



Party Cadreization and Political Communication Pattern: A Comparative Study of PKS and Gerindra In West Sumatera

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Abstract

The Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) and Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Gerindra) represent two contrasting models of party cadreization in West Sumatra. This study examines how each party's cadreization system shapes its political communication patterns and their combined effects on organizational sustainability and electoral outcomes. Despite employing fundamentally distinct cadre-building strategies, both parties remained competitive in the West Sumatra Provincial Legislative Elections of 2019 and 2024. This study uses a qualitative comparative approach, collecting data through in-depth interviews with nine key informants including party cadres, executives, and political observers, combined with document analysis of internal policies and training materials. The analytical framework integrates Huntington's (1968) four dimensions of party institutionalization, Randall and Svåsand's (2002) indicators of systemness and value infusion, and McNair's (2018) political communication framework. Results show that PKS's structured, ideologically grounded cadreization produces cadres capable of delivering consistent, value-based political communication to constituents throughout the year, driving a steady vote increase from 389,526 in 2019 to 453,572 in 2024. Gerindra's flexible, experience-driven cadreization produces electoral branding communication that intensifies during campaigns but recedes between election cycles, contributing to a vote decline from 476,985 in 2019 to 427,177 in 2024. These findings demonstrate that cadreization quality directly determines the depth and consistency of a party's political communication, which in turn shapes long-term electoral viability. Parties that invest in systematic value-based cadre training build stronger political communication infrastructure and more durable constituent relationships across electoral cycles.

Keywords: Party Cadreization; Party Institutionalization; Organizational Strengthening; Political Communication; Comparative Politics.

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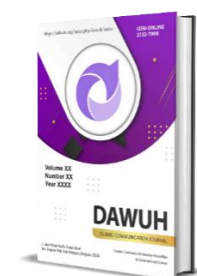


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INTRODUCTION

Political parties constitute the cornerstone of contemporary democratic architectures, functioning as principal conduits for citizen engagement in governance, the recruitment of political leadership, and the formulation of public policy. Carl J. Friedrich conceptualizes a political party as a durable entity striving to capture and sustain governmental authority, advancing both elite interests and tangible-ideational benefits for adherents (Budiardjo, 2008). Political parties occupy a vital position in modern democratic systems. Matlosa and Shale (2008) describe them as organized groups whose primary goal is to seize governmental power via elections or other political means. Far beyond mere electoral machines, parties also formulate public policies and cultivate political leadership. Thus, a party's internal organizational strength particularly an effective cadre development system—serves as the foundation for stable and sustainable democracy. The research objectives should be articulated clearly and concisely, followed by an explanation of the main contributions and novelty of the study compared to previous research. The introduction should conclude with a brief outline of the paper's structure, aiding readers in understanding the flow of the research (Khabele Matlosa & Victor Shale, 2008). These delineations converge on a pivotal insight: parties transcend electoral contestation, serving as crucibles for cultivating the human capital essential to state administration. Consequently, robust internal organization emerges as indispensable for democratic steadiness.

Among parties' manifold roles, cadre cultivation commands singular significance, albeit remaining underexplored in political scholarship. This encompasses systematic recruitment, political indoctrination, capacity enhancement, and evaluative protocols geared toward yielding proficient, loyal, and ideologically anchored cadres. The OSCE (2011) Guidelines on Political Party Regulation frame cadre development as a strategic internal endeavor to mold, educate, and elevate members into reliable, competent operatives. Extending beyond mere enlistment, it embraces leadership training, ideological reinforcement, and generational succession planning, thereby safeguarding organizational and doctrinal perpetuity (OSCE, 2011).

The connection between cadre development and party resilience draws heavily from Huntington's (1968) institutionalization theory in *Political Order in Changing Societies*. Huntington argues that highly institutionalized parties share four defining dimensions: adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence. Cadre development strengthens all four dimensions at once (Huntington, 1968). Building on this, Panebianco (1988) in *Political Parties: Organization and Power* argues that parties with clear recruitment and cadre development systems tend to have more stable structures and a stronger capacity to survive long-term political competition (Panebianco, 1988). Norris and Lovenduski (1995) reinforce this point by showing that parties act as gatekeepers, determining who qualifies for public office through structured cadre selection mechanisms (Pippa Norris & Joni Lovenduski, 1995).

In post-Reform Indonesia, cadre development faces serious problems. Many Indonesian political parties still recruit members based on pragmatic considerations rather than leadership capacity or organizational experience. Selection processes are frequently shaped by personal closeness to party elites, patronage networks, and the electoral potential of candidates. In this environment, personal loyalty often matters more than any systematic cadre formation process.



This pattern reflects weak institutionalization of political recruitment and risks obstructing long-term party organizational development (Haris et al., 2016).

