

PUBLIC RELATIONS AS POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE 2024 DPD CAMPAIGN OF MAMBEROB RUMAKIEK

**Wiryawan Kresna Wisnu Brata, Tria Patrianti, Ismed Kelibay,
Tito Handoko**

Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong, Sorong, Indonesia

Universitas Riau, Riau, Indonesia

wkhsajuang@gmail.com, tria.patrianti@umj.ac.id, ismed92@um-sorong.ac.id,

tito.handoko@lecturer.unri.ac.id

Abstract

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This study examines the role of political public relations in building political relations and public communication of Mamberob Yosephus Rumakiek in the election of the Regional Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia. The analysis focuses on two main aspects: (1) the formulation of political messages and public responses to these messages, and (2) patterns of two-way communication and political representation constructed by Kaka Mambe. This study employs the theoretical framework of political public relations proposed by Frohlich. A descriptive qualitative method is applied, with the research conducted at the DPD RI office and within Kaka Mambe's constituency in Southwest Papua. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Kaka Mambe as the key informant, as well as Papuan community leaders, campaign team members, youth activists, and Papuan academics as supporting informants. Data analysis was carried out using comparative context and analogy approaches, and data validity was ensured through triangulation to establish research credibility and dependability. The findings indicate that the political PR strategy implemented by Kaka Mambe, through contextual political messaging, responsive two-way communication, and political representation grounded in local values, has proven effective in building political relations and strengthening political communication, thereby contributing significantly to his success in the DPD RI election.

Introduction

The election of the Regional Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia (DPD RI) for the 2024-2029 term serves as a strategic arena for examining the dynamics of political communication at the local level, particularly how relationships between candidates and constituents are constructed outside

formal political party structures. In contemporary electoral democracies, political communication is no longer understood merely as the transmission of messages; rather, it constitutes a systematic effort to build image, relationships, and public trust through sustained and context-sensitive approaches (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019).

This study is grounded in the argument that political communication at the local level often encounters structural and cultural challenges, especially regarding the effectiveness of message delivery and the quality of interaction between political actors and the public. In practice, local political communication frequently becomes confined to one-way, transactional patterns, in which political messaging is oriented more toward short-term electoral vote mobilization than toward the development of long-term relational engagement. Such communication patterns contribute to low levels of public trust in local political figures, which in turn affects declining political participation and the overall quality of democracy at the regional level (Putnam, 2020).

Furthermore, this study concentrates on Public Relations (PR) as an instrument of political communication, functioning as a strategic mechanism for managing relationships between political actors and their publics. In the political sphere, Public Relations encompasses the evaluation of public attitudes, the formulation of communicative policies, and the implementation of communication programs aimed at building public understanding, support, and legitimacy (Musi et al., 2022). Recent scholarship emphasizes that a relationship management-based PR approach significantly contributes to the construction of political image and public trust, particularly within local political contexts that demand social proximity and intensive interpersonal communication (Ledingham, 2022).

In the context of general elections, Public Relations practices are frequently articulated through political branding strategies, namely the process of constructing a candidate's political identity in a manner that is consistent, authentic, and responsive to voters' needs. Empirical studies demonstrate that personal political branding developed through direct engagement with communities, the use of localized narratives, and sustained social presence can significantly influence public perception and voting behavior (Setiawan et al., 2024; Pratama & Kurniawan, 2025). These findings underscore that effective political communication rests upon long-term relational engagement rather than merely short-term electoral mobilization.

The establishment of the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI) itself emerged from post-1998 political reform demands aimed at strengthening regional representation within Indonesia's constitutional system. The DPD RI was created to accommodate regional interests in the national legislative process, particularly in light of Indonesia's demographic and geographic disparities (Asshiddiqie, 2020). Nevertheless, several studies indicate that since the 2004 General Election, the DPD RI's authority has remained relatively limited and tends to be subordinate compared to the DPR RI and the Central Government. Consequently, the political visibility of DPD RI members largely depends on their personal communication capacity and direct engagement with constituents (Mietzner, 2020; Romli, 2021).

These conditions compel political actors, including members of the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI), to develop communication strategies

that are adaptive, contextual, and inclusive. Within the framework of Indonesia's pluralistic democracy, social dynamics and identity, particularly religious dimensions, constitute crucial factors in the formulation of political communication strategies. Research by Refra et al. (2025) indicates that political actors who are able to align their communication strategies with social diversity and local values tend to secure stronger political legitimacy. This finding is significant for understanding how Public Relations-based political communication can function as a mechanism for building trust across identity boundaries and expanding the public support base.

