strategy. The *Multaqā al-Fikr* Forum in 2008 is an important example of how the PKS elite uses internal communication to reduce conflicts and rebuild the unity of cadre perceptions (Muhtadi, 2012). In the forum, the party elite tried to equalize the "cognitive frequency" of cadres so that there would be no confusion about the political direction of the party ahead of the 2009 elections.

However, the conflict over the concept of an open party is not completely resolved. The difference of views between pragmatic and ideological groups remains an internal dynamic of PKS to this day. However, PKS managed to maintain its organizational stability through cadre discipline, a strong internal communication system, and the ability of the party elite to control political narratives. The transformation of PKS's political communication shows that modern Islamic parties face not only electoral challenges, but also challenges in maintaining a balance between ideological identity, political marketing strategies, and internal party consolidation in the multiparty democratic system in Indonesia.

### **Internal–External Communication Strategy of PKSs in Maintaining the Traditional Voter Base**

The transformation of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) political communication as an open party does not mean that this party abandons the Islamic ideological identity that has been the main foundation of its political movement. The findings of the study show that PKS has actually developed a dual communication strategy, namely pragmatic and populist external communication to expand the electoral base, as well as internal communication that still emphasizes the identity of Islamism in order to maintain the loyalty of traditional cadres and voters. This strategy shows PKS's ability to negotiate political identity in the midst of Indonesia's competitive and pluralistic multiparty democratic system.

From a political marketing perspective, PKS's communication strategy shows a shift from a product-oriented party to a market-oriented party (Triono et al., 2018). PKS no longer only offers Islamic ideology as the main "political product", but begins to tailor communication messages based on the needs and preferences of voters. In the national public space, PKS builds an image as a party of "Clean, Careful, and Professional" through issues of anti-corruption, social welfare, public services, and partiality to the small people (Purwosusanto, 2011). However, at the same time, the party maintains Islamism-based communication to internal cadres through the agenda of public morality, solidarity of global Muslims, and strengthening the da'wah system.

The findings of the study show that the dualism of communication is not an accidental contradiction, but a strategy deliberately designed by the party elite. Ahmad Maburri Mei Akbari explained that PKS realizes the need to distinguish communication approaches based on the character of the political audience they are facing. He stated:

"If it is to the wider public, of course the language used must be the language of nationality, welfare, service. But for the cadres, the spirit of the da'wah struggle must still be maintained. Because PKS was born not just for elections, but for da'wah and societal change" (A. M. M. Akbari, 2024)

The statement shows that PKS political communication works at two levels at once, namely external communication for electoral interests and internal communication to maintain the party's ideological identity. In the context of the Spiral of Silence theory, this strategy can be understood as a form of PKS's adaptation to the opinion of the majority of Indonesian

people who tend to be moderate (Putri et al., 2026). PKS realizes that the over-explicit prominence of Islamist symbols has the potential to cause public resistance and narrow the party's electoral market. Therefore, the party chooses to display a moderate image in the public space while maintaining an internal ideology through cadre regeneration mechanisms and closed communication.

PKS's dual communication strategy is clearly visible in framing moral issues and sharia-based legislation. PKS's support for the Anti-Pornography Bill, sharia regulations, and various public morality policies shows that the party still maintains issue ownership on Islamic moral issues. In Henrik Bech Seeberg's theory, issue ownership explains how a party seeks to maintain dominance over certain issues that are considered to represent its political identity (Seeberg, 2025). For PKS, the issue of Islamic morality is a symbol of party differentiation from other political groups as well as a tool to maintain the loyalty of the conservative voter base.

However, PKS frames support for the agenda as part of the democratic process, not religious coercion. Hidayat Nur Wahid explained that the struggle for Islamic values must be pursued through a constitutional mechanism. He stated:

"If democracy is accepted, then the aspirations of the people must also be accepted. The important thing is to fight for it through law and democracy. So it is not coercion, but part of the political rights of the community" (H. N. Wahid, 2024).

The statement shows how PKS is reframing the Islamist agenda to remain compatible with democracy. In the perspective of Robert Entman's framing theory, PKS seeks to define sharia issues not as a threat to pluralism, but as an expression of democracy and the aspirations of local communities (Olivia & Setiawan, 2023). This framing strategy is important to reduce the public's negative perception of the conservative image of PKS.

