

Political Skill and Public Leadership Trust

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Abstract

¹³ This study aims to examine the political skills of leaders on the integrity of the leader's behavior, and public trust. There are 340 respondents in big cities in East Java Province used as sample after going through the screening process. In particular, the results of this study found that the political skills of the leader affect trust, both political skills affect the integrity of behavior and finally the integrity of behavior affects the trust of the leader.

Keyword: Political Skill, Behavior Integrity, Public Leadership Trust

1. INTRODUCTION

Many politicians, senators and executives that involved in corruption, abuse of authority, are soaring in recent years, resulting in individual distrust to leaders, both ¹ local, national, and private companies (Edelman, 2015; Zeleny & Thee-Brennan, 2019). In fact, the most recent Edelman Trust Barometer Global Survey (2020) found that the number of countries with high levels of public trust ⁴ experienced a decline in non-governmental organizations, businesses, the media, and less than half of the individuals surveyed indicated that 20% of them were not living up their adopted norms. The discrepancy between the norms adopted and implemented has serious implications for the survival of the organization (Simons et al., 2007). The integrity of public leadership can be measured by the only or harmony between words and deeds (Simons, 2002). Keep promises and carry out professional ethics reflect the integrity of behavior. Few empirical studies examine ¹ the positive effects of behavioral integrity on leader performance; and also ⁴ how leaders can influence public perceptions of the integrity of their behavior. Given the integrity of behavior, perception is the only word with the actions of a leader (Simons, 2002; Frieder & Basik, 2019), which can influence better public perceptions. ⁷

⁷ Based on the theory of social influence and social information processing ¹ that mastery of political skills is very important in creating and managing public

perceptions of behavioral integrity (Kolodinsky et al., 2007; Munyon et al., 2015; Ferris et al., 2007). Behavioral integrity can reduce uncertainty in the leader-follower relationship (Lind & van den Bos, 2002; Rosen, et al., 2011) so as to increase trust and better public perception. Therefore, this study makes an important contribution to the literature on political skills and leaders with integrity. Previous research has only discussed the antecedent of behavioral integrity (Simons, 2002). But it is not comprehensive enough in shaping public perception in the harmony of words and deeds in convincing followers. The idea we offer is to take into account the limited information processing ability of the public that vulnerable be distorted, perception bias, and social and environmental influences (Frieder & Basik, 2019) considering that perception is reality, the affective function and behavior of followers will be consistent regardless of a leader has high integrity or not (Gandz & Murray, 1980).

In addition, this study enriches the political skills literature of leaders by exploring the mechanisms of political skill effectiveness and organizational performance (Blickle et al., 2010; Douglas & Ammeter, 2004), teams (Ahearn et al., 2004), and followers (Brouer et al., 2013). However, previous literature states that in the last decade many studies have begun to examine how politically skilled leaders can influence positive outcomes for themselves and their followers. Therefore, this study is empirically the void of the influence of leader's political skills on public perception (Treadway et al., 2014; Frieder & Basik, 2019).

2. THEORY REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Political Skills of Leaders and Behavioral Integrity

Politics in organizing as an arena for winning and losing (Mintzberg, 1985; Pfeffer, 1981), and political skills can navigate the political landscape. Political skills are related to individual and organizational performance (Blickle et al., 2010; Gentry et al., 2012) in maintaining leadership (Laird et al., 2013). Cognitive and observational skills are used as a radar to explore the condition and willingness of followers (Goffee & Jones (2005). According to (Ferris et al., 2005) political skills as the ability to effectively influence others is acted according to personal and or

group goals. Further, he stated that political skills consist of four dimensions: social intelligence, interpersonal influence, networking and sincere attitude.