Table 1. Strengths and Track Record of Members of DPD RI for the 2024-2029 Period

Member of DPD RI	Experience/Track Record	Description
Mamberob Y. Rumakiek (Kaka Mambe)	The first student activist from Papua to serve as the National Chair of GMKI (Indonesian Christian Student Movement). Extensive structural and organizational experience, including roles as Chair of the Student Senate, member of KNPI leadership, involvement in foundations, the Public Accountability Body of DPD RI, and Vice Chair of the Special Committee on Foreign Workers in DPD.	Strong advocacy for fishermen and educators/medical personnel; criticized the distribution of fishing equipment assistance and advocated for welfare and access for medical staff and teachers in West Papua. These strengths make Mamberob stand out in terms of organizational experience, local community advocacy, and national access through DPD RI.
Paul Finsen Mayor	Although elected with the highest vote share in the 2024 DPD RI election, there has been limited recorded activity apart from his role as an official of the Papuan Customary Council. After being elected, he focused on employment, education, and health issues, as well as policies aimed at limiting non-Papuan labor in order to prioritize local communities.	Stronger in terms of electoral support and local policy vision, but does not possess a background in student organizational activism comparable to that of Mamberob (Kaka Mambe).
Agustinus Kambuaya	Previously served as a member of the Papua Barat Provincial DPRD. After being elected as a member of DPD RI for the 2024–2029 period, he actively absorbed the aspirations of transmigrant communities, particularly regarding land issues, agricultural business	His primary focus is on agrarian and transmigrant issues after election. He has not been highly visible in the public sphere and does not have deep experience in student-level organizational activism.

	difficulties, and access to markets and capital.	
H. Hartono	Extensive experience in the empowerment of sharia-based microeconomics: served two terms as Chair of the Regional Board of PAN (2010–2020), Chair of BMT Al-Hijrah, Chair of the Supervisory Board of BMT KUM3, Chair of DEKOPINDA Southwest Papua, and mentor for local MSMEs and cooperatives.	Possesses strong professional expertise in microeconomic development and community-based institutions. This differs from the background of social or student activism such as that represented by Mamberob (Kaka Mambe).

The figure of Mamberob Yoshephus Rumakiek (Kaka Mambe) represents a relevant empirical case in this context. His sustained success in securing a public mandate, from his replacement appointment (PAW) for the 2014–2019 term, to being elected for the 2019–2024 period, and subsequently re-elected in the 2024–2029 General Election, demonstrates the practice of effective political communication oriented toward building public trust. Studies on local political communication indicate that the continuity of electoral support generally correlates with image consistency, the intensity of social interaction, and the sustainability of programs directly experienced by the community (Putnam, 2020).

The repeated electoral victories of Mamberob Yoshephus Rumakiek (Kaka Mambe) underscore the importance of adaptive political communication strategies that are responsive to contextual local values and diversity, as well as the strengthening of cross-identity public trust to enhance societal support (Refra et al., 2025). Therefore, political branding strategies that emphasize social proximity, direct community presence, and message consistency tend to generate higher levels of public trust compared to candidates who rely primarily on conventional campaign approaches (Fuaddah et al., 2025). In a society increasingly disillusioned with traditional political elites and political parties, independent figures capable of fostering two-way communication with the public, such as demonstrated by Kaka Mambe, present a compelling subject of study. From a political communication perspective, a central question of this research is how Kaka Mambe constructed public trust in himself, enabling his re-election as a member of the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI) for the 2024–2029 term.

Accordingly, this study positions Public Relations as the primary analytical framework to examine how the political communication strategies implemented by Kaka Mambe contributed to the formation of public trust and his electoral success in the 2024–2029 DPD RI Election, while also offering a theoretical contribution to the study of political communication and local democracy in Indonesia.

Research Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of Political Public Relations practices in building political communication and public relations during the DPD RI election for the 2024–

2029 period. A qualitative approach is chosen because it enables the researcher to explore meanings, experiences, and social constructions embedded in the political communication practices of actors within their natural context (Moleong, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The descriptive method is used to present a factual and systematic account of communication patterns, public relations dynamics, and political communication strategies implemented by Kaka Mambe as a Member of the DPD RI (Kriyantono, 2006).

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with informants selected purposively, namely individuals who had direct or indirect involvement in Kaka Mambe's political communication and Public Relations processes during the DPD RI electoral contestation. Purposive sampling was employed to obtain relevant, context-rich data that support in-depth analysis (Neuman, 2014). Secondary data were collected through a literature review, including academic books, scholarly journal articles, official documents, as well as institutional archives and reports related to political communication, Public Relations, and the DPD RI.

Table 2. List of Informants

Name	Position	Education	Category
Mamberob Y. Rumakiek	Member of the DPD RI	Master of Social Welfare	Key Informant
Pdt. Demianus Osok	Community Leader of Southwest Papua	Bachelor of Theology	Informant
Jumain Acang	Young NU Activist	Bachelor of Islamic Guidance and Counseling	Informant
Dr. Mervin S. Komber, M.M.	Lecturer/ Academic	Doctor of Management Science	Informant
Frengky. F. Gifelem	Papuan Activist / Campaign Team Member	Bachelor of Law	Informant

Data analysis was conducted using an ideal type analysis strategy rooted in the thought of Max Weber and further developed in modern qualitative research (Neuman, 2014). The ideal type was employed as an analytical framework to compare the empirical practices of Kaka Mambe's Political Public Relations with the theoretically ideal conceptual models of political communication and public relations. This approach enabled the researcher to identify patterns, contextual specificities, and gaps between the ideal concept and actual practice without intending to generalize the findings. To ensure data trustworthiness, the study applied source and data triangulation by comparing interview results, field findings, and literature-based evidence. This strategy was implemented to enhance the credibility, consistency, and validity of interpretation in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Discussion

