

## Public Trust in the Existence of Patronage Politic in the Distribution of Power in the Merah Putih Cabinet

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### ABSTRACT

In the history of Indonesian politics, for the first time a cabinet of state ministries was formed with an extraordinarily large number of members, known as the Merah Putih cabinet. The existence of patronage politics is thought to be the main cause of the increase in the number of cabinet members. Therefore, researchers conducted research to determine public trust in the existence of patronage politics in the distribution of power in the Merah Putih cabinet using quantitative methods with a descriptive type. The results of research data processing using simple linear regression data analysis reveal that there is a positive influence that public trust has on the existence of patronage politics in the distribution of power in the merah putih cabinet, even though only 16.1%. This means that even though the level of trust is not very high, the public still believes in the existence of patronage politics in the distribution of power in the merah cabinet. One form of the existence of patronage politics is the public's belief that strategic positions in the Merah Putih cabinet are given to those who have political closeness to the leader.

**Keywords:** Public Trust; Patronage Politic; Distribution of Power; Merah Putih Cabinet

### ABSTRAK

Dalam sejarah perpolitikan Indonesia, untuk pertama kalinya terbentuk kabinet kementerian negara dengan jumlah anggota yang luar biasa banyak yang disebut sebagai kabinet Merah Putih. Eksistensi politik patronase diduga menjadi penyebab utama menggemuknya jumlah anggota kabinet ini. Oleh karena itu, peneliti melakukan penelitian untuk mengetahui kepercayaan publik terhadap eksistensi politik patronase dalam pendistribusian kekuasaan kabinet merah putih melalui metode kuantitatif dengan tipe deskriptif. Hasil pengolahan data penelitian menggunakan analisis data regresi linear sederhana mengungkapkan adanya pengaruh positif yang diberikan kepercayaan publik terhadap eksistensi politik patronase dalam pendistribusian kekuasaan kabinet merah putih yaitu hanya sebesar 16,1%. Artinya walaupun tidak terlalu tinggi tingkat kepercayaannya, namun masyarakat tetap percaya terhadap eksistensi politik patronase dalam pendistribusian kekuasaan dalam kabinet merah putih. Salah satu bentuk eksistensi politik patronase tersebut adalah kepercayaan masyarakat bahwa jabatan-jabatan strategis dalam kabinet merah putih diberikan kepada mereka yang memiliki kedekatan politik dengan pemimpin.

**Kata Kunci:** Kepercayaan Publik; Politik Patronase; Pembagian Kekuasaan; Kabinet Merah Putih

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

After the inauguration of a President, the most interesting thing for the public is the announcement of the president's cabinet of ministers. As a presidential prerogative based on the law in Article 17 of The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, the President has full power to choose anyone to be his minister without intervention from anyone (Baital, 2014; Susanto, 2016). The regulations regarding this state ministry are further regulated in Law Number 39 of 2008 about the State Ministry.

A ministry is a state organ within the executive power, tasked to assisting the President in running the government of a state system (Monteza, 2023). Ministers in leading state ministries are also specifically given certain tasks by the president in government so that state goals are achieved (Razak, Syah Reza, & Eka Saputra, 2024). However, in the Indonesian political landscape, in the process of forming a state ministerial cabinet there is a phenomenon of distribution of power based on the response to support obtained during the presidential election. This phenomenon itself is called patronage politics. Patronage politics is the distribution of material, power or other benefits carried out by politicians to individuals or groups who choose or support them (Cahyati & Lopo, 2019; Shefter, 1993). The high cost of campaigning in general elections made political actors seek large support, which often demands reciprocity, which is the root of the emergence of a patronage political culture (Rosyan & Prasojo, 2024). This phenomenon generally occurs as an effort by a leader or political party to appreciate support, whether in the form of finance, networks, or other resources, which have contributed to their political success. However, academically, the politics of reciprocity contains two opposing sides: on the one hand it can strengthen power relations, but on the other hand it has the potential to create dysfunction in governance.