Social intelligence describes individuals in harmony with social situations, their behavior in accordance with the perceptions of others (Ferris et al., 2007), for sympathy that is personally desired (Pfeffer, 1992). Interpersonally influential individuals have superior interpersonal flexibility that allows them to adapt their behavior to suit the situation. Individuals who have strong networking skills are able to identify, develop, and position themselves among a wide variety of contacts and networks of influential connections. Individuals who appear sincere are able to appear authentic, natural, earnest, and without ulterior motives (Ferris et al., 2012). Therefore political skill is a consistent predictor of social construction (Blickle, Fröhlich, et al., 2011; Gentry et al., 2012), career success (Breland et al., 2007) and job performance that goes beyond the effects of personality and common mental abilities (Blickle, et al., 2010; Munyon et al., 2015). In addition, there is a growing body of research that supports the importance of political skills for success and effectiveness in imaging and improving subordinates' job performance (Harris et al., 2007; Treadway et al., 2007). The increase in performance achievement is mediated by the perception of the leader favored by followers (Kolodinsky et al., 2007). Previous literature also stated that politically skilled people have more positive perception techniques (Brouer et al., 2015) and are better ability to see and detect sycophants (Wu et al., 2013) having high-performing teams (Ahearn et al., 2004) compared to leaders who do not have this skill. Thus political skills are placed in competitive predictions with other social effectiveness constructs, and are superior predictors of managerial performance compared with self-monitoring, leader self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence (Semadar et al., 2006).

Political skill emerged as the strongest predictor of adaptive and proactive ability and performance apart from professional experience and intrinsic motivation (Garcia-Chas et al., 2015). Other studies have also linked the political skills of leaders with subordinates' perceptions of organizational support, trust, and satisfaction (Treadway et al. 2004). He further stated that leaders with high political

skills are able to increase confidence that organizational actions are carried out in the common best interest.

Previous research has shown that politically skilled leaders are at least partly more effective because they are able to choose and are good at packaging their behavior effectively and without ulterior motives (Ewen et al., 2014). Politically skilled leaders are perceived as more ethical even when they engage in deviant behavior, and their subordinates imitate (perceived) this ethical behavior by committing less deviant themselves (Harvey et al., 2014). Thus leaders who are skilled in politics even if they are not ethical, they are able to reap the benefits of such perceptions. Political skills are also strengthened by behavioral integrity, such as Simons (2002) which states that subordinates' perceptions of the integrity of the leader's behavior arise from the unity between the words and actions of the leader. We therefore argue that politically skilled leaders will be able to use their interpersonal savoir faire (ability) to influence this perception. According to social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), subordinates will utilize information cues from the social context to shape their perceptions of work and their experiences at work. Leaders are critical to the work experience of subordinates, and as a result are often responsible, and strategically positioned, for creating and managing shared meaning (Smircich & Morgan, 1982).

Leaders socially construct the meaning of events by directing and framing the attention processes of subordinates (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). In this way, leaders can influence their subordinates by framing their work experience because they want their subordinates to see and/or experience it. Previous research has found that leaders are able to manipulate subordinates' perceptions of job characteristics (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006) and their attitudes toward their work (Grant, 2008). Thus, politically skilled leaders will also be able to shape subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which they have a high degree of word-deed congruence (ie, behavioral integrity).

We believe that politically skilled leaders are more likely to be perceived as having high behavioral integrity by their subordinates for three main reasons. In addition, politically skilled individuals are skilled at packaging and transmitting

1 their impression management behavior and influence-oriented behavior in undetected ways (Harris et al., 2007; Wu et al., 2013). Thus, the hypotheses that can be proposed are:

H1: The leader's political skills have a positive effect on the integrity of the leader's behavior.

H2: The leader's political skills have a positive effect on the leader's trust.

2.2. Integrity of Behavior and Leader Trust

According to Ferris et al, (2007), trust is considered 1 as a fundamental factor in building and maintaining effective organizational relationships. Furthermore, 1 Simons (2002) distinguishes between behavioral integrity and trust. Integrity of behavior is a description of past traits that are consistent with words and deeds, steady, trustworthy. Trust is a predictor of public acceptance of future risk (Davis et al., 2000; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002), and the expectation of behaving in a certain way (Ammeter et al., 2004). The previous literature explicitly states this conceptual difference 1 between trust and behavioral integrity, that they are related, but quite distinct, constructs (Simons et al., 2007). Recent research suggests that perceived integrity of leader behavior 4 serves to reduce uncertainty and risk among leaders-followers (Palanski & Yammarino, 2011). Followers will follow what the leader says and believe that the leader is making improvements in a certain way (Simons, 2002). Thus, the perceived integrity of the leader's behavior is related to trust. Trust is needed only when there is uncertainty, and public accountability (Ammeter et al., 2004).