In addition to the issue of domestic morality, Palestinian solidarity is one of the most important political communication instruments in maintaining the traditional base of PKS (DPTP PKS, 2017). The findings of the study show that the Palestinian issue is not just a foreign policy issue, but has become part of the party's ideological identity. PKS uses what can be called Islamic solidarity framing, which is a political framing that builds solidarity based on the identity of global Muslims (*ummah*) (Yuniartin, 2019).

In various Palestinian solidarity actions, PKS combines religious and humanitarian framing simultaneously. At the elite level, the Palestinian issue is often framed as an issue of human rights and universal humanitarian solidarity. However, at the level of mass mobilization, Palestinian expressions of solidarity often use strong religious symbols and language. This study found that the ambiguity of the framing is part of PKS's communication strategy to reach two audiences at once, namely the moderate national public and the internal Islamist base.

Ahmad Mabruri explained that Palestine has always been an important issue in the narrative of the PKS's struggle:

"Palestine is not just a foreign policy issue for PKS. It is part of humanitarian solidarity and the solidarity of the people. But of course, in public communication, we must also use the language of humanity so that it can be more widely accepted" (A. M. M. Akbari, 2024).

From a political marketing perspective, the Palestinian issue also serves as a brand reinforcement tool. Palestinian solidarity actions strengthen the image of PKS as a party that consistently defends the interests of global Muslims. This is important because in the midst of the moderation of the party's image, PKS still needs symbols of Islamism to maintain the ideological loyalty of cadres and sympathizers.

However, the study also found that religious framing in Palestinian action sometimes causes the universal message of humanity to become blurred. Some demonstration slogans that use religious symbolism have the potential to give rise to the perception of religious exclusivism. Therefore, in this study, the analysis of these slogans is placed at the academic level as part of the framing strategy of Islamic social movements, not as a form of legitimacy for hate speech.

The blasphemy case by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) and the Aksi Bela Islam 212 movement is an important momentum to see how PKS manages the ambiguity of political communication between Islamism and pragmatism (Wardani, 2024). This case is relevant because it clearly shows how PKS maintains closeness to the mobilization of Islamic identity without losing its image as an open party.

PKS supports the lawsuit against Ahok and encourages cadres to participate in demonstrations. However, the party formally banned the use of PKS attributes in the 212 action. Mustafa Kamal asserted:

"Cadres can participate as part of Muslims, but do not bring party

attributes. This is not an institutional action of the party" (M. Kamal, 2024).

This strategy shows an ambiguous but measurable form of brand positioning. PKS wants to gain symbolic benefits from its proximity to the Islamic movement without having to be perceived as the main actor of the movement. From a political marketing perspective, this move allows PKS to maintain closeness to the Islamist base while maintaining communication with moderate voters.

This study found that the ambiguity is not a sign of inconsistency, but a deliberate communication strategy. PKS understands that full involvement in the 212 movement risks reinforcing conservative stigma and hindering the party's efforts to build a moderate image. On the other hand, if it moves too far away from the movement, PKS risks losing legitimacy in the eyes of its cadre base and conservative Islamic voters.

In the context of the Spiral of Silence theory, PKS seems to be trying to read the change in the climate of opinion in society. When the wave of Islamic solidarity increased after the Ahok case, PKS chose to take a position that was close enough to the movement so as not to be isolated from the Muslim base (Yilmaz and Barton, 2021). However, the party still maintains institutional distance to avoid alienating moderate voters. This strategy shows PKS's ability to adapt political communication to situational changes in public opinion.

The success of PKS in maintaining the dualism of communication is closely related to the *tarbiyah* system as an internal communication instrument of the party (Haris et al., 2020). The findings of the study show that *the tarbiyah* system is not only an ideological cadre regeneration mechanism, but also an internal political communication system that forms a uniform perception of cadres towards the direction of the party's struggle.

Through halaqah, liqo', dauroh, and tiered cadre training, the party elite builds an internal climate of opinion that allows the party's official narrative to be accepted collectively. This system explains why PKS is able to maintain internal solidity despite experiencing ideological tensions related to the concept of an open party.