Historically, the presence of patronage politics in Indonesia has a long history that began in the colonial era, the New Order until now (Kusumana & Mustofa, 2024; Nordholt, 2015). The pattern of patronage politics that was previously traditional-cultural has changed to an adaptive and complex pattern following the dynamics of Indonesian politics. This change can be seen in the subject of patronage politics which was previously personal but changed to institutional or political parties and interest groups. In previous studies, patronage politics was found in every layers of government, from village heads (Cahyati & Lopo, 2019), regional heads (Galang Geraldly & Lasiono, 2024), legislative (Wahidah et al., 2022.), and even previous presidents (Widoyoko, 2018). The pattern of patronage politics existence can also be seen in the current presidential administration in the distribution of power in his cabinet which is named the Merah Putih cabinet. Merah Putih cabinet is the largest President's cabinet in Indonesian history. The number of cabinet members is 109 people consisting of 48 ministers, 5 ministerial-level officials, and 56 deputy ministers. The large number of cabinet members forms a public assumption, the assumption that the large numbers of the Merah Putih cabinet is a form of efficiency of positions and duties or even a form of patronage political existence in the Merah Putih cabinet because many strategic positions in the Merah Putih cabinet are filled by political parties supporting the president elected in the last presidential election. This public assumption will certainly affect public trust in the government because one of the indicators of public trust is how the government behaves (Dwiyanto, 2011).

Public trust in the government and political institutions is an important element in the success of a democratic system. This trust describes how society views the legitimacy, credibility, and integration of leaders and the policies they make. Public trust in the political context includes some aspects, including trust in government institutions, politicians, the legal system, and the democratic process itself. This trust is formed through the experience of society in interacting with the government and their experience of the quality of public services, transparency, accountability, and justice received.

Starting from policy products to service products produced by the government, all are greatly influenced by public trust (Andhika, 2018). Public trust in politics is the main key to creating stability and legitimacy of government. Scientifically, this trust is influenced by transparency, accountability, integrity of leaders, and the effectiveness of the government in carrying out its functions. Increased public trust will always get political stability towards communication style and also towards management style in the political process towards society, because it is in line with the existence of three variables, namely economic stability; well-developed political institutions and processes; political participation that determines political stability (Hastuti, 2018). When people believe that political leaders and state institutions act in the common interest, they tend to be more active in participating in the political process and supporting government policies.

Public trust also plays an important role in the accountability of leaders and public officials, their actions will provide very clear direction for the policies made, in a new government, accountability is a major direction towards public trust, in terms of integrity from political leaders, when leaders are seen as honest, there will be a sense of efficiency and effectiveness of government in public services. Based on the previous

explanation, it can be seen that public trust has a vital role in the running of the country's government. so this re search is important to be conducted in order to find out the level of public trust and public assessment of the existence of patronage politics in the distribution of power in the Merah Putih cabinet.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is a quantitative method with a descriptive type with a survey approach. Quantitative methods are known as research methods that have a philosophical basis of positivism which is used to research certain populations and samples, collect data using research tools, then conduct quantitative or static data analysis which aims to test existing hypotheses (Sugiyono, 2013). The survey in this research was conducted online via the Google Form website to obtain a random population of research respondents or what is also known as the simple random sampling technique. This technique is one of the techniques carried out by selecting respondents based on random numbers and obtaining a population of respondents that is adjusted to the number of samples obtained (Arieska & Herdiani, 2018). The number of respondents who filled out the survey in this study was 150 Indonesian people.

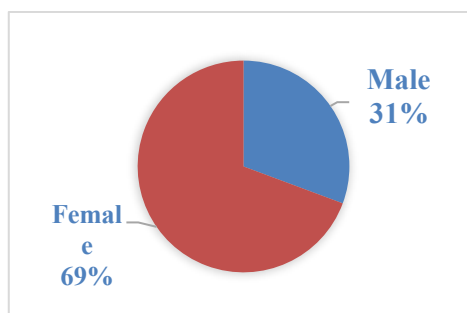
The variables in this research are public trust which is the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y) is the existence of patronage politics in the distribution of power in the Merah Putih cabinet. These two variables will be processed using simple linear regression data analysis techniques which will then be explained descriptively.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. Description of Survey Results