1 Subordinates must know exactly what is expected of their leaders with high behavioral integrity, because they perceive their leaders as having a history of word-deed consistency, trustworthiness, and consistency (Simons, 2002). Thus, behavioral integrity serves to reduce the concern that subordinates will be exploited by their leaders (Thau et al, 2007). 1 Research has found that trust mediates the relationship between perceived behavioral integrity and subordinates' job performance (Palanski & Yammarino, 2011), as well as the relationship between behavioral integrity and leader effectiveness, followers or subordinates job

satisfaction, job involvement, and turnover intention (Moorman et al., 2013). We therefore make the following hypothesis:

H3 : Subordinates' perceptions of the integrity of the leader's behavior will significant effect on the trust of followers.

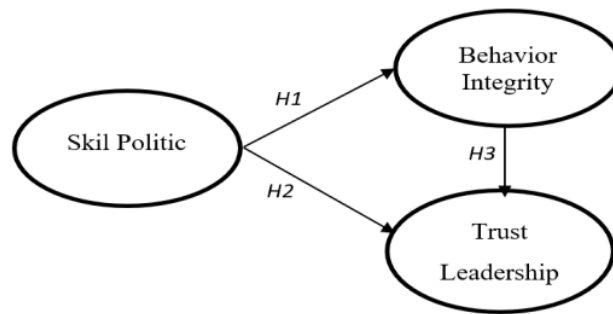


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Research context

The proposed theoretical model (Figure 1) is evaluated in the context of the current situation of public leadership, especially in Indonesia, which is divided into executive, legislative and judicial leadership. The population taken is students at universities in big cities in East Java. The number of samples used as respondents, as many as 340 (85%) answers that meet the requirements. So that the sample size that can be used as an analysis is 340 respondents. The sample characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Karakteristik sampel (N = 340).

	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Usia			24.52	5.58
Jenis Kelamin				
Laki-laki	145	42.64		
perempuan	132	38.82		
Tidak menjawab	63	18.52		
Latarbelakang geografis				
Megapolitan	109	32.05		
Metropolitan	85	25.00		
Kota/kabupaten	146	42.94		

3.2. Measurement

The measuring instrument using a questionnaire instrument consists of: (1) political skills, (2) behavioral integrity (3) leader trust. Then, participants were asked to recall and rate a number of general leaders in government or public organizations. To ensure that the description was clear, they were asked to write down the leadership in the organization to which he belonged. The measuring instrument in this study was adopted from several previous studies. Political skills. Subordinates' perceptions of the leader's political skills were measured using 18-item Political Skills (Ferris et al., 2005). Items assessed the leader's perceived interpersonal influence (e.g., "It's very easy for him to build good relationships with most people"), social intelligence (e.g., "He understands people very well"), apparent sincerity (e.g., "when communicating with others" he tries to be sincere in what he says and does"), and networking skills (eg, "He spends a lot of time and effort at work networking with other people"). Alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0,98$) or the combined reliability estimates ($CR = 0,96$) for the higher order constructs are adequate.

Behavioral integrity. Subordinates' perceptions of the integrity of their leader's behavior were measured using a modified version of the eight-item measurement tool developed and validated by Simons et al. (2007). "There is a match between my words and actions" is an example item. Both the alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0,95$) and the combined reliability estimate ($CR = 0,97$) were adequate.

Trust in Leaders. Subordinates' trust in the leader was measured by adapting six of the original eight items of Cook and Wall's (1980) trust management scale to fit the military university context. Items are framed in the future tense to emphasize the operationalization of the trust construct "forward" rather than the construct of integrity behavior "backwards" (Simons, 2002). This adjustment also highlights the important issue of risks and vulnerabilities associated with having a leader as a partner in future exchanges. Example items include "I feel fairly confident that my leader will always try to treat me fairly" and "my leader is trustworthy." The alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0,97$) and the combined reliability estimate ($CR = 0,95$) for this final six-item scale is adequate. The measuring instrument was evaluated using the

seven items likert's scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Internal consistency reliability was measured based on Cronbach's alpha scores for all individual scales and overall measuring instrument. All of the scales used in this study show high reliability, the reliability of the scale along with the mean and standard deviation for each question item on the scale is presented.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

