

The Influence of Electoral Oversight Management Factors on Public Perception through Public Trust in the 2024 Simultaneous Elections in Ngawi Regency

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ABSTRACT

Electoral oversight plays a crucial role in safeguarding electoral integrity and strengthening democratic legitimacy, particularly in emerging democracies where public trust in electoral institutions remains a central challenge. This study aims to examine how electoral oversight management influences public perception through the mediating role of public trust in the 2024 Simultaneous Elections in Ngawi Regency, Indonesia. Employing a quantitative explanatory research design, the study analyzed the effects of four dimensions of electoral oversight management—planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation—on public trust and public perception. Data were collected from 400 registered voters selected through proportional stratified random sampling and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The findings reveal that electoral oversight organizing has a direct and significant effect on public perception, while planning, implementation, and evaluation do not exert significant direct effects. However, organizing, implementation, and evaluation significantly influence public trust, whereas planning does not. Public trust is found to have a positive and significant effect on public perception and serves as a mediating variable in the relationships between organizing, implementation, and evaluation of oversight and public perception. Conversely, public trust does not mediate the relationship between oversight planning and public perception. These results indicate that public perception of electoral oversight is shaped primarily by oversight practices that are visible, organized, accountable, and directly experienced by the public, with public trust functioning as the key mechanism linking oversight performance to societal evaluations. The study contributes to the literature on electoral governance by highlighting the strategic role of public trust in translating managerial performance into positive public perception at the local level.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Election oversight has become a global standard in modern democratic governance and is widely recognized as a key mechanism for safeguarding electoral integrity. At the international level, election monitoring and observation are viewed as essential instruments for ensuring transparency, preventing electoral fraud, and strengthening the legitimacy of elected governments (Diepreye, 2024). International organizations, particularly the European Union, actively deploy election observation missions as part of their democracy support initiatives, especially in countries undergoing political transition or facing democratic backsliding (Youngs et al., 2022). Empirical studies suggest that the presence of independent election observers generates a deterrent effect against electoral misconduct and contributes to the diffusion of democratic norms and international standards in electoral management (Erameh et al., 2021).

In Asia, election oversight practices vary considerably, reflecting differences in levels of democratization, institutional capacity, and political regimes. Countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Timor-Leste have demonstrated relatively open oversight models that involve civil society and international partners, while in other Asian states, oversight space remains constrained by restrictive regulations or authoritarian control (Youngs et al., 2022). In Indonesia, election oversight is constitutionally mandated to the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), which is responsible for ensuring that elections are conducted in a free, fair, and democratic manner. Nationally, innovations in digital monitoring systems and participatory oversight have contributed to improving Bawaslu's public image and credibility, although significant challenges persist in translating these achievements into consistent performance at the local level (Wance et al., 2025; Kompas, 2025).

Elections themselves are a fundamental instrument of modern democracy, functioning not only as a mechanism for leadership selection but also as a means of ensuring political accountability and democratic legitimacy. Through elections, citizens exercise sovereignty while enabling peaceful power rotation and democratic consolidation (Erameh et al., 2021). In the global context, credible elections are closely associated with political stability and the maintenance of a rules-based international order, particularly amid rising authoritarian tendencies that threaten democratic institutions worldwide (Youngs et al., 2022).

Electoral integrity is inseparable from effective election oversight. Election oversight refers to a systematic process aimed at ensuring that all stages of elections comply with legal frameworks and democratic principles, thereby safeguarding transparency, fairness, and accountability (Diepreye, 2024). Beyond detecting violations, oversight functions as a preventive and corrective mechanism that strengthens electoral governance and enhances public trust in democratic institutions. International experience shows that robust oversight systems not only reduce the risk of manipulation but also reinforce the legitimacy of electoral outcomes, especially in countries with developing or fragile democratic institutions (Erameh et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, election oversight is carried out by Bawaslu across all electoral stages. National survey data indicate relatively high levels of public trust in Bawaslu, reflecting improvements in institutional professionalism, transparency, and the adoption of digital reporting platforms (Kompas, 2025). The increasing use of electoral technologies, such as digital recapitulation systems and online reporting applications, has further heightened the need for structured and adaptive oversight management, particularly with regard to data security, information validity, and the prevention of digital manipulation (Wance et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, empirical evidence suggests that the effectiveness of election oversight management at the local level remains uneven. Several studies and media reports highlight persistent challenges, including limited human resources, weak inter-institutional coordination, low digital literacy among election supervisors, and suboptimal public participation (Hamdi Saiful, 2023; Materu et al., 2024).