Kaka Mambe's Political Public Relations

Ahead of the 2024 General Election, the political Public Relations (PR) approach implemented by Mamberob Yoshephus Rumakiek (Kaka Mambe) demonstrates a significant strategic shift from conventional communication patterns toward a dialogic and participatory model of digital political communication. This transformation is marked by the use of social media as a two-way interaction space between the candidate and the public, not merely as a channel for information dissemination, but also as a medium for building symbolic closeness, political responsiveness, and representative legitimacy. In the 2024 election context, social media has become a core arena of modern political communication, characterized by participatory and dialogic interaction dynamics in which candidates and citizens can respond to one another directly across various digital platforms (Fahruji & Fahrudin, 2023; Idris & Jamalullail, 2024).

Through digital platforms, Kaka Mambe consistently showcases his political activities, communicates policy positions, and directly responds to public aspirations, thereby shaping public perceptions of openness and political accountability. Other findings in political communication studies indicate that high levels of interactivity on social media enable the public to feel “heard” and involved in political narratives, which in turn contributes to increased political engagement and citizen participation in democratic processes (Afrita, 2024).

This narrative is intentionally positioned outside formal party affiliations, thereby reinforcing perceptions of independence, alignment with public interests, and moral legitimacy as a regional senator. Such image-building strategies function not only as tools of electoral persuasion but also as mechanisms for strengthening political trust, rooted in communication practices that are open and responsive to local social dynamics (Hanif et al., 2025).

This adaptive political PR approach has proven effective in maintaining existing voter loyalty while simultaneously expanding the scope of electoral support, particularly among younger voters who are more familiar with digital communication and value-based political narratives. Research on youth political communication in the digital era confirms that digital strategies leveraging relevant messaging and two-way interaction can significantly enhance Generation Z's political engagement, an effect that aligns with the communication patterns evident in Kaka Mambe's digital campaign (Salim, 2025).

Overall, the evolution of Kaka Mambe's popularity from one period to the next reflects a sustained process of political Public Relations strategy evolution, transitioning from traditional approaches based on social proximity and community relations to modern strategies that integrate symbolic communication, public participation, and the strengthening of representative images through digital media. This strategic evolution has become a key factor in maintaining and expanding his electoral support base over three consecutive terms as a member of the DPD RI (2014–2029), while also demonstrating the adaptive capacity of political communication in response to changes in the media landscape and voter behavior in the digital era.

External and Internal Communication

The author conducted in-depth interviews with the key informant, namely Mamberob Yoshephus Rumakiek (Kaka Mambe), beginning with general questions regarding the patterns of political message delivery, both to the public and to the internal working team. The interview results indicate that Kaka Mambe places openness and message consistency as the main principles of his political communication. He emphasized that there is no substantive difference between the messages conveyed to the internal team and those delivered to the wider public. This consistency is considered crucial for maintaining public trust and avoiding dissonance in political communication.

In every forum, both formal and informal, Kaka Mambe consistently communicates his political views honestly and transparently, including on strategic issues such as the establishment of the Southwest Papua Province. This position is reflected in the following interview statement: *“What I convey to my team is always the same as what I communicate to the public. For example, during a recess discussion with the team regarding the urgency of establishing Southwest Papua Province, I stated that there are two possible outcomes: it could become a disaster if the region is not ready, or it could improve public welfare. If the establishment is intended to ensure equitable development and enhance community welfare, then as a senator I am certainly ready to support and oversee the process. I conveyed the same message when attending a thanksgiving service in one of the villages in Seget District”*. (Interview, April/2025).

The statement indicates that Kaka Mambe does not avoid sensitive issues; instead, he addresses them in an argumentative, proportional, and contextual manner, enabling the public to understand policy complexities without politically oversimplifying them. This approach strengthens his image as an honest figure who is morally responsible in conveying political messages. This finding is reinforced by a statement from a local religious leader, Rev. Demianus Osok, S.Th., a prominent figure of the Evangelical Christian Church (GKI) in the Malamoi area, who considers message consistency to be the most salient characteristic of Kaka Mambe’s political communication. He stated: *“He (Kaka Mambe) is a very consistent person. What he conveys to us is the same message he delivers to the wider community”*. (Interview, May/2025).

Furthermore, Kaka Mambe’s consistency and openness are also acknowledged by his internal team. Frengky F. Gifelem, a member of Kaka Mambe’s working team in Tambrau Regency, emphasized that there is no discrepancy between internal and external communication narratives: *“Kaka Mambe is very genuine, open, and hides nothing. What he conveys is the same message he delivers everywhere”*. (Interview, June/2025).

Message consistency and communication openness constitute the main foundations of Kaka Mambe’s political public relations (PR) strategy. This communication pattern has contributed significantly to building public trust (*political trust*), not only among voters but also among community leaders and internal campaign networks, thereby strengthening his political legitimacy as a representative of the people of Southwest Papua.

Furthermore, to examine more deeply how Kaka Mambe maintains the consistency of political messages delivered to both his team and the public, the author posed a specific question regarding internal message control mechanisms.