Structural equation modeling (SEM) with AMOS 21.0 was used to evaluate the suitability of the research model (Figure 2). SEM is suitable for this study, because the proposed relationship can be analyzed simultaneously Hair et al. (2010). Further Hair et al. (2010) recommends a procedure with two stages of analysis: First, each scale is tested for its adequacy which consists of many statement items covering each construct that has been described in the previous measuring instrument. All statement items show a significant convergent validity standard. See Table 2, each construct has a construct reliability above of 0,60 thus showing internal or reliable consistency. In addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) ranges from 0,68 to 0,79 which indicates each construct has good discriminant validity or that the variance depicted by the construct is greater than the variance caused by measurement error (Fomell & Larcker, 1981).

Table. 2
Construct correlation dan AVE

	Skill politic	Behavior integrity	Trust leadership
Skil politic	0,791		
Behavior integrity	0,242	0,723	
Trust leadership	-0,022	0,112	0,714

Second, testing the fit of the hypothesized model. The first measurement of the model shows that the level of goodness of fit indices (GOF) is not as recommended ($\chi^2/df = 4,134$, GFI = 0,79, AGFI = 0,76, TLI = 0,81, CFI = 0,84, RMSEA = 0,08). Thus, it is necessary to modify the model (Min & Mentzer, 2004; Hair et al., 2010; Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In the second measurement as a model modification

process, the results show a fit. There is no single measure of fit that is recommended in SEM, so it is only estimated based on various indices (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Table 3. Shows the empirical estimates. The χ^2/df value for the model is 2,135 which is below the desired cut-off value of 3.0 (Segars & Grover, 1993). Successively the results are ($\chi^2/df = 2,1324$, $GFI = 0,906$, $AGFI = 0,901$, $TLI = 0,922$, $CFI = 0,923$, $RMSEA = 0,071$) all of which are in accordance with what is recommended in the fit model, thus these results are very fits the conceptual model (Hair et al., 2010; Browne & Cudeck, 1993).

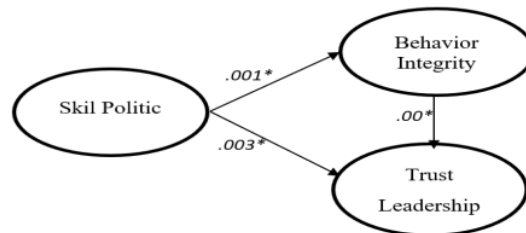
Table 3. Fit Model

<i>Goodness of fit indices</i>	<i>Fit guidelines</i>	<i>Proposed model</i>
χ^2/df	≤ 3	2,1314
<i>Goodness of fit index (GFI)</i>	$\geq 0,92$	0,907
<i>Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)</i>	$\geq 0,94$	0,911
RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0,071
TLI	$\geq 0,97$	0,912
CFI	$\geq 0,96$	0,933

4.2. Structural Model

The conceptualized path was tested in a structural model using AMOS 21. The results of the analysis showed that political skills of leaders were significantly related to perceived behavioral integrity of leaders ($\beta=0,55$, $p<0,01$) and behavioral integrity was significantly related to trust in one's leader in ($\beta= 0,26$, $p< 0,01$).

Taken together, this suggests that the effect of (perception) of the leader's political skills on subordinates' trust in the leader is fully mediated by subordinates' perceptions of the integrity of the leader's behavior. Thus, Hypotheses 1 to 3 are supported.



Gambar2: Test Hypoteses

5. DISCUSSION

Recognizing that the construct of behavioral integrity is subjective and relatively few studies have examined the antecedents of behavioral integrity, this study aims to examine the role of political skills in shaping perceptions of subordinates on the integrity of their leader's behavior. In addition, although political skills are associated with leader and team effectiveness (Ahearn et al., 2004; Douglas & Ammeter, 2004; Treadway et al., 2014), there is little research examining the mechanisms by which politically skilled leaders can lead to effective functioning of subordinate. Meanwhile, research shows that politically skilled individuals are more adept at impression management (Harris et al., 2007; Treadway et al., 2007) and are able to disguise insincere motives (Ferris et al., 2007; Wu et al., 2013).

