

Balancing Public Trust and Legal Literacy: Assessing Community Readiness for Electronic Land Certificates within Digital Land Administration

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ABSTRACT

The digitalization of land administration particularly through the implementation of Electronic Land Certificates constitutes a key component of Indonesia's national land administration reform agenda. However, the success of this policy is not determined solely by technological readiness and regulatory frameworks, but also by the social and legal readiness of the community as the primary users of land services. This article aims to analyze community readiness for Electronic Land Certificates by examining the relationship between public trust and legal literacy. The study employs a descriptive-quantitative approach with interpretative analysis based on questionnaire data collected from residents of Duri Kepa Subdistrict who participated in a community service program organized by the Faculty of Law, Universitas Esa Unggul Jakarta, on 12 August 2025. The findings reveal a structural gap between high levels of public trust in land administration institutions and Land Deed Officials (PPAT) and low levels of procedural understanding regarding land registration, Electronic Land Certificates, and personal data protection risks. This gap indicates the emergence of trust-based compliance, in which acceptance of digital land services relies more on institutional legitimacy than on substantive legal understanding. The article argues that such compliance is inherently fragile and may undermine the sustainability of land administration digitalization if not accompanied by systematic legal education, a human-centered approach, and the strengthened role of Land Deed Officials (PPAT) as legal facilitators in the transition toward a digital land administration system.

Keywords: Electronic Land Certificate, land administration digitalization, legal literacy, public trust, Land Deed Official (PPAT)

Introduction

Land registration is a state instrument to guarantee legal certainty of land rights as mandated in Article 19 of Law Number 5 of 1960 concerning Basic Agrarian Principles (UUPA) (Undang-Undang Dasar Tentang Pokok Agraria, 1960). In line with developments in public administration technology, the land registration system has undergone a significant transformation from a conventional model to electronic-based management through the implementation of electronic certificates as part of the modernization of national land administration (Yusuf et al., 2024).

Digital transformation in the land sector is aimed at improving administrative governance, namely by increasing efficiency, transparency, and accuracy of land data (Kusmiarto et al., 2021). However, the success of public service digitization is not solely determined by technological readiness and regulations, but is greatly influenced by societal readiness and the level of public trust in the implementing institutions (Heeks, 2006). In the context of land, these challenges become more complex because land not only has economic value, but also has strong social, cultural, and historical dimensions.

Studies on electronic certificates in Indonesia have so far focused more on regulatory and institutional aspects (Ghaniyyu et al., 2022), while empirical research that places the

community as the main subject of analysis, particularly in examining the relationship between public trust and legal literacy in the context of digital land registration, is still relatively limited.

The novelty of this study lies in its empirical disclosure of the imbalance between the level of public trust in institutions and PPATs and the public's legal literacy and procedural understanding of land registration, electronic certificates, and personal data protection. Unlike previous studies that focused on the normative and technical readiness of institutions, this article shows that high public trust can actually give rise to the phenomenon of trust-based compliance, which is passive compliance based on the legitimacy of office rather than on adequate understanding of the law. This condition risks creating vulnerabilities and further problems if it is not accompanied by efforts to strengthen legal literacy through a continuous educational approach. Based on this framework, this article aims to analyze the community's readiness for electronic certificates in land digitalization by focusing on the relationship between public trust, legal literacy, and the strategic role of PPAT as the community's legal companion in the transition to a digital land system.

Based on this background, this article focuses on answering two main questions, namely: (1) how prepared is the public for the implementation of electronic certificates in land digitization; and (2) what is the relationship between public trust and public legal literacy and its implications for legal certainty in land matters.

Methods Research

This study uses a descriptive-quantitative method combined with a socio-legal approach. Primary data was obtained by distributing questionnaires to residents of Duri Kepa Village who participated in the Community Service program of the Faculty of Law, Esa Unggul University Jakarta, held in Duri Kepa Village on August 12, 2025.

Respondents in this study consisted of 29 residents of Duri Kepa Village who played an active role in the village community and participated in Community Service activities in the field of land law. The questionnaire instrument covered the following variables: (1) demographic profile of respondents; (2) land certificate ownership; (3) level of understanding of land registration procedures; (4) perceptions of electronic certificates; (5) understanding of personal data security risks; and (6) level of trust in the National Land Agency (BPN) and the role of the Public Notary (PPAT). The data were analyzed using frequency distribution and percentages for each variable, followed by a proportional comparison between variables to identify any gaps. The results of the analysis were then interpreted using a social and legal approach with data processing using Microsoft Excel without inferential statistical tests because this research was exploratory-descriptive in nature. Therefore, the data obtained was not intended to represent the population statistically, but rather to provide an empirical picture of the patterns of perception, level of legal literacy, and community readiness in a social and legal context at the village level.

Results and Discussion

1. Respondent Profile and Its Consequences on Legal Literacy

The survey results show that respondents were predominantly female (56.7%) with the largest age group being 41–50 years old (40%). In terms of education, the majority of respondents had a high school/vocational school education (54.8%) and a bachelor's degree (38.7%). The composition of respondents shows that they are a group of urban communities who are relatively active socially and economically and have a high potential for interacting with land services.