Suparto PKS cadre explained:

"In PKS, internal communication is very strong. Even when there are differences of opinion about party openness, cadres end up following the decision of the congregation because the tarbiyah system forms high loyalty and discipline" (Suparto, 2024)

From the perspective of political organization communication theory, *the tarbiyah* system functions as a mechanism of ideological control as well as a reproduction of the party's collective identity (K. Hasan et al., 2026). The PKS elite uses a network of cadres to ensure that the transformation of party communication is understood as a political da'wah strategy, not a form of disappearance of Islamic identity.

In addition, the PKS cadre regeneration system also shows how the party builds a balance between mass recruitment and ideological selectivity. At the external level, PKS opens up a wide space for sympathizers, volunteers, and non-cadre voters. However, at the internal level, the party continues to implement a strict tiered cadre regeneration process through *the marhalah system* (Djuyandi and Sodikin, 2019). This strategy allowed the PKS to expand its electoral base without losing ideological control over the core of the organization.

The findings of this study show that the success of PKS in maintaining the traditional voter base does not only depend on the issue of Islamism, but especially on the party's ability to manage internal-external communication simultaneously. PKS has succeeded in building a flexible political identity, namely appearing moderate and populist in the national public space, but remaining ideological in internal communication and cadre mobilization (Wahyudi, 2022).

Theoretically, these findings show that the transformation of Islamic parties in democracy does not necessarily lead to full ideological moderation. In contrast, Islamic parties such as PKS tend to develop hybrid political communication that combines electoral pragmatism with the maintenance of an ideological identity (Fuad et al., 2024). Similar phenomena can also be found in the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey and the Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) in Malaysia which combine the moderation of public image with the consolidation of internal Islamic identity.

The PKS case shows that the political communication of modern Islamic parties is basically a continuous negotiation process between the demands of electoral democracy, political marketing strategies, and the need to maintain internal ideological loyalty. PKS's success as a relatively stable Islamic party in Indonesia lies not only in its ability to mobilize politically, but also in its ability to manage the dualism of political communication in an adaptive, structured, and ideological manner at the same time.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the transformation of the political communication of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) as an open party is a form of negotiation between the Islamic ideological identity and the pragmatic demands of electoral democracy in Indonesia. PKS develops a dual communication strategy, namely moderate, populist, and inclusive external communication to expand the voter base, as well as *tarbiyah*-based internal communication to maintain cadre loyalty and party da'wah identity. This transformation can be seen through changes in slogans, the use of more modern political logos and visuals, the use of flashmobs and social media as political branding, and the framing of welfare, anti-corruption, and public service issues. However, at the same time, PKS still maintains the issue of Islamic morality, Palestinian solidarity, and the Islamic movement as part of the party's internal ideological communication. These findings show that PKS does not abandon the identity of Islamism, but manages it adaptively according to changes in public opinion as described in the Spiral of Silence theory and political marketing.

Theoretically, this article contributes to the debate on the relationship between social movements and political parties. This research shows that PKS not only moves as an institutional political party, but also maintains the character of social movements through mass mobilization, Palestinian solidarity actions, public morality movements, and da'wah cadre regeneration systems. Thus, this article asserts that the boundaries between extra-institutional movements and institutional politics are fluid and intersecting. PKS shows that modern Islamic parties can combine electoral pragmatism with ideological consolidation through framing strategies, issue ownership, and hybrid political communication. These findings also expand the study of da'wah *siyasah* by showing that da'wah communication in modern electoral politics is not only carried out through lectures and religious symbols, but also through political branding, digital media, and organized visual communication strategies.

However, this study has limitations because it focuses on one case study and uses a qualitative approach so that it cannot quantitatively measure the influence of PKS communication strategies on voter behavior. In addition, the dynamics of PKS digital communication have also not been analyzed longitudinally. Therefore, further research needs to be carried out

through comparative studies with other Islamic parties such as the AKP in Turkey or PAS in Malaysia, as well as using a mixed methods approach and digital media analysis to understand the relationship between political marketing, da'wah communication, and electoral behavior of Islamic parties in the era of digital democracy.

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