Based on the interview findings, message consistency is maintained through a firm leadership style and a strong emphasis on narrative uniformity from the initial stages of communication planning. Kaka Mambe emphasized the importance of message repetition and internal communication discipline within the campaign team, as reflected in the following statement: *“Whenever I convey something important, I always repeat it, and I consistently remind the team to deliver the message exactly as I have stated it, without adding unnecessary elements”*. (Interview, April/2025).

The statement indicates a strategic awareness of the importance of maintaining clarity and coherence in political messaging to prevent distortion when conveyed to the public. This practice constitutes a core component of a political public relations strategy that emphasizes narrative consistency as a fundamental prerequisite for building public trust. This emphasis on consistency is further reinforced by the testimony of Jumain Acang, a member of Kaka Mambe’s campaign team with a background as a young activist affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). When asked about internal communication patterns, Jumain described an empirical experience that illustrates Kaka Mambe’s high level of attentiveness and message control: *“Kaka Mambe is a consistent, firm, and meticulous person. On one occasion, he entrusted me with delivering a message because he was unable to attend a discussion with young people. He even called me afterward to make sure that the message had been delivered exactly as he had previously conveyed it”*. (Interview, May/2025).

The consistency of Kaka Mambe’s political messaging is constructed through a combination of firm leadership, planned message repetition, and strict internal control mechanisms. This strategy contributes to the formation of public perceptions of Kaka Mambe as a credible and trustworthy political figure with strong communicative integrity, which ultimately strengthens the sustainability of political support in the long term.

Issue Management

In the context of managing political issues during his tenure as a member of the Regional Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia (DPD RI), Kaka Mambe demonstrated a relatively moderate and defensive-rational approach to political communication. When asked about the strategies employed to respond to criticism or potential political attacks from opponents, Kaka Mambe emphasized that throughout both the nomination process and his term in office, he was rarely, if ever, the target of negative attacks or contentious political issues. This condition cannot be separated from his personal character and the political communication style he cultivated, which prioritizes civility, avoids open confrontation, and refrains from retaliatory attacks against political rivals. This stance is reflected in the following statement by Kaka Mambe: *“I am grateful that during the nomination process and after assuming office, I never faced attacks or negative issues from opponents. In managing issues, our team focused more on responding to local policy issues, such as regional expansion or other policies, both at the local and national levels”*. (Interview, April/2025).

This statement indicates that the primary focus of issue management undertaken by Kaka Mambe and his team was not directed toward personal conflicts or political rivalries, but rather toward public policy issues that have

direct relevance to community interests. Such an approach also functions as a strategic effort to maintain political image stability and public trust. Furthermore, when asked about how these policy issues were addressed, Kaka Mambe emphasized the importance of adopting a rational and communicative approach that is easily understood by grassroots communities. According to him, political legitimacy is not built through confrontational rhetoric, but through arguments that are reasonable and contextually grounded: *"Of course, my team and I respond or take positions in ways that are more rational and can be understood by grassroots communities. People tend to be more receptive to statements or responses that are rational"*. (Interview, April/2025).

A similar assessment was also conveyed by Dr. Ir. Mervin Komber, M.M., who has directly observed Kaka Mambe's political communication style in responding to various issues at both the regional and national levels. According to him, a rational approach and adherence to the core duties and functions of a DPD RI member characterize each political response delivered by Kaka Mambe: *"Based on my observation, Kaka Mambe is a politician who rarely, if ever, becomes associated with negative issues. In responding to policy-related issues, both regional and national, he tends to act rationally and in accordance with his main duties and functions as a member of the DPD RI in Senayan"*. (Interview, May/2025).

These findings indicate that Kaka Mambe's political issue management strategy is oriented toward image stability, rational communication, and policy-focused engagement rather than conflict-driven politics. Such an approach contributes to maintaining public trust and minimizing the potential for political polarization at the local level, particularly within the context of the DPD RI electoral contestation.

Mutual Understanding

Mamberob Yoshephus Rumakiek (Kaka Mambe) is perceived as a political figure who maintains cross-identity social proximity, encompassing ethnic, religious, and community backgrounds. Although he comes from a Protestant Christian background, his religious identity does not serve as a barrier in building social and political relations. On the contrary, this openness has strengthened his social acceptance across diverse segments of society. Such proximity is strategically utilized to construct a shared understanding between himself and the public, which serves as a foundation for sustained political communication.

Efforts to build social closeness and shared understanding are carried out through intensive and consistent direct interactions with various community groups. This is affirmed by Kaka Mambe, as reflected in the following interview statement: *"I do not limit myself in communicating with all segments of society, including various community groups. On many occasions, I always make time to meet them. From these meetings, I receive a great deal of input and feedback from the community, which I later use as material in hearings with partner institutions in the committee"*. (Interview, April/2025).