Several studies confirm that weaknesses in cadre development directly affect the quality of political representation and the institutional capacity of parties. A report by the Corruption Eradication Commission and the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (2016) found that cadre development failures leave many parties unable to prepare legislative candidates with the political competence needed to perform legislative functions effectively (Haris et al., 2016). Widayati et al. (2025) back this up with solid evidence, showing how cadre training in Indonesia's political parties is falling short—consequently leaving many parties unable to produce legislative representatives with the substantive competence required to effectively discharge legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions within parliament. This context renders a systematic comparative examination of PKS and Gerindra's cadreization systems in West Sumatra particularly pertinent — both parties have demonstrated sustained electoral competitiveness across successive legislative elections, notwithstanding their fundamentally divergent approaches to cadre development (Widayati et al., 2025). For political parties to meaningfully contribute to democratic stability, they must develop robust institutional foundations rooted in systematic organizational development rather than episodic electoral mobilization. Kristiyanto et al. (2023) demonstrate that parties functioning beyond mere electoral vehicles — serving instead as genuine centers for leadership development and sustained public interest articulation — exhibit significantly greater organizational resilience across successive electoral cycles. This observation is directly applicable to the present study: the quality of cadreization in PKS and Gerindra not only determines their electoral competitiveness but also shapes their broader contribution to democratic consolidation in West Sumatra (Kristiyanto et al., 2023).

West Sumatra presents an interesting political dynamic in the context of regional party competition. In the 2019 Legislative Election, Gerindra won 14 seats in the Provincial Parliament, while PKS secured 10 seats. Both parties maintained their dominance in the 2024 Legislative Election, each winning 10 seats in the Provincial Parliament. This consistent seat performance shows that both parties hold a relatively stable electoral base and strong enough organizational capacity to sustain their political position at the provincial level.

This study comparatively examines the cadre development systems applied by PKS and Gerindra and their implications for party organizational sustainability in West Sumatra. The study uses a qualitative comparative approach, collecting data through in-depth interviews with nine informants consisting of cadres, party executives, and political observers. The analysis focuses on identifying differences in the cadre development patterns of both parties and how those differences affect organizational capacity, cadre loyalty levels, and the electoral resilience of each party. Analytical emphasis resides in unpacking divergent cadre formation trajectories and their bearing on institutional capacity, allegiance intensity, and electoral tenacity peculiar to each formation. The resultant insights enrich party scholarship by furnishing empirical attestation that protracted organizational viability hinges preeminently on cadre development efficacy, rather than mere scale or episodic triumphs.



METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a comparative study design. This design was chosen because PKS and Gerindra run cadre development mechanisms that differ considerably, rooted in each party's ideology, organizational structure, and political strategy. Sehring et al. (2013) describe qualitative comparative analysis as a method that allows for systematic comparisons across a modest number of cases, bridging the gap between intensive single-case studies and large-scale statistical analysis. This methodological approach is particularly appropriate for the present study, given that PKS and Gerindra operate through markedly distinct cadreization trajectories, each shaped by their respective ideological orientations, organizational structures, and political strategies (Sehring et al., 2013).

Empirical materials were procured via dual principal modalities. Initially, semi-structured in-depth interviews engaged nine purposively selected informants, comprising cadres and executives from PKS and Gerindra alike—encompassing cadre cultivation coordinators, incumbent legislators, regional administrators, and grassroots operatives across West Sumatra. This stratified informant profile guaranteed comprehensive representation spanning apex leadership, parliamentary ranks, and rank-and-file membership. Complementarily, documentary scrutiny encompassed internal statutes, constitutional provisions and bylaws, cadre training syllabi, and authoritative party pronouncements, serving to corroborate and buttress primary interview insights.

Noble and Heale (2019) affirm that triangulation involves using multiple data sources to enhance the credibility and validity of research findings, enabling researchers to cross-validate testimonial accounts against official documentation and informants' public declarations (Noble & Heale, 2019).

Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which covers four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis was conducted iteratively, moving back and forth between these stages until consistent patterns emerged from the findings (Huberman, 1994).

The analytical framework of this study combines three complementary theories. Huntington (1968) provides the conceptual foundation for party institutionalization through four dimensions: adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence (Huntington, 1968). Randall and Svåsand (2002) translate Huntington's four dimensions into more measurable indicators for comparing party institutionalization. These four indicators are systemness, value infusion, decisional autonomy, and reification. This study uses these four indicators as the main analytical tools for comparing the cadre development systems of PKS and Gerindra in West Sumatra (Randall & Svåsand, 2002). This argument is further supported by Teehanke and Echle (2023), who find that across eight Asian democracies including Indonesia, the common element explaining democratic survival is the extent to which political parties have become institutionalized and act as stabilizers of democracy. These contextual frameworks are particularly relevant for understanding why PKS and Gerindra, despite operating within the same electoral environment in West Sumatra, demonstrate fundamentally different levels of organizational institutionalization rooted in their distinct historical and ideological origins (Teehanke & Echle, 2023).