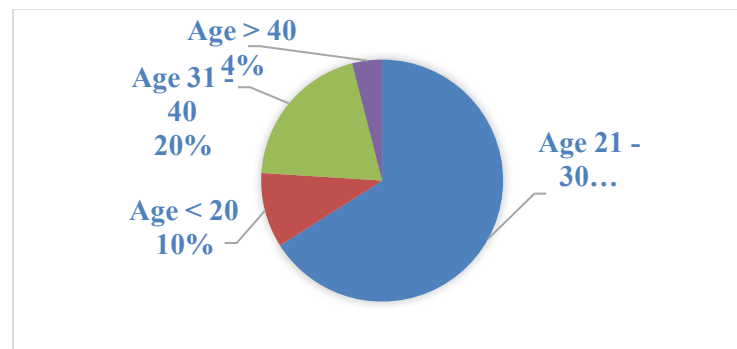
The characteristics of respondents in this study can be described as Indonesian citizens who are adults or over 17 years old as the reason that this age has entered adulthood and has undergone civic education during education so that they have political understanding and carry out political participation (Rahman, 2016). The number of respondents who filled out the survey in this study was 150 people where data collection was carried out in November 2024. The following is a description of the characteristics of respondents based on gender as seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Percentage of Respondents by Gender



**Source:** Research Result, 2025

Based on Figure 1, can be seen that the involvement of respondents in filling out the survey in this research was dominated by respondents who were female with a total of 69% or 104 people. Then followed by 31% of respondents or 46 people who were male.

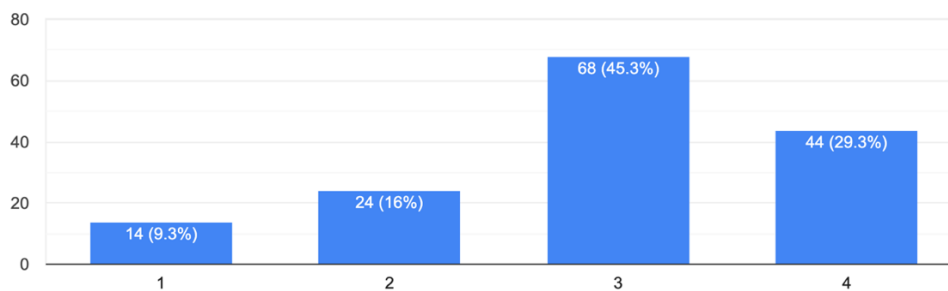
**Figure 2.** Percentage of Respondents by Age

**Source:** Research Result, 2025

Based on Figure 2, can be seen that based on the survey data, respondents have a diverse age range. The data shows that the highest number of respondents is in the 21-30 age group, which is 66% or 99 people and the lowest number of respondents is in the age group over 40 years, which is 4% or 6 people. The number of other respondents is the age group under 20 years, which is 10% or 15 people and the age group 31-40 years, which is 20% or 30 people. This shows that the productive age has a high interest in state politics which is manifested in the form of active participation in the survey for this research. In this research survey, there are six questions with four answer choices that can be chosen by respondents, namely:

1. Strongly Disagree with the Statement
2. Disagree with the Statement
3. Agree with the Statement
4. Strongly Agree with the Statement

The first question is that trust in strategic positions in the Merah Putih cabinet is more often given to those who have political closeness to the leader than those who have the best qualifications or abilities and professional experience. The answers from respondents are shown in Figure 3.

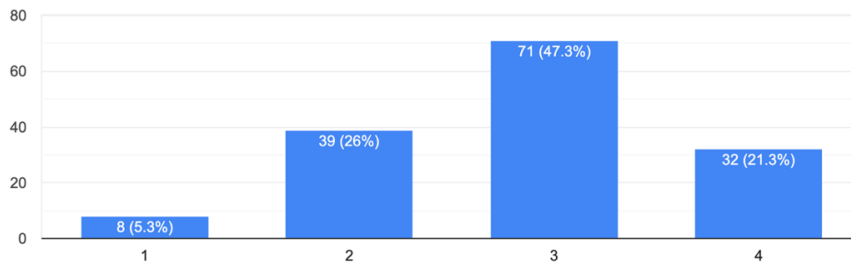
**Figure 3.** Percentage of Respondent's Answers to the First Question

**Source:** Research Result, 2025

Based on Figure 3, can be seen that public trust is quite high that strategic positions in the Merah Putih Cabinet are more often given to those who have political closeness to the leader than those who have the best qualifications or abilities and professional experience as shown in the percentage of 74.6% or 112 people.