This statement indicates that the communication established does not merely operate at a symbolic or image-building level, but functions as a mechanism for absorbing public aspirations that are subsequently integrated into his representative role as a member of the DPD RI. Furthermore, similar views were

expressed by Frengky F. Gifelem and Jumain Acang, two youth activists in Southwest Papua, who separately emphasized Kaka Mambe's openness and accessibility in engaging with various community groups: *"Kaka is a very open person. He is willing to meet anyone, from any group, even if it is just to sit together for a discussion or have coffee. Whenever Kaka is here, he always makes time to engage with them"*. (Interview, June/2025).

"Kaka Mambe is very open to us from youth communities with NU and Muhammadiyah backgrounds. He is always welcoming, actively involved in the discussions we organize, and some of our activities have even received direct support from Kaka". (Interview, May/2025).

These field findings demonstrate that Kaka Mambe's communication approach is inclusive and dialogical, transcending primordial identities and religious affiliations. Based on the author's observations while frequently accompanying Kaka Mambe in various community meetings, he is not only active in articulating his views but also receptive to criticism and feedback. This interaction process consistently creates a dialogical space that enables the development of mutual understanding between the political representative and the community.

Interestingly, in addition to actively building relationships across various social communities, Kaka Mambe also demonstrates a high level of involvement in the religious life of the Christian community. He not only attends major religious celebrations but also regularly participates in weekly worship services at various churches, including those located in remote areas. This is reinforced by a statement from Rev. Demianus Osok, S.Th: *"Kaka Mambe is very active in church activities. Not only during major religious holidays, but he also frequently attends Sunday worship services. Whenever someone contacts him, Kaka Mambe makes the effort to attend, even traveling to churches located in remote villages. After the service, he always takes the time to engage in discussions with the congregation"*. (Interview, May/2025).

Through this approach, Kaka Mambe has been able to optimize political public relations practices effectively by integrating communicative openness, direct engagement, and socio-religious legitimacy. In the context of strategic communication, openness is not merely about delivering information; it involves a two-way exchange of messages that actively engages the public in meaningful dialogue, thereby fostering a deeper relationship between political actors and society. This strategy not only strengthens Kaka Mambe's personal image but also cultivates sustained public trust, reinforcing his position as a legitimate representative of the aspirations of the people of Southwest Papua. Direct interaction between political actors and the public, both through face-to-face encounters and digital platforms, contributes significantly to perceptions of authenticity and approachability in leadership. These perceptions, in turn, enhance public trust and support. Interactivity and dialogue on digital platforms have been shown to significantly strengthen relationships and public trust toward political actors.

Dialogical and responsive interactions enable the public to feel genuinely heard and meaningfully involved in the political communication process, not merely as passive recipients of messages, but as active participants. Reciprocal message exchanges between politicians and citizens on social media create

stronger relationships and higher levels of participation (Latuperissa, 2022). These findings reinforce the argument that legitimacy in political public relations is not determined solely by the content of the message, but also by the quality of interaction established with the public and the capacity to build deep emotional and social connections. Transparency, dialogue, and public engagement constitute the primary foundations for building and sustaining trust as well as social legitimacy (Kurniawan & Wijoyo, 2025).

Kaka Mambe's Public Relation

Two-Way Communication

In addition to examining political Public Relations (PR) strategies, this study specifically explores the public relations practices established by Kaka Mambe through in-depth interviews. The primary focus of the interviews was to assess the extent to which Kaka Mambe develops sustained two-way communication with the community, particularly with religious leaders, community figures, and youth leaders. The findings indicate that the public relations he fosters are not merely instrumental or transactional; rather, they emphasize personal closeness, openness, and substantive participation. This is reflected in the statement of one religious leader who served as a research informant. He emphasized that the communication established by Kaka Mambe is intensive, egalitarian, and not solely oriented toward electoral interests: *"I personally observed how Kaka Mambe interacts with the community, and it is both intensive and very positive. Kaka Mambe does not just come to talk about his own interests to seek support; he also frequently asks for input, inquires about our activities in the church, and even offers assistance by asking, 'Pastor, how can I help?' In my view, this approach is rarely seen among other politicians, as usually we have to request help first"*. (Interview, May/2025).

This statement demonstrates that the political communication established by Kaka Mambe contains elements of social empathy and relational care, which are foundational in building public trust. A similar communication pattern was reported by youth informants, who emphasized its fluid, informal, and participatory nature:

"Kaka Mambe often meets with youth organization leaders, and these meetings are often incidental. He suddenly invites us to sit together, share stories, and engage in discussions about current issues. Frequently, he asks, 'What activities are you planning? I will support you,' without us having to ask first". (Interview, May/2025).

Meanwhile, from the perspective of community leaders, Kaka Mambe's public relations are also characterized by strong ties with customary structures and a genuine commitment to indigenous community issues. One informant emphasized this point: *"Kaka Mambe is very close to the customary leaders in the Sorong Raya area. His closeness is not only evident in ceremonial activities but also in the process of receiving input and advocating for the aspirations of indigenous communities at the national level. I vividly recall how he, together with the indigenous community, supported the revocation of palm oil permits in the Moi customary area"*. (Interview, June/2025).