Beyond institutionalization theory, this study incorporates political communication as a third analytical layer to examine how cadreization systems produce distinct communication outputs. McNair (2018) defines political communication as purposeful communication about politics directed at citizens and voters, identifying three core functions: informing, persuading, and



mobilizing (McNair, 2018). This framework guides the analysis of how PKS and Gerindra translate their respective cadreization models into distinct constituent communication strategies. Strömbäck's (2008) four-phase mediatization theory further sharpens this analysis by tracing the degree to which each party's communication practices are driven by political logic versus media logic. Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) complement this by situating both parties within the third age of political communication, characterized by media abundance, audience fragmentation, and intensified pressure on parties to diversify and personalize their messages. Together, these three communication frameworks operate as an integrated analytical lens: McNair (2018) identifies what political communication does, Strömbäck (2008) explains how media shapes it, and Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) contextualizes the broader communication environment in which both parties operate. This integrated framework allows the study to move beyond organizational analysis and assess how cadreization quality determines the depth, consistency, and sustainability of each party's political communication with its constituents in West Sumatra.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the research findings on cadre development patterns in PKS and Gerindra in West Sumatra Province. The discussion covers six main aspects: first, cadre recruitment and selection mechanisms. second, political education and the cadre coaching process. third, cadre capacity evaluation and development. fourth, the formation of loyalty and internal cohesion. fifth, the contribution of cadre development to organizational strengthening and electoral continuity and sixth, a comprehensive comparison between the two cadre development models.

Recruitment Pattern: Ideological Selectivity Versus Open Mobilization

The analysis reveals that PKS and Gerindra in West Sumatra employ fundamentally distinct cadre recruitment paradigms. These divergences extend beyond mere procedural variances, embodying divergent political identities and the core strategic philosophies animating each party. PKS mandates that prospective members undergo an initial mentoring phase prior to accessing the formal cadre cultivation pathway. This preliminary stage serves dual purposes: as a crucible for value assimilation and as a vetting mechanism for ideological alignment. Panebianco (1988) observes that parties originating from social or religious movements typically institute selective recruitment protocols, given that ideological coherence constitutes the bedrock of their organizational potency (Panebianco, 1988). PKS's roots in the campus-based tarbiyah movement network indelibly shaped this recruitment ethos. Far from being a mere numbers game, recruitment prioritizes the infusion of newcomers who genuinely resonate with the party's foundational value system.

Katz and Mair (1995) caution that overly permissive recruitment devoid of value-driven vetting may engender superficial membership—nominally administrative affiliations bereft of profound organizational devotion. While such tactics yield short-term electoral outreach gains, they imperil long-term internal cohesion, as cadre allegiance remains episodic and beholden to self-interest (Katz & Mair, 1995)



Norris (2004) stresses that the level of centralization in candidate selection—namely, how much decision-making power is given to national versus regional or local party bodies—forms a crucial aspect of intra-party democracy. Parties with highly centralized processes keep nomination authority at the national level, while decentralized ones hand it over to regional or local structures, leading to different patterns of candidate recruitment and accountability (Norris, 2004). PKS enforces nationally prescribed recruitment criteria, despite localized execution, thereby ensuring uniform cadre caliber across regions. Gerindra, conversely, affords its district and municipal DPC branches considerable latitude in autonomous recruitment, fostering inter-regional disparities in cadre quality. This dynamic illuminates PKS's capacity to sustain consistent vote shares in West Sumatra over successive electoral contest.

Political Education and Cadre Development: Structured Curriculum Versus Experience-Based Learning

A further divergence between PKS and Gerindra manifests in their respective strategies for political education and cadre nurturing. PKS deploys a standardized, nationally formulated curriculum known as the Party Cadre Curriculum (KKP), structured hierarchically and implemented consistently throughout its organizational hierarchy. Gerindra, in contrast, prioritizes experiential learning derived from hands-on political engagement. These contrasting methodologies yield divergent trajectories in capacity building, encompassing both the developmental pathways and their resultant competencies.

In practice, political education in PKS takes place through regular coaching activities that integrate ideological, leadership, and political strategy content within a single structured curriculum framework. Party education goes beyond technical training to serve as normative learning, helping members absorb political values and understand their organizational roles. This fosters deeper engagement rooted in shared convictions (Bladh, 2022).

In his classic study of political parties, Panebianco (1988) emphasizes that cadre parties build their organizational foundation around value formation, prioritizing normative learning over simple technical training. This approach helps members internalize political beliefs and strengthens their commitment to the party's mission, setting cadre parties apart from more pragmatic, electoral-focused models (Panebianco, 1988)

Andreas Ufen's analysis in *Political Parties and Party System Institutionalisation in Southeast Asia* reveals that parties across Southeast Asia remain institutionally weak, marked by personalistic leadership, shallow ideologies, and low cadre loyalty. Although Ufen doesn't directly address internal political education, these patterns highlight the need for cadre-building mechanisms to transmit values and foster organizational commitment. Thus, internal party education emerges as a potential tool to strengthen institutionalization by cultivating cadre loyalty and collective identity (Ufen, 2007).