These challenges have direct implications for public perception, as delayed enforcement of violations and limited transparency in handling cases often generate skepticism toward election oversight institutions (Tempo, 2024; CNN, 2024).

From a public management perspective, effective election oversight requires an integrated process encompassing planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation. Planning enables the identification of electoral vulnerabilities and preventive strategies (Yulianto, 2025), while organizing ensures clear role distribution, coordination, and accountability among oversight actors (Zulkarnaini et al., 2022). Implementation emphasizes proactive and participatory supervision supported by early warning systems and rapid response mechanisms (Hidayat Amri Wahid et al., 2025). Evaluation serves as a reflective process to assess performance, identify weaknesses, and generate recommendations for institutional learning and continuous improvement (Widhiandono, 2023).

These managerial dimensions are closely related to public trust. Public trust in oversight institutions is shaped by perceptions of competence, integrity, transparency, and procedural fairness (Ferreira, 2021; Blomqvist, 2021). Empirical studies demonstrate that effective institutional performance and accountability are positively associated with public trust and institutional legitimacy (Marti et al., 2025). Conversely, internal ethical issues and limited transparency may weaken public confidence, even when formal oversight mechanisms are in place (Suhenty, 2022).

Ngawi Regency provides a relevant empirical context to examine these dynamics. Institutional survey data from Bawaslu Ngawi (2025) indicate relatively high levels of public awareness and general support for Bawaslu's role in safeguarding electoral integrity. However, gaps remain in public trust regarding institutional integrity and procedural justice, limited participation from strategic stakeholders such as media and civil society organizations, and the tendency for oversight activities to intensify only during election periods. These findings suggest that positive surface-level perceptions do not necessarily translate into sustainable public trust.

Despite a growing body of literature on election oversight in Indonesia, most existing studies focus on regulatory frameworks, institutional authority, or resource constraints (Jukari, 2021; Yulianti, 2024). Limited attention has been given to empirically examining how election oversight management influences public perception through the mediating role of public trust, particularly at the local level. This gap highlights the need for research that integrates public management and social trust perspectives within the context of electoral democracy.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the influence of electoral oversight management on public perception through the mediating role of public trust in the 2024 Simultaneous Elections in Ngawi Regency. Specifically, this research investigates whether each dimension of electoral oversight management—planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation—has a direct effect on public perception and public trust. Furthermore, it explores the extent to which public trust influences public perception of electoral oversight and whether public trust mediates the relationship between electoral oversight management and public perception. By addressing these relationships, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on how managerial processes within election oversight institutions shape public trust and societal perceptions of electoral integrity at the local level.

2. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design to examine the causal relationships between electoral oversight management, public trust, and public perception in the context of the 2024 Simultaneous Elections. A quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for objective measurement of relationships among variables and enables hypothesis testing through statistical modeling (Sugiyono, 2018). The study involved six latent variables: planning (X1), organizing

(X2), implementation (X3), and evaluation/controlling of electoral oversight (X4) as independent variables; public trust (Z) as a mediating variable; and public perception (Y) as the dependent variable.

The research was conducted in Ngawi Regency, East Java, Indonesia. This location was selected due to the completeness of its electoral oversight structure and the diversity of its social characteristics across 19 sub-districts. The population of the study comprised all registered voters listed in the Permanent Voter List (Daftar Pemilih Tetap/DPT) for the 2024 elections, totaling 701,425 voters. A sample size of 400 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula with a 5% margin of error. Respondents were selected through proportional stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation from each sub-district.

Data were collected primarily through a structured questionnaire developed based on the operational indicators of each research variable. All questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To enhance contextual understanding and support quantitative findings, limited supplementary data were obtained through interviews with electoral oversight officials and document analysis of official reports, regulations, and institutional publications related to election oversight.