The two-way communication established by Kaka Mambe operates consistently and continuously. He actively positions the community as a source of political insight, which is then used as a reference to address various regional issues, both through formal forums such as public hearings with relevant institutions and through public communication channels and online media. This finding is reinforced by the perspective of an academic who also served as a research informant. When asked about the substance of the two-way communication constructed by Kaka Mambe, Dr. Ir. Mervin S. Komber, M.M., provided a reflective assessment based on indirect but repeated observations: *"I was not directly involved, but from the narratives I followed, through my students and constituents around me, it is very clear how the narrative built by Kaka Mambe resonates with the community. Even though Kaka Mambe is a Christian, he is able to bridge interreligious issues."*

Interviews with these informants confirm that Kaka Mambe's public relations practices do not stop at symbolic communication or political formalities; rather, they develop into substantive political communication oriented toward dialogue, participation, and trust. This pattern of communication is one of the key factors in strengthening social legitimacy and political support for Kaka Mambe.

Public Representation

After examining the aspect of two-way communication, the analysis then focused on the dimension of public representation, namely the extent to which Kaka Mambe is perceived as capable of representing and advocating for the voices of the communities that have given him political support. The primary focus in this aspect is on how the mechanism of representation is carried out and the indicators used to assess his effectiveness as a regional representative.

When asked how he ensures that the voices and aspirations of the public are genuinely represented, Kaka Mambe emphasized that, for him, political representation does not stop at the symbolic nature of the office, but is realized through direct and sustained engagement with the community: *"From the beginning, I have been committed to ensuring that my presence in the DPD RI is not merely symbolic, but an extension of the voice of the people of West Papua. I regularly visit villages, engage in dialogue with indigenous communities, youth, and women, to hear firsthand what they need and feel. The aspirations shared are, of course, diverse, and those that are rational and within the scope of my duties and authority I make sure to convey to the relevant parties."* (Interview, April/2025).

This statement illustrates that public representation is understood as a relational process that emphasizes closeness, responsiveness, and moral responsibility toward the constituents' aspirations. Representation is not measured solely by electoral success, but also by the ability to deliver solutions to concrete problems faced by the community. This perspective is reinforced by Rev. Demianus Osok, S.Th., who assessed that Kaka Mambe possesses the capacity and strong commitment to voice public aspirations fairly and proportionally: *"I believe Kaka Mambe is very capable of voicing the community's aspirations, taking into account his duties and authority. Even for issues outside his formal responsibilities, if they are urgent, he still makes an effort to communicate them"*

as much as possible. That is what makes the community feel close to him and appreciate his work." (Interview, May/2025).

A similar assessment was conveyed by Frengky F. Gifelem, who highlighted Kaka Mambe's capacity to bring regional issues to the national level, particularly strategic issues related to structural justice in Papua: *"Kaka Mambe has an excellent capacity to voice the issues and aspirations of the community at the national level, including matters concerning the resolution of problems in Papua. He is also actively supporting government initiatives, such as efforts to revoke the licenses of palm oil companies in the Malamoi customary territory, Sorong"*. (Interview, June/2025).

This statement indicates that Kaka Mambe's public representation is not merely articulative but also advocative, as it brings the interests of indigenous communities and environmental concerns into the national policy arena. This point is further emphasized by Dr. Ir. Mervin S. Komber, M.M., who considers Kaka Mambe's consistency in raising current issues and offering concrete solutions as a critical factor in his political success: *"In my view, Kaka Mambe has represented the interests of the community very effectively and possesses a high level of capacity. Almost every time he appears, he raises timely issues accompanied by concrete solutions. The successive victories he has achieved indicate that the public perceives Kaka Mambe as capable of representing their interests."* (Interview, May/2025).

Kaka Mambe's active engagement with various segments of society, including religious leaders, customary leaders, academics, and local stakeholders, serves as the core of an effective and sustainable mechanism of public representation. The intensive interactions that are cultivated create an open and mutually responsive space for dialogue, ensuring that political decisions and actions reflect local needs as well as socio-cultural values. Such dynamics provide a strong foundation for strengthening political trust, which recent research identifies as a crucial factor in motivating civic participation in public affairs and reinforcing the legitimacy of political actors at both local and national levels (Xu et al., 2026).

Within the framework of effective political representation, recent studies indicate that public trust is not built solely on promises or symbolic gestures, but on meaningful citizen involvement in decision-making processes and in providing feedback on political outcomes. Xu et al. (2026) emphasize that strong community leadership can enhance public participation by reinforcing group identification and political trust, which in turn encourages citizens to become more actively engaged in public affairs and to support leaders who are responsive to their aspirations. Additional findings from research conducted by the Indonesian Ombudsman further demonstrate that meaningful public participation and the inclusion of citizens' voices in public policy are significantly associated with increased public trust and greater compliance with resulting policies (Ferdinand, 2024). This reciprocal pattern, between leaders who genuinely listen and citizens who feel heard, constitutes a fundamental explanation for why communities consistently extend political support to Kaka Mambe in every contestation for the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI).