Gerindra adopts a contrasting methodology. The *Political Party Programming Guide* notes that parties often ramp up training and capacity-building just before elections, focusing mainly on campaign tactics, candidate selection, and quickly assembling political teams. This reactive pattern shows many parties skip steady organizational work until the electoral crunch hits. Changes made at the last minute tend to disrupt operations and lack staying power. It also points to weak long-term cadre development, with political education geared more toward short-term campaign skills than building deep values or ideology. Over time, this can erode party institutionalization, heighten reliance on strong individuals, and foster cadre loyalty that's mostly pragmatic rather than rooted in principles (NDI, 2010). This dynamic poses the risk of inconsistent representational quality across Gerindra's electoral constituencies in West Sumatra.

Joseph Postell contends that political parties serve as vital hubs for civic education, actively shaping how citizens engage politically and grasp democratic principles. Party involvement teaches members key values like participation and civic duty. (Postell, 2025). Parties without a clear cadre development system risk producing representatives who are more oriented toward personal interests than constituent aspirations. In this context, PKS's investment in a structured cadre system not only strengthens the party's organizational capacity but also has the potential to raise the overall quality of political representation in West Sumatra.

Political Communication: How Cadreization Shapes Party Messaging

Political communication is not a peripheral activity for political parties. It sits at the core of how parties build legitimacy, sustain constituent relationships, and maintain organizational coherence across electoral cycles. In the context of PKS and Gerindra in West Sumatra, political communication functions as a direct extension of each party's cadreization model. The way each party communicates reflects the depth, or shallowness, of its cadre formation system.

Brian McNair (2018) defines political communication as purposeful communication about politics by political actors directed at citizens and voters. McNair identifies three core functions: informing, persuading, and mobilizing. He argues that parties with strong internal ideological identity tend to produce more consistent and coherent political communication, since their messages derive from a stable value framework rather than shifting electoral calculations (McNair, 2011). This framework directly applies to the PKS-Gerindra comparison in West Sumatra. PKS cadres, trained through a structured ideological curriculum, deliver communication that consistently reflects the party's core Islamic-social justice values. Gerindra cadres, by contrast, communicate primarily through the personal appeal of local figures, producing messaging that is flexible but less institutionally anchored.

This section examines political communication across three interconnected dimensions: ideological messaging versus electoral branding at the organizational level, intra-party communication as an internal coordination mechanism, and digital communication as a platform for constituent outreach.



a. Political Communication: Ideological Messaging Versus Electoral Branding

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Brian McNair (2018), in *An Introduction to Political Communication*, defines political communication as purposeful communication about politics by political actors, including parties, candidates, and institutions, directed at citizens and voters. McNair identifies three core functions: informing, persuading, and mobilizing. He argues that parties with strong internal ideological identity tend to produce more consistent and coherent political communication, since their messages derive from a stable value framework rather than shifting electoral calculations (McNair, 2011). This framework directly applies to the PKS-Gerindra comparison in West Sumatra. PKS cadres, trained through a structured ideological curriculum, deliver communication that consistently reflects the party's core Islamic-social justice values. This ideological coherence produces recognizable, stable messaging that builds long-term constituent trust. Gerindra cadres, by contrast, communicate primarily through the personal appeal of local figures, producing messaging that is flexible but less institutionally anchored.

Pippa Norris (2004) introduces the concept of the permanent campaign, the practice of continuous political communication that extends party outreach well beyond formal election cycles. Norris argues that parties maintaining permanent communication channels with constituents build stronger electoral resilience because they convert episodic voter contact into durable political relationships (Norris, 2004). PKS's cadre network in West Sumatra functions precisely as a permanent campaign infrastructure.

Cadres conduct routine community activities, religious gatherings, and social assistance programs throughout the year. These activities serve dual functions: they reinforce cadre values internally and sustain direct constituent communication externally. This continuous presence explains PKS's consistent vote growth from 389,526 votes in 2019 to 453,572 votes in 2024. Gerindra's communication pattern, in contrast, intensifies sharply during election seasons and recedes afterward, which aligns with the vote-seeking party model described by Wolinetz (2002) and contributes to the modest vote erosion observed between the two election cycles.



The digital dimension reinforces this divergence. Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) note that the third age of political communication is defined by audience fragmentation and the multiplication of communication channels, which increases pressure on parties to personalize and diversify their messages (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999). PKS in West Sumatra responds to this pressure through an organized system: cadres receive structured guidance on digital communication through the Umi Pemilu Application (UPA), ensuring that online messaging stays aligned with the party's ideological framework across all organizational levels. Gerindra responds to the same pressure through individual candidates' personal social media accounts, producing decentralized and inconsistent messaging that reflects the candidate's personal brand rather than the party's institutional identity. This difference in digital communication organization directly reflects the gap in cadre development depth between the two parties.