Analytically, this finding is important because it shows that limitations in procedural literacy cannot be explained solely by formal education factors. With a fairly dominant level of secondary to higher education, the main problem lies in the lack of translation of legal knowledge into operational understanding in the field of land. This is in line with the research by Castillo-martínez et al. (2023).

2. Certificate Ownership and Procedural Understanding Gap

A total of 51.8% of respondents already had land certificates, while 48.1% did not. However, 65.5% of respondents stated that they had little or no understanding of the land registration procedures at the National Land Agency (BPN). On the other hand, 52.9% of respondents cited legal certainty as the main purpose of land registration.

These findings reveal a gap between the interpretation of legal certainty as a normative goal and mastery of the procedural mechanisms to achieve it. Legal certainty is understood as a normative goal, but the procedural mechanisms to achieve it are not adequately understood. From an agrarian law perspective, this condition risks creating legal certainty that is only formal in nature, reflected in the existence of certificates without adequate understanding of land registration data maintenance and administrative risk mitigation efforts (Harsono, 2008)

3. Perceptions of Electronic Certificates and Levels of Digital Readiness

The survey results show that 53.8% of respondents had never heard of electronic certificates before filling out the questionnaire. In terms of security, only 13.8% of respondents believed that electronic certificates were more secure than physical certificates, while 34.5% expressed doubt or were unsure.

The level of approval for the implementation of electronic certificates shows clear polarization. A total of 31.6% of respondents stated that they strongly disagreed, while 44.7% were in the agree and strongly agree categories. This polarization indicates a digital readiness gap at the community level.

Resistance to electronic certificates in this context cannot be interpreted as a rejection of technology alone, but rather as a rational response to legal uncertainty, lack of procedural understanding, and concerns about data security. This reinforces the view that land digitalization requires a paradigm shift, not just a change in media (Rogers, 2003). In his research, Ahoen concluded that a national digital literacy campaign is needed to ensure that this transition is not only technologically successful, but also legally certain and socially just (Ahoen, 2025).

4. Land Disputes and Conflict Resolution Preferences

A total of 30% of respondents stated that they had experienced or knew of land disputes in their neighborhood. In terms of dispute resolution, 41.9% of respondents chose family deliberation and 29% chose village mediation, while litigation was the choice of a minority. These findings indicate that the community's legal culture still strongly favors non-litigation and restorative approaches. In the context of land administration digitalization, the preference for non-litigation mechanisms shows that the digital land administration system needs to be designed in line with the social practices of conflict resolution that are deeply rooted in the community. Digitalization that ignores the human dimension risks escalating disputes (Soekanto, 2010).

5. Personal Data Security and the Phenomenon of Trust-Based Compliance

A total of 58.6% of respondents stated that they did not fully understand the risks of personal data leaks in digital land services. However, at the same time, 59.4% of

respondents expressed a high level of trust (scale 4 and 5) in the National Land Agency (BPN) and the Notary Public (PPAT) in protecting their data.

The relationship between high levels of trust in institutions and low substantive understanding of digital systems shows a pattern of compliance based on institutional legitimacy (trust-based compliance), rather than substantive understanding of digital systems. This condition facilitates policy implementation in the short term, but in the long term, trust-based compliance is vulnerable and can lead to delegitimization if the system does not run optimally or if data leaks occur (Bannister & Connolly, 2014).

6. Repositioning the Role of PPAT in Land Digital Transition

A total of 72.4% of respondents considered the role of PPAT to be very important in preventing land disputes. This figure confirms the position of PPAT as an important figure in building trust and ensuring legal certainty in land matters.

In the digital land landscape, PPATs are directed to perform a dual function as deed officials and facilitators of public understanding in the digital transition. PPATs have a strategic function to translate legal norms and digital systems into terms that are accessible to the public, while also exercising due care in every legal action related to land (Purba & Suprayitno, 2025)

7. Electronic Certificates from a Jurisprudential Perspective

The Supreme Court has consistently emphasized that land certificates are strong evidence, but not absolute, as reflected in Supreme Court Decision Number 109 K/Sip/1971. Supreme Court Decision Number 821 K/Pdt/2011 emphasizes that administrative errors in land registration can weaken the legal force of certificates.

Furthermore, Supreme Court Decision Number 255 K/TUN/2016 emphasizes that land administration errors should not be borne by the community. In the context of electronic certificates, this jurisprudence reinforces the principle that the state and land officials remain primarily responsible for data accuracy and system security Yusuf et al. (2024).

8. Critical Analysis of Variable Comparison: Trust, Legal Literacy, and Digital Legal Certainty

The results of the comparison of variables in this study show a structural tension between the relatively high level of public trust in land institutions and PPATs and the low level of legal literacy and procedural understanding among the community. Quantitatively, this condition is reflected in the proportion of respondents who expressed a high level of trust (59.4%) in contrast to the proportion of respondents who admitted to having little or no understanding of land registration procedures (65.5%) and the risks of personal data protection (58.6%).

From the perspective of legal awareness theory, this condition shows that public compliance with the land law system is not yet fully based on substantial understanding, but still relies on institutional legitimacy and formal legal symbols