Kaka Mambe's Political Communication

Political Messaging

In conveying his political messages, Kaka Mambe tends to adopt a communication approach that is simple, rational, and contextual, aligned with the social realities faced by the communities in his electoral district. His political messages are not constructed in an elitist or merely normative manner; rather, they are grounded in the concrete issues experienced by people in their daily lives. To explore the fundamental principles underlying Kaka Mambe's way of communicating with the public, the author posed a question regarding the core values he upholds in delivering political messages. This is reflected in the following statement: *"My main principles are authenticity, simplicity, and relevance. I believe the public has the right to receive honest information, free from manipulation or excessive promises. Therefore, every message I convey must be based on reality and on commitments that I can fulfill, not merely political rhetoric. I also strive to communicate in simple, down-to-earth language so that it can be understood by all segments of society, from coastal villages to district towns."* (Interview, April/2025).

The statement indicates that Kaka Mambe's political communication strategy is grounded in message authenticity and in the alignment between his political narrative and his institutional capacity and authority as a member of the Regional Representative Council (DPD RI). This approach is crucial for building public trust, particularly amid widespread public fatigue toward unfulfilled political promises. In addition, the author inquired about the key issues that Kaka Mambe consistently raises when engaging directly with the community. According to him, the issues he advocates are always directly related to the fundamental needs and structural problems faced by the people of Papua, as expressed in the following statement: *"The issues most frequently discussed, and those that genuinely require solutions, concern customary law, the fundamental rights of Papuans, and human resource development. Special Autonomy has been granted, yet the welfare of the Papuan people remains a challenge. Education and healthcare are also critical issues, not only for Indigenous Papuans, but also for other Indonesian communities living in Papua, many of whom continue to face significant constraints in these sectors."* (Interview, April/2025).

This view is reinforced by a statement from a local religious leader, Rev. Demianus Ososk, S.Th., who highlighted Kaka Mambe's language style and rhetoric in conveying political messages to the public. According to him, the simplicity of language constitutes the primary strength of Kaka Mambe's political communication: *"In every narrative, Kaka Mambe consistently uses language that is easily understood by the community. For example, when speaking to children in the villages, he often says, 'you must go to school; Special Autonomy (Otsus) is already in place, so you must be capable of managing it properly.' Kaka Mambe also frequently participates in discussions with indigenous communities in a familial and warm atmosphere."* (Interview, May/2025).

A similar perspective was expressed by Frengky F. Gifelem, who emphasized that the issues raised in Kaka Mambe's political messages directly address the fundamental needs of the community: *"The main issues consistently raised by Kaka Mambe concern indigenous communities, the improvement of human resource quality, and health. With the implementation of Special*

Autonomy (Otsus), Papuan children must become educated and skilled so that these funds can be managed effectively, bringing prosperity rather than causing communities to lose their land and their future.” (Interview, June/2025).

Regarding the process of formulating political narratives, Frengky F. Gifelem explained that political messages were not constructed in an elitist manner, but rather grounded in real problems encountered in the field: *“Simply put, we must first understand the problems experienced by people at the grassroots level. We also discover many issues directly in the field, sometimes incidentally. Kaka Mambe’s main focus remains on indigenous communities and on improving human resources through education and healthcare.” (Interview, June/2025).*

Meanwhile, Jumain Acang added that, beyond issues of education and healthcare, Kaka Mambe has consistently motivated young people to actively develop their capacities: *“Beyond education and healthcare, Kaka Mambe always encourages young people to engage in organizations and participate in discussion forums. According to him, through such involvement, young people can broaden their perspectives and strengthen their personal capacities.” (Interview, May/2025).*

Based on field observations and testimonies from informants, it can be concluded that Kaka Mambe’s success in delivering his political messages primarily lies in his ability to frame issues in a simple, relevant, and realistic manner, conveyed through accessible and easily understood language. This communication approach enables political messages to emerge from the social realities of the community without excessive promises, making them more readily accepted by the public. His consistent, authentic, and context-sensitive style of delivery significantly contributes to building public trust and mitigating resistance to political narratives that are overly complex or technocratic. This is one of the key factors explaining why public support for Kaka Mambe has remained relatively consistent in successive DPD RI electoral contests.

Public Response

The author further explored public responses to the political messages conveyed by Kaka Mambe in order to assess the extent to which his political Public Relations (PR) approach has been effective. In-depth interviews were conducted with several informants representing religious leaders, community figures, academics, youth representatives, as well as the candidate himself.

An interview with Rev. Demianus Osok, S.Th., revealed that the majority of people who have interacted directly with Kaka Mambe tend to show positive responses to the political messages delivered. This is largely attributed to his use of simple, contextual language that aligns with the lived realities of the local community. According to him, Kaka Mambe’s understanding of his constituents’ conditions constitutes a key factor in fostering public acceptance. He stated that communities with established social and emotional proximity to Kaka Mambe demonstrate strong loyalty. Meanwhile, segments of society who have not personally known him remain in a neutral position and have yet to determine their support.

“Most people who have met Kaka Mambe always respond positively, especially since the messages are delivered in simple and easily understood

language. Kaka Mambe truly understands the condition of his constituents. Communities that are already close to him are very unlikely to shift, while those who do not yet know him tend to remain neutral." (Interview, May/2025).