In sum, the mediatization framework of Strömbäck (2008) and the three-age model of Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) together explain why the two parties produce fundamentally different communication outputs despite operating in the same electoral environment. PKS's resistance to full mediatization is not incidental. It is a structural product of a cadreization system that prioritizes value formation over media performance. Gerindra's advanced mediatization reflects a cadre system that prioritizes electoral mobilization over ideological depth. Political communication in PKS functions as a continuous institutional practice. In Gerindra, it functions as a campaign-period instrument. This structural difference shapes not only electoral outcomes but also the quality and sustainability of each party's relationship with its constituents in West Sumatra.

b. Intra-Party Communication: How Cadreization Shapes Internal Messaging

The quality of political communication that a party projects externally depends heavily on the coherence of its internal communication system. Parties that invest in structured internal communication produce cadres who carry consistent, institutionally anchored messages. Those that neglect it produce cadres who communicate based on personal interpretation, circumstantial judgments, or the preferences of local figures. In West Sumatra, this distinction maps directly onto the PKS-Gerindra comparison and explains a significant portion of the observable differences in how each party communicates with its constituents. Gerindra's internal communication follows a different logic. Instructions flow primarily from the DPP and regional executives to branch-level cadres, but this flow is largely tactical rather than value-oriented.

Cadres receive guidance on mobilization targets, candidate support, and campaign activities, but they do not undergo a standardized process of value formation that would align their political messaging at the grassroots level. Vaccari and Valeriani (2016) demonstrate that party members who receive structured organizational socialization engage in a wider variety and greater depth of party-related communication activities than those whose party engagement remains informal and episodic. Parties that fail to provide this structured socialization produce members whose public messaging reflects personal networks and individual candidate appeal rather than a unified party identity (Vaccari &



Valeriani, 2016). This pattern characterizes Gerindra's communication architecture in West Sumatra, where the party's public-facing messages are shaped more by the social capital of individual figures than by an institutionally embedded communication framework. The practical consequence is a clear gap between PKS's consistent, value-driven communication and Gerindra's flexible but institutionally fragmented messaging.

c. Digital Political Communication: Cadre Networks as Online Messaging Infrastructure

The digital dimension of political communication has become a primary arena in which parties compete for constituent attention, build brand recognition, and sustain organizational visibility between electoral cycles. How a party organizes its cadres' digital communication behavior is no longer peripheral to its electoral strategy. It sits at the center of how modern parties maintain contact with fragmented audiences in a high-information environment. In West Sumatra, PKS and Gerindra demonstrate fundamentally different approaches to digital communication organization, and these differences trace directly back to the depth of their respective cadreization systems. Römmele (2003) identifies a key distinction between parties that use digital communication tools for participatory engagement and value dissemination versus parties that use them primarily for top-down information dissemination and electoral mobilization. The former approach produces cadres who function as active nodes in a networked communication infrastructure. The latter produces cadres who function as passive message recipients who activate during campaigns and disengage afterward (Römmele, 2003). PKS in West Sumatra operates closer to the first model. Through the Umi Pemilu Application (UPA), the party provides structured digital communication guidance to cadres at all organizational levels, ensuring that online messages stay aligned with the party's ideological framework regardless of the platform or the individual cadre producing the content. This system transforms PKS cadres into a distributed but coordinated digital communication network, extending the party's reach into communities and digital spaces that traditional media cannot penetrate. The result is a digital presence that reinforces constituent relationships year-round, not only during campaign periods.

Gerindra's digital communication follows the individual candidate model. Cadres and legislative candidates manage their own social media accounts independently, producing content that reflects their personal brand, local network relationships, and campaign priorities. Vaccari and Valeriani (2016) show that when parties lack a structured system for coordinating member communication on digital platforms, political engagement becomes fragmented and candidate-centered rather than party-centered. The absence of party-level coordination means that digital communication reflects individual visibility rather than collective institutional identity (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2016). This is precisely what characterizes Gerindra's online presence in West Sumatra: the party's digital visibility intensifies dramatically during election seasons and recedes afterward, producing an episodic pattern consistent with a vote-seeking communication model. This digital communication gap between PKS and Gerindra directly reflects the structural difference in their cadreization depth: PKS's systematic cadre formation produces cadres capable of sustained, ideologically coherent digital engagement, while Gerindra's experience-based



model produces cadres whose digital communication capacity depends heavily on individual initiative and personal resources.

Constituent Communication and Electoral Sustainability: Permanent Campaign vs Episodic Mobilization

The relationship between political communication and electoral sustainability depends not only on the quality of messages parties deliver but on the continuity with which they deliver them. Parties that maintain active communication with constituents across the full electoral cycle build durable voter relationships that translate into stable and growing vote shares. Parties that compress their communication into campaign periods risk losing constituent contact between elections, weakening the organizational bonds that sustain long-term electoral performance. This distinction between permanent and episodic communication constitutes one of the most consequential differences between PKS and Gerindra in West Sumatra, and its electoral implications are empirically visible in the vote data from 2019 and 2024.