The second question is trust in the distribution of power in the Merah Putih Cabinet based on individual competence and qualifications, not only based on political considerations. The respondents' answers are shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4.** Percentage of Respondent's Answers to the Second Question

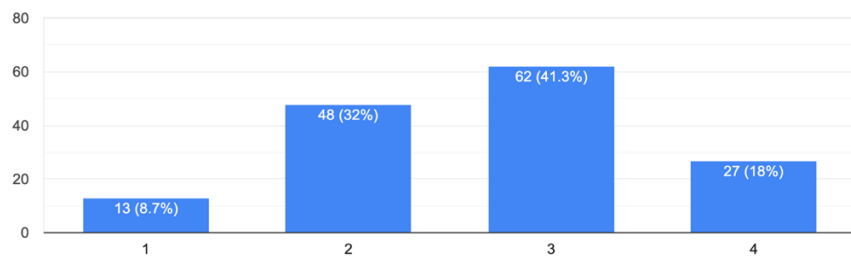


Source: Research Result, 2025

Figure 4 shows that 68.6% of respondents or 103 people stated that they have quite high confidence in the distribution of power in the Merah Putih cabinet based on individual competence and qualifications, not only based on political considerations. This number shows that the public believes that the position of ministers in the Merah Putih cabinet is still determined by the integrity of the official.

The third question is confidence in the distribution of power in the Merah Putih cabinet taking into account various social, economic backgrounds, and community needs. The respondents' answers are shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5.** Percentage of Respondent's Answers to the Third Question

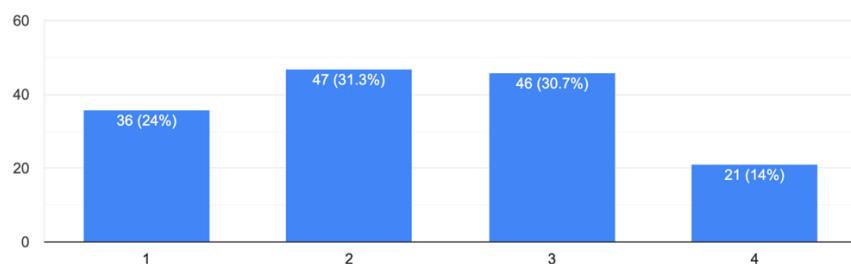


Source: Research Result, 2025

Based on Figure 5, public trust is not too high in the distribution of power in the Merah Putih cabinet considering various social, economic, and community needs backgrounds. This can be seen in Figure 5 where only 59.3% of respondents or 89 people agreed with the third question.

The fourth question is that large number of cabinet makes government performance more effective and efficient, therefore the number of corruption in government will decrease. Respondents' answers are shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6.** Percentage of Respondent's Answers to the Fourth Question

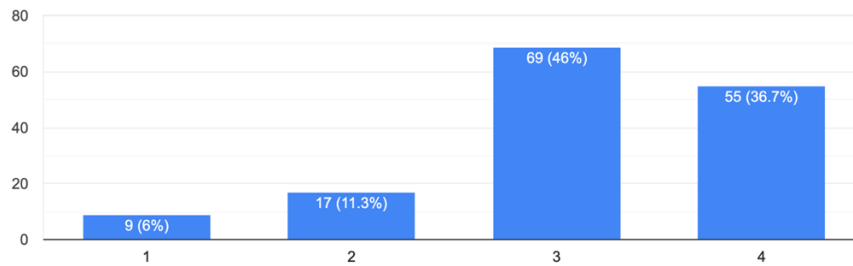


Source: Research Result, 2025

In Figure 6, can be seen again that there is a small difference between the respondents' answers where 55% or 83 people stated that they disagreed, which shows that public trust is not too high in a fat cabinet making government performance more effective and efficient, therefore the level of corruption in government will decrease.

The fifth question is the practice of patronage politics in the form of favors in the form of giving positions in ministries can have an impact on the quality of policies issued by the government. The respondents' answers are shown in Figure 7.

**Figure 7.** Percentage of Respondent's Answers to the Fifth Question

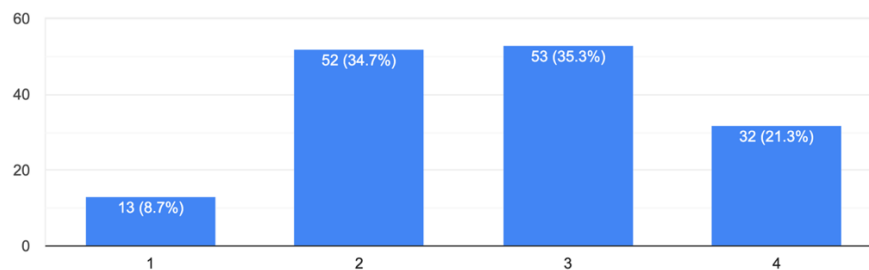


Source: Research Result, 2025

Figure 7 shows that 82.7% of respondents or 124 people have very high confidence that the practice of patronage politics in the form of favors in the form of granting positions in ministries can have an impact on the quality of policies issued by the government.