Electoral oversight management variables were operationalized using the POAC framework—planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling—as proposed by Terry (2021). Public trust was measured using indicators of integrity, competence, transparency, and responsiveness, referring to the public trust framework developed by Norris (2020). Public perception was measured through indicators of understanding, performance evaluation, transparency assessment, and supportive attitudes toward the electoral oversight institution, drawing on perception theory articulated by Robbins (2020).

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling with Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS), assisted by SmartPLS software. The analysis followed a two-stage procedure. First, the measurement model (outer model) was evaluated through tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability. Second, the structural model (inner model) was assessed to examine direct and indirect (mediated) effects among variables. Hypothesis testing was performed using a bootstrapping procedure with a significance threshold of $p \leq 0.05$. SEM-PLS was selected due to its suitability for complex models involving latent variables, as well as its robustness in handling non-normal data distributions and moderate sample sizes.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

Prior to testing the structural relationships using SEM-PLS, a descriptive analysis was conducted to examine respondents' general perceptions of the research variables. This analysis serves as a preliminary assessment to understand the tendency and distribution of responses across the latent constructs, measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Overall, the descriptive results indicate that respondents perceived electoral oversight management, public trust, and public perception of electoral oversight positively. The mean scores of all variables exceeded 4.00, indicating a "good" to "very good" category based on the interpretation criteria proposed by Masri and Effendi (2008).

Table 1 presents a summary of the mean values for each latent variable examined in this study.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Code	Mean	Category
Electoral Oversight Planning	X1	4.19	Good
Electoral Oversight Organizing	X2	4.13	Good
Electoral Oversight Implementation	X3	4.16	Good
Electoral Oversight Evaluation	X4	4.16	Good
Public Trust	Z	4.12	Good
Public Perception	Y	4.13	Good

Source: Survey data processed by authors (2026)

The highest mean value among the oversight dimensions was observed for planning (X1), indicating that respondents strongly agreed that electoral oversight objectives, standard operating procedures, risk mapping, and resource allocation were well-formulated. Meanwhile, public trust (Z) and public perception (Y) also demonstrated high mean scores, suggesting that effective oversight management contributes positively to institutional credibility and societal acceptance.

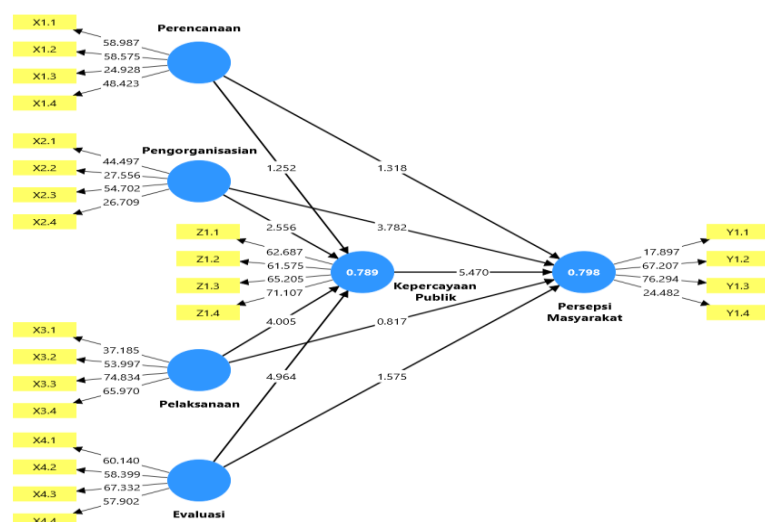
These descriptive findings provide empirical support for proceeding to the structural model analysis, particularly in examining how oversight management dimensions influence public trust and public perception.

Evaluation of the Structural Model (SEM-PLS Results)

After confirming that the measurement model met the criteria of validity and reliability, the structural model was evaluated to examine causal relationships among latent variables. The analysis focused on path coefficients, coefficients of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), and hypothesis testing using a bootstrapping procedure with a 5% significance level.

The structural model demonstrates strong explanatory power. The R^2 value for Public Trust (Z) was 0.789, indicating that planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation explain 78.9% of the variance in public trust. Similarly, Public Perception (Y) recorded an R^2 value of 0.798, showing that nearly 80% of its variance is explained by electoral oversight management and public trust.