Norris (2004) introduces the concept of the permanent campaign as the practice of continuous political communication that extends party outreach well beyond formal election cycles. Norris argues that parties maintaining permanent communication channels with constituents build stronger electoral resilience because they convert episodic voter contact into durable political relationships that persist across electoral cycles (Norris, 2004). PKS's cadre network in West Sumatra functions precisely as this kind of permanent campaign infrastructure. Cadres conduct routine community activities, religious gatherings, social assistance programs, and civic education events throughout the year. These activities serve dual functions simultaneously: they reinforce cadre values internally and sustain direct constituent communication externally. This continuous presence directly explains PKS's consistent vote growth from 389,526 votes in 2019 to 453,572 votes in 2024. PKS constituents do not encounter the party only during campaign periods. They encounter it as a continuous presence in their communities, and this repeated contact converts into durable political loyalty.

Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) identify the third age of political communication as a period defined by communication abundance and intensified pressure on parties to diversify and personalize their outreach across multiple channels and throughout the calendar year (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999). PKS responds to this pressure through its permanent cadre network, which functions as a multi-channel, year-round outreach infrastructure operating at the grassroots level. Gerindra, by contrast, responds primarily through concentrated electoral mobilization. Its communication infrastructure activates sharply when elections approach and recedes once votes are counted, a pattern consistent with what Wolinetz (2002) describes as the vote-seeking party model, in which organizational energy is deployed episodically in service of electoral outcomes rather than continuously in service of constituent relationships (Wolinetz, 2002).



Cadre Evaluation and Development: Organizational Quality Control Mechanism

The evaluation and cadre development process serves as a critical organizational mechanism for political parties to maintain ideological consistency, ensure leadership quality, and guarantee institutional sustainability. In comparing PKS and Gerindra in West Sumatra, this mechanism reveals fundamental divergences in how each party conceptualizes internal quality control. PKS employs a structured periodic evaluation system to systematically monitor cadre progress across every developmental rung, while Gerindra prioritizes practical electoral involvement as the primary measure of cadre contributions to the party. These differing approaches, though comprehensible within their respective contexts, carry substantial consequences for the long-term institutionalization of each organization.

PKS's evaluation practices reflect Huntington's (1968) autonomy dimension in institutionalization—the independence of political organizations from external interests—as further (Huntington, 1968). Detailed by Panebianco (1988). Panebianco outlines party institutionalization through two primary dimensions: autonomy (freedom from external actors) and systemness (level of internal coherence), stressing that highly institutionalized parties maintain more stable dominant coalitions (Panebianco, 1988). PKS implements this framework by defining precise criteria for cadre advancement, facilitating early identification of developmental stagnation and preemptive corrective measures before ideological deviations emerge. Far exceeding routine bureaucratic processes, this mechanism serves as an early sentinel for behavioral deviations that could harm the party's reputation and moral standing. The significance of this evaluation mechanism is further underscored by Vicky Randall and Lars Svåsand's (2002) concept of *value infusion*, identified as a core dimension of party institutionalization. Value infusion denotes the depth to which party principles are embedded in the beliefs and behaviors of individual members.

When this process is profound and sustained, parties evolve from instrumental political vehicles into organizations with genuine meaning for their cadres (Randall & Svåsand, 2002). In PKS's case, periodic evaluations serve as an institutional tool not only to initiate value infusion during initial cadre training but also to renew and reinforce it throughout a cadre's organizational lifespan. This ongoing emphasis on ideological orientation distinguishes PKS's quality control approach from shallower training models.

According to Wolinetz (2002), parties focused on vote-seeking gauge success mainly by votes won, channeling their recruitment, platforms, and campaigns to build the broadest possible electorate (Wolinetz, 2002). Research here reveals that Gerindra evaluates cadres primarily based on electoral prowess, aligning neatly with vote-seeking dynamics in fiercely contested elections. Huntington (1968) defines *adaptability* as a political organization's capacity to sustain its functions across generational challenges and environmental shifts, with orderly leadership regeneration signaling higher institutionalization. In this framework, PKS's cadre system deliberately prepares for structured leadership renewal. PKS's model in West Sumatra exemplifies this trajectory, whereas Gerindra's evaluation architecture—though functionally adaptive in the short term—risks accumulating structural vulnerabilities as the organization scales and ambitions grow. Ultimately, cadre evaluation quality determines not just who advances within the party, but the type of political actors it produces for Indonesia's democratic system.



Cadre Loyalty and Cohesion: The Foundation of Party Institutionalization

Cadre loyalty and internal cohesion are widely recognized in comparative party politics literature as the most reliable indicators of genuine party institutionalization. Parties that retain cadres through principle-based commitment—rather than material incentives or personal loyalties—exhibit a structural depth that is hard to replicate and even harder to destabilize. This study's findings reveal PKS and Gerindra as representing two fundamentally distinct models of loyalty formation, each with unique organizational logics and long-term sustainability implications. PKS has cultivated what can be termed value-based cohesion, while Gerindra's organizational unity is better characterized as interest-based cohesion, centered around electoral rewards and the appeal of central leadership figures.

Samuel Huntington (1968), in his seminal work on political order, identifies coherence as a pivotal dimension of organizational institutionalization, reflecting the degree of internal unity and solidarity within a political entity (Huntington, 1968). PKS scores relatively well on this dimension, as cadres undergoing the party's tiered development process share a common ideological framework for interpreting organizational goals and navigating political decisions. This shared foundation acts as a stabilizing buffer: even amid dramatic external shifts, as frequently seen in Indonesia's volatile electoral landscape, PKS's internal cadre cohesion endures through collectively held values, rather than reliance on a single leader's presence or popularity.

Self, Franke, and Mitchell (2025) demonstrate that party cohesion built on patronage access and material interests is illusory and fragile—as evidenced by Indonesia's Golkar, whose unity collapsed dramatically after Suharto's fall and the loss of patronage streams. In contrast, parties successfully fostering *value infusion*—tying cadre career progression to party values rather than individual leaders—exhibit far greater organizational resilience, even amid turbulent political transitions (Self et al., 2025). This is corroborated by Carroll and Kubo (2019), who show that programmatically oriented parties produce more ideologically homogeneous candidates compared to those focused solely on office-seeking (Carroll & Kubo, 2019)

This distinction maps directly onto the PKS-Gerindra comparison: PKS cadres who have internalized the party's Islamist and social justice values through years of structured development tend to remain loyal even during organizational hardships, whereas Gerindra's interest-based cohesion harbors structural vulnerabilities most evident during leadership transitions or electoral setbacks.

Organizational Structure Strengthening and Electoral Sustainability

The divergent cadre development strategies of PKS and Gerindra in West Sumatra yield tangible, measurable impacts on both organizations' structural resilience and electoral sustainability. These two dimensions—organizational strength and electoral endurance—are interdependent, with cadre quality serving as the critical linkage. Parties systematically investing in cadre development not only produce more competent individuals but construct a layered organizational architecture capable of enduring beyond electoral cycles, leadership transitions, and political environmental shifts.



Huntington (1968) defines *complexity* as an institutionalization dimension referring to the depth of role differentiation and hierarchy within political organizations—the more layered and differentiated the internal structure, the stronger the institutionalization (Huntington, 1968). In this context, PKS's cadre system, producing cadres across various hierarchical levels, embodies this complexity dimension, ensuring organizational continuity through planned leadership succession. This stratification is no accident, it is a direct outcome of a cadre system that tracks member progress over time and deliberately grooms cadres for institutional advancement. The practical upshot is proactive management of PKS's organizational continuity, rather than reactive responses. Leadership succession occurs in a planned and orderly manner, not as a crisis reaction to sudden vacancies, significantly mitigating structural shocks that often destabilize Indonesian parties post-elections or leadership changes. Wolinetz (2002) describes a party type inherently intermittently active—constituent associations exist across regions, yet extraparliamentary organization is virtually invisible outside election periods. This shifts dramatically when elections are called, transforming the party into a well-oiled machine for voter mobilization, campaign material distribution, and rally organization. Once votes are tallied, this bustle ceases entirely, reverting the party to dormancy (Wolinetz, 2002). In this study, Gerindra's organizational pattern in West Sumatra mirrors this dynamic—structurally energized pre-elections but subdued between cycles—posing long-term risks to sustained party-constituent bonds.

While this adaptive approach enables rapid mobilization when most needed, it breeds structural fragility. Electoral-focused organizational infrastructure rarely proves robust enough to sustain ongoing constituent services, policy engagement, and cadre development essential for true party institutionalization. Essentially, parties become periodic activation mechanisms rather than continuous organizational presences in members' and constituents' lives.

The relationship between cadreization quality and the electoral sustainability of both parties is empirically demonstrated through vote share data from two legislative election periods. Complete data on vote acquisition and electoral development for PKS and Gerindra in West Sumatra are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Vote Share and Electoral Sustainability Data of PKS and Gerindra in The west Sumatera Provincial Legislature (DPRD), 2019 and 2024 Legislative Elections

Indicator	PKS 2019	PKS 2024	Gerindra 2019	Gerindra 2024
Valid Votes	389,526	453,572	476,985	427,177
Vote Percentage	13.31% (est.)	15.53%	16.29% (est.)	14.53%
Provincial DPRD Seats	10 seats	13 seats	14 seats	14 seats
Vote Trend	—	▲ Up +64,046 votes (+2.22%)	—	▼ Down -49,808 votes (-1.76%)
Ranking in West Sumatra	2nd	1 st	1st	2nd



Main Support Base	Educated urban Muslim community, campus da'wah activists	Expanded to young voters and digital communities	Local figure networks, customary communities, regional bureaucracy	Incumbent figure consolidation, recruitment of new prominent figures
Electoral Strategy	Continuous cadre activities in communities	Intensified digital cadreization and UPA system	Candidate figure popularity, personal network mobilization	Incumbent figure strength and party wing organizations (GMD, TIDAR)
Key Electoral Factor	Depth of grassroots cadre network	Consistent cadre development and community expansion	Candidate's social capital	Personal network strength and party wing mobilization
Cadreization Model	Ideological-transformative	Ideological-transformative	Pragmatic-electoral	Pragmatic-electoral

(Source: West Sumatera Provincial general Elections Commissions (KPU) 2019&2024 and Field Research data 2025&2026)

The data in Table 1 point to a clear connection between the cadre development patterns each party runs and their electoral outcomes. PKS shows a relatively consistent growth in vote share from the 2019 to the 2024 elections. This trend links directly to cadres who received systematic training and developed the capacity to build and sustain relationships with constituents over time.

Ufen (2007) argues that institutionalized parties in Southeast Asia are characterized by deep roots in civil-religious organizations and organizational independence from charismatic leaders—yielding lower electoral volatility and more stable voter-party ties. Conversely, parties heavily reliant on elite charisma exhibit fragile structures vulnerable to sudden political shifts (Ufen, 2007). For PKS in West Sumatra, the surge in votes cannot be attributed chiefly to a singular influential figure; rather, it stemmed from the persistent engagement of cadre networks in community-based social and political initiatives, extending far beyond formal campaign periods.

Gerindra witnessed a modest erosion in its vote share from 2019 to 2024, even as its legislative seat holdings remained stable. Wolinetz (2002) characterizes a party type as inherently intermittently active—its organizational machinery reactivates during election campaigns to mobilize voters, distribute materials, and organize rallies, ceasing entirely once final votes are tallied and reverting to dormancy. This cyclical activation reveals parties whose organizational vitality depends solely on electoral imperatives, lacking sustained institutional commitment to constituent engagement (Wolinetz, 2002). In this study, Gerindra's organizational pattern in West Sumatra mirrors this—structural vigor emerges in electoral competition but wanes between polls—gradually eroding party-voter bonds foundational to long-term electoral sustainability. Nevertheless, Gerindra's success in maintaining its seats underscores the viability of leveraging entrenched incumbents as an effective, albeit temporary, bulwark for electoral resilience.



Synthesis: Two Cadreization Models in One Competitive Arena

This study identifies two distinct cadre development models that both remain competitive within West Sumatra's political landscape. The first is the transformative ideological cadreization model run by PKS. The second is the pragmatic cadreization model oriented toward electoral needs, as practiced by Gerindra.

PKS's approach produces cadres with value-based loyalty, relatively even organizational capacity across regions, and the ability to maintain constituent relationships on a sustained basis. This model demands significant investment in cadre coaching, but it drives stronger party institutionalization and secures long-term organizational continuity. Gerindra's approach tells a different story. The party shows greater organizational flexibility and a faster capacity to adapt when the political landscape shifts, largely through recruiting figures who already carry social and electoral capital. The trade-off is real, however. This pattern also produces wider variation in cadre capacity and loyalty that tends to be situational rather than principled.

These findings make one thing clear: no single cadre development model is universally superior. The effectiveness of any cadre system depends heavily on the party's organizational character, its voter base, and the political strategy it adopts. Looking at the broader picture, cadre development quality also feeds directly into the quality of political representation and the trajectory of democratic development at the local level.

CONCLUSION

This analysis delineates two divergent paradigms of cadre cultivation, both proving viable within West Sumatra's electoral arena. The first embodies PKS's ideological transformation model, while the second reflects Gerindra's pragmatic, election-centric approach.

PKS develops cadres through a tiered guidance system that integrates the formation of ideological values, periodic evaluation, and planned leadership regeneration. This system produces strong internal cohesion, belief-based cadre loyalty, and a grassroots network that operates continuously. The outcomes are reflected in the increase in vote acquisition from 389,526 in the 2019 elections to 453,572 votes in the 2024 elections, while simultaneously reinforcing PKS's position as the largest party in West Sumatra in the most recent period.

Gerindra applies a more flexible cadreization approach by placing practical political experience and the mobilization of local figure networks as the primary instruments of cadre development. This approach provides short-term adaptation advantages and the capacity to respond rapidly to changes in the electoral landscape. However, this pattern also generates greater variation in cadre capacity and more conditional loyalty. The moderate decline in votes from 476,985 in the 2019 elections to 427,177 votes in the 2024 elections reflects the consequences of weakened organizational activity outside campaign periods.

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