The sixth question is respondent's believe that the distribution of power in the Merah Putih cabinet is carried out with consideration of the interests of the community, not just political interests. The respondents' answers are in Figure 8.

**Figure 8.** Percentage of Respondent's Answers to the Sixth Question



Source: Research Result, 2025

Figure 8 also shows a small difference, namely 56.6% of respondents or 85 people, which means that public trust is not very high in the distribution of power in the Merah Putih cabinet being carried out with consideration of the interests of the community, not just political interests.

## B. Data Analysis Calculation

Furthermore, hypothesis testing in this study uses analysis techniques, namely simple regression analysis. Hypothesis testing uses the help of the SPSS Statistics 25 computer program. The hypothesis tested in this study is that there is a positive influence between Public Trust in the Existence of Patronage Politics in the Distribution of Power in the Merah Putih Cabinet. This hypothesis testing uses simple regression analysis techniques. A summary of the results of the first hypothesis test can be seen in the following table:

**Tabel 1.** Hypothesis Testing Results

Mod*	$r_{xy}$	$r^2_{xy}$	$T_{hit}$	$T_{tabel}$	$R_{tabel}$	Koef.	Kons.	Ket
X	0,401	0,161	5,324	1,976	0,159	0,395	0,449	Positive and Significant

Source: Research Result, 2025

Based on the table of hypothesis testing results above, the following results and descriptions were obtained:

### Simple Regression Line Equation

Based on the table above, the regression equation can be expressed in the following equation:  $Y = 5.088X + 0.449$

The equation shows that the regression coefficient value is positive at 5.088. This means that if Public Trust (X) increases by one point, the Existence of Patronage Politics in the Distribution of Power in the Merah Putih Cabinet increases by 5.088 point.

### 1. Correlation Coefficient (r) and Determinant Coefficient (r<sup>2</sup>)

The results of a simple regression analysis with one predictor show a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.401 with a determination coefficient (r<sup>2</sup>) of 0.161. The determination coefficient shows the accuracy of the regression line. The regression line is used to explain the proportion of the Existence of Patronage Politics in the Distribution of Power in the Merah Putih cabinet (Y) explained by Public Trust (X). This means that Public Trust has a 16.1% effect on the Existence of Patronage Politics in the Distribution of Power in the Merah Putih Cabinet and there are 83.9% of other factors or variables that may have an effect on political participation.

### Significance Testing with t-Test

Significance testing with t-test is used to determine the effect of Public Trust (X) on the Existence of Patronage Politics in the Distribution of Power in the Merah Putih Cabinet (Y). The hypothesis tested is that there is a positive effect of Public Trust on the Existence of Patronage Politics in the Distribution of Power in the Merah Putih Cabinet.

**Tabel 2.** Dependent Variable: Public Trust

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.088	.684		7.437	.000
	Public Trust	.449	.084	.401	5.324	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Kabinet Merah Putih

Source: Research Result, 2025

Based on the output above, it is known that the significance value (sig.) Of 0.000 is smaller than the probability of 0.05 so that it can be concluded that  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_a$  is accepted, which means that there is an influence of Public Trust (X) on Patronage Politics in the Distribution of Power in the Merah Putih Cabinet (Y). The results of this study indicate that the correlation coefficient value ( $r_{xy}$ ) is 0.401 and the determination coefficient value ( $r^2_{xy}$ ) is 0.161, while for  $R_{tabel}$  it is 0.159. This shows that there is a positive influence of Public Trust on the Existence of Patronage Politics in the Distribution of Power in the Merah Putih Cabinet.

After conducting a significance test with the t-test, the Tcount was obtained as 5.324 which was then compared with the Ttable value at a significance level of 5%, which was 1.976. This shows that  $Tcount > Ttable$  ( $4.605 > 1.980$ ) so that the Public Trust variable has an influence on the Existence of Patronage Politics in the Distribution of Power in the Merah Putih Cabinet.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that there is a positive influence of Public Trust on the Existence of Patronage Politics in the Distribution of Power in the Merah Putih Cabinet. Although Public Trust has a positive influence on the Existence of Patronage Politics in the Distribution of Power in the Merah Putih Cabinet, with a percentage of 16.1% it is very small. The reason is, the influence of public trust has an influence below 50%.