Behavioral integrity, by definition, is based on subordinates' perception of the above-mentioned congruence of their leader's words. Therefore, politically skilled leaders will be perceived as having higher behavioral integrity, and whose positive effects are hypothesized to influence performance through subordinates' trust and subsequent effort at work. The results of this study largely supported this hypothesis. More specifically, politically skilled leaders are perceived to have higher behavioral integrity, which in turn is related to trust, trust in leaders is not significantly related to work effort, although work effort does significantly predict subordinate performance objectives.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the data showed that subordinates' perceptions of the leader's political skills and behavioral integrity were highly correlated ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, subordinates may find it very difficult to distinguish socially astute, seemingly sincere, and interpersonally influential (i.e., politically skilled) leaders from leaders with whom they have high-quality relationships. However, despite empirical overlap, our findings suggest that composite political skills and one particular dimension of political skill (ie, real sincerity) have unique effects on behavioral integrity (and trust).

Research on political skills has long argued that politically skilled leaders will be perceived as more sincere, trustworthy, and honest by their nature. In addition, individuals who are skilled in politics according to the definition of being

4
able to read other people and present oneself in a believable and appropriate manner in situations. Our findings provide support for the core principles of the construct of political skills. Skill explained 57% of the variance in subordinates' perceived behavioral integrity, indicating that perceived behavioral integrity depended in large part on the leader's ability to connect with their subordinates on a very personal level. For a person to be perceived as having behavioral integrity, their pattern of action must appear genuine. This perception of sincerity can also help frame attributions of intentionality and blame if word-deed dissonance occurs (Tomlinson & Carnes, 2015). In addition, sincerity can also imply that managers are approachable, thereby increasing the amount of interaction and feedback that can contribute to the perception of word-deed congruence.

On the one hand, these findings suggest that subordinates perceive politically skilled leaders to more fully align their values and beliefs. Politically skilled leaders recognize the importance of word-deed harmony, and therefore, objectively embody high standards of behavioral integrity, and are able to display and package their words in harmony with their actions (and vice versa) then they are also better able to disguise or quibble for each instance of the word-deed incongruity. Based on the foregoing discussion and the inherent characteristics of politically skilled leaders, it is inclined to believe the combination of these possibilities. In particular, leaders who are equipped with social intelligence will recognize the importance of acting with integrity, and will do so whenever possible. Leaders with interpersonal influence will be able to cleverly package and present their actions to subordinates in a way that is in line with their values. Leaders who appear sincere will appear trustworthy and "not responsible" for misbehavior integrity behavior, while networking skills will enable a leader to be successful navigate conflicts and produce quick resolutions of inconsistencies of words that will forgive them for their mistakes.

If we consider the behavioral integrity construct, these findings, while counterintuitive at first, it is not entirely surprising. Remember that perceiving someone to have high behavioral integrity does not imply that the perceiver agrees with the values held and practiced by the target; instead, it simply means that the

perceiver has confidence that the target will act according to his stated values, whatever they may be (Simons, 2002). For example, a leader may be outwardly narcissistic and behave in a manner consistent with his or her self-interested values; the word-action alignment is unlikely to inspire an increase in the performance of subordinates. Behavioral integrity appears to reduce the uncertainty surrounding the leader-follower relationship by providing some assurance that leaders will do what they say they will do. For this leader's ascription to generate performance, subordinates must trust their leader and tend, to some extent, to be willing to be vulnerable to agenda stated by the leader.

6. CONCLUSION

Integrity of behavior, or the congruity of words and deeds is a very important leadership characteristic because "we are more willing to entrust the management of an organization or area to leaders, because they can practice what they say" (Kouzes & Posner, 1993). The result of the research shows the relation between leaders political skills and subordinates' trust in the leader as well as with behavioral integrity. Thus, the ability to influence perceptions of subordinate's behavior integrity has implications for the quality of leader and subordinate interactions as well as the effectiveness of regional progress. Therefore, this research deepens the research domain that has not been widely studied, especially related to the accuracy of the perceived integrity of the leader's behavior, the correspondence between word-deed congruity objectively and subjectively, and the dimensions of specific political skills which enables leaders to better align (or appear to align) the values they hold and practice.

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