Figure 1. Structural Model of Electoral Oversight, Public Trust, and Public Perception (Bootstrapping Results)



(SEM-PLS path diagram showing standardized path coefficients and significance levels)

Source: SmartPLS output processed by authors (2026)

The results of hypothesis testing reveal that organizing, implementation, and evaluation of electoral oversight significantly influence public trust, while public trust and organizing directly influence public perception. Furthermore, public trust plays a significant mediating role in the

relationship between organizing, implementation, and evaluation of oversight and public perception. However, planning does not exhibit a significant direct or indirect effect on public perception.

Overall, these findings confirm that public trust functions as a critical mechanism through which electoral oversight management shapes societal perceptions of electoral integrity.

Electoral Oversight Management and Public Perception

The findings of this study demonstrate that not all dimensions of electoral oversight management exert a direct influence on public perception. Specifically, electoral oversight planning shows a positive but statistically insignificant effect on public perception. Although planning is theoretically positioned as a fundamental managerial function that determines organizational direction and preparedness (Terry, 1977), its impact tends to remain internal and technocratic. Consequently, planning activities—such as the formulation of standard operating procedures, risk mapping, and oversight strategies—are not immediately visible to the public and therefore do not directly shape societal perceptions. This result suggests that public perception is more strongly influenced by observable outputs rather than internal managerial processes.

In contrast, electoral oversight organizing exhibits a positive and significant effect on public perception. This finding underscores the importance of organizational structure, role clarity, coordination mechanisms, and field-level presence in shaping how the public evaluates electoral oversight institutions. Well-organized oversight systems signal professionalism and institutional capacity, which are readily perceived by citizens through visible coordination, responsiveness, and consistency in supervision activities. This result aligns with organizational effectiveness theory, which emphasizes that external stakeholders assess institutions based on the visibility and coherence of their operational structures (Robbins & Judge, 2020).

The implementation of electoral oversight, while positively associated with public perception, does not demonstrate a statistically significant direct effect. Although implementation represents the most tangible aspect of oversight activities, its influence on perception appears contingent upon public understanding and communication. Oversight actions that are technical or procedural may fail to translate into meaningful public evaluations unless they are accompanied by effective communication strategies and transparency. This finding supports institutional trust theory, which suggests that performance alone is insufficient to shape perception unless its relevance and impact are clearly perceived by the public (Norris, 2022).

Similarly, evaluation or controlling of electoral oversight does not exert a significant direct effect on public perception. Evaluation processes are primarily internal mechanisms aimed at accountability and institutional learning. Without sufficient public exposure and dissemination of evaluation outcomes, their contribution to shaping societal perception remains limited. This result is consistent with organizational legitimacy theory, which emphasizes that institutional actions must be visible and interpretable by external audiences to generate perceptual legitimacy (Deephouse & Suchman, 2016).

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationships between electoral oversight management, public trust, and public perception in the context of the 2024 Simultaneous Elections in Ngawi Regency, Indonesia. The findings demonstrate that electoral oversight management contributes to shaping public perception primarily through the mechanism of public trust, rather than through direct managerial effects alone. While electoral oversight organizing shows a direct and significant influence on public perception, other managerial functions—namely planning, implementation, and evaluation—exert their influence indirectly through public trust.

The results highlight that public perception of electoral oversight is not formed solely by the existence of formal plans or internal control mechanisms, but by oversight practices that are visible, organized, accountable, and experienced directly by the public. Organizing, implementation, and evaluation functions strengthen institutional credibility and consistency, which in turn foster public trust and subsequently shape positive societal perceptions of electoral integrity. In contrast, oversight planning, which is largely internal and technocratic, plays a foundational but indirect role and does not independently influence public trust or public perception.

These findings contribute to the literature on electoral governance by demonstrating that public trust functions as a critical cognitive and institutional pathway linking oversight management to public perception. The study extends existing electoral integrity and public governance theories by empirically confirming that trust mediates the relationship between managerial performance and societal evaluation, particularly at the local level of electoral administration.

Future research may expand this model by incorporating additional explanatory variables such as political awareness, media exposure, digital transparency, or political efficacy to further explain variations in public perception. Comparative studies across regions or electoral cycles would also be valuable to assess the generalizability of the findings. Ongoing and future research could further explore how digital oversight tools, public communication strategies, and participatory monitoring initiatives influence trust-building processes and democratic legitimacy in electoral governance.

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