The results of this study are supported by the theory that public trust is important because it is a supporting factor in the administration of the state (Rahayu, Amy, & Juwono, 2019). In governing the state, the government needs a valuable relationship with the public in order to achieve public trust so that the actualization of government activities runs effectively. In addition, the concept of trust is closely related to risk and hope. This trust is expected to be a substitute for risk and reduce uncertainty and reduce social complexity to anticipate the future (Rahayu et al., 2019). Trust interprets expectations of profit or loss which will later determine whether citizens will give trust or not (Coleman, 1990).

Public trust is one of the social capitals that can support cooperation and collaboration in effective governance (Houston & Harding, 2013). Public trust is the trust of citizens in the state and government including its institutions, policies, and officials (Wahyunengseh, 2011). Based on the explanation of public trust, it can be concluded that public trust is an attitude contributed by the community to the government in an effort to support the implementation of planned policies and programs.

It has been stated by various experts, public trust can be understood differently through the perspective used. Therefore, it is necessary to explain the dimensions in measuring the level of public trust. In the literature review on the dimensions of trust in e-government. Five dimensions that can be used to measure trust. These dimensions are used in measuring trust, one of which is the dimension of Trust in Government Organizations, this dimension of trust indicates that the public believes in the government that the actions they take are in the interests of citizens (Haning, -, & Tahili, 2018).

Next is the behavioral dimension, public trust is influenced by the attitudes/actions of state institutions and their officials. This attitude/action includes three things, there are:

First, the concern of the government and public officials in meeting the needs of each citizen. Second, the ability of the government and public officials in upholding the interests of citizens. Third, the commitment of the government and its officials in keeping promises that have been made to citizens. In short, public trust is greatly influenced by the behavior of the government in meeting the needs of its people (Dwiyanto, 2011).

Then, Kim (in Dwiyanto, 2011) reviewed the variables from previous studies and came to the conclusion that in measuring public trust, there are five variables that can be used, there are:

1. Credible Commitment, shows that the trusted party has a strong and reliable commitment and consistency of the attitude of the government and its officials.
2. Kind, The government is considered sincere when its officials will not take actions that harm the interests of its citizens even though the citizens do not supervise them. This variable is important to explain why there is a crisis of trust in the government. The increasing rarity of sincere and caring public officials in the government bureaucracy has tended to diminish public trust in the government.
3. Honesty, Berman and Nye (in Dwiyanto, 2011) use honesty as an important variable to explain changes in public trust. When citizens judge the government and its officials to be dishonest, they tend to lose trust in the government.
4. Competence, This competence is related to the capacity and capability of the government and its officials in carrying out their duties. Government institutions and public officials are required to understand the

problems being faced by the community and then be able to produce an action as an effort to solve the problem. Not only that, the ability of public officials in providing public services can increase citizen satisfaction with government performance. This satisfaction is what can encourage the creation of an emotional relationship between citizens and the government and public officials to become stronger.

5. Justice, assessed when the government and public officials provide services fairly based on predetermined principles without discriminating in providing services to the community.

These five variables provide a strong basis for measuring the level of public trust in an institution or individual in the context of communication or social relations in this case the existence of patronage politics in the distribution of power in the Merah Putih Cabinet. Based on the results of the research and opinions above, it can be concluded that there is a positive influence of public trust on the existence of patronage politics in the distribution of power in the Merah Putih cabinet.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

There is a positive influence between public trust in the existence of patronage politics in the distribution of power in the Merah Putih cabinet, but the positive influence given by public trust in the existence of patronage politics in the distribution of power in the Merah Putih cabinet is only 16.1%. This is indicated by the correlation coefficient ( $r_{xy}$ ) of 0.401 and the determinant coefficient ( $r^2_{xy}$ ) of 0.161, and T-count 5.324 is greater than T-table of 1.976 ( $5.324 > 1.976$ ) at a significance level of 5% and the simple regression model formed is  $Y = 4.525X + 0.513$ .

Therefore, it can be concluded that even though the level of trust is not too high, the public still believes in the existence of patronage politics in the distribution of power in the Merah Putih cabinet. One form of the existence of patronage politics in the distribution of power in the Merah Putih cabinet that is people believed by the public is the public's belief that strategic positions in the Merah Putih cabinet are given to those who have political closeness to the leader and patronage politics in the ministry will also have an impact on the quality of policy.

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