That perspective is reinforced by Frengky F. Gifelem, who argues that Kaka Mambe's political messages have been positively received because their substance is seen as directly addressing the core concerns of the community. He emphasized that there has been no significant resistance from groups that have interacted directly with Kaka Mambe. Even those who have not had direct encounters have not shown rejection, but instead tend to maintain a neutral stance.

"The community groups that frequently meet Kaka Mambe always respond positively. He is seen as speaking to the heart of the issues and offering concrete solutions. I have not observed any negative responses; even from those who have never met him personally, their attitude is simply neutral and not antagonistic." (Interview, June/2025).

Meanwhile, Jumain Acang highlighted a shift in public perception and political attitudes after people attended campaign events and listened to Kaka Mambe's messages. He stressed that the use of local language in delivering the message strengthens emotional closeness and enhances public trust. Education and youth issues are regarded as the most resonant themes because they align with the community's real needs.

"Kaka Mambe's messages are quite clear, especially since they are often delivered in the local language, making them more impactful. When he speaks about education and youth, he clearly understands the community's conditions. Personally, I have become more convinced because it is not just promises. Many of my neighbors also feel that his message is more sincere compared to other candidates." (Interview, May/2025).

This finding aligns with the view of Dr. Ir. Mervin S. Komber, M.M., who argues that the effectiveness of Kaka Mambe's political messaging lies in his grounded, personal communication style, characterized by strong emotional and cultural engagement. According to him, youth groups and indigenous communities are the segments most responsive to these messages. He also observes a growing public perception of Kaka Mambe's integrity and representational commitment from one election cycle to the next: *"The public is highly receptive to a personal and culturally grounded communication style. Kaka Mambe is particularly strong in emotional engagement. Youth groups and indigenous communities respond most positively. Public perception of his integrity and alignment with the people continues to increase. Many university students feel close to him because of his attentiveness and demeanor."* (Interview, May/2025).

Overall, the interview findings indicate that the political Public Relations (PR) approach implemented by Kaka Mambe functions effectively in fostering social acceptance, public trust, and loyalty. This effectiveness is primarily supported by contextual communication practices rooted in cultural proximity and by prioritizing direct dialogue as the principal medium of political engagement with the community. Such an approach not only strengthens perceptions of authenticity and approachability of the political actor, but also positions communication as a sustainable relational instrument. Nevertheless, Kaka Mambe emphasizes that communication patterns and teamwork are not treated as static

strategies; continuous evaluation is undertaken to achieve a more adaptive, ideal, and long-term-oriented formulation of political communication, extending beyond the electoral campaign phase and throughout the entire period of political representation.

Within this framework, message simplicity and communication accessibility, particularly through the use of non-technical language aligned with the needs and social experiences of the community, play a crucial role in enhancing public engagement, political trust, and the legitimacy of political actors (Turkenburg, 2025). Message strategies designed to be easily understood while maintaining social and emotional resonance have proven capable of broadening civic participation and shaping public opinion that is more responsive to the political issues and content conveyed (Hermawan, 2025). Furthermore, message personalization and the strengthening of two-way interaction through social media affirm that communication which is simple yet socially relevant not only improves citizens' political understanding, but also encourages their active involvement in political processes (Rambe et al., 2025). Accordingly, inclusive and accessible political communication should not be understood merely as a short-term persuasive strategy, but rather as a fundamental element in building sustainable public trust amid the complexity and fragmentation of contemporary political dynamics (Turkenburg, 2025).

Conclusion

The political Public Relations (PR) strategy implemented by Kaka Mambe has been proven to play a strategic role in building strong political relationships and managing public communication effectively. This success is supported by his ability to formulate contextual political messages, develop responsive two-way communication, and construct authentic political representation grounded in local values. Such a political PR strategy not only contributed to his electoral success in the DPD RI elections but also strengthened the quality of representative relationships between the regional representative and the community he represents. Kaka Mambe's political messages were formulated based on the social and cultural realities of the people of Southwest Papua, emphasizing strategic issues such as basic infrastructure development, public welfare, and the strengthening of local identity. The packaging of these messages through simple, communicative, and emotionally resonant narratives enabled the formation of psychological closeness between the candidate and voters. These findings underscore that the effectiveness of political communication is determined more by the alignment of message substance with the lived social experiences of the community than by the mere intensity of communication, as reflected in the continuity of electoral support in the 2019 and 2024 DPD RI elections.

In practice, Kaka Mambe successfully established a two-way political communication pattern through a combination of direct interactions and the use of social media as a space for public dialogue. This communication pattern was not only informative but also participatory and responsive to public aspirations. Such an approach resulted in the construction of political representation that emphasizes emotional closeness, social presence, and transparency, leading Kaka Mambe to be perceived not merely as a political elite but as an integral part of the local community. This form of representation contributed to an increase in public

trust (*political trust*) as a key form of social capital in sustaining long-term political support at the local level. Accordingly, this study highlights the crucial role of political Public Relations in building trust and social legitimacy, particularly in the context of independent candidates and peripheral regions. Therefore, future research is encouraged to explore the long-term impacts of political PR strategies on political participation and local democratic consolidation, as well as to critically examine the role of social media, ethical considerations, and accountability in political communication across Indonesia's diverse geographic and social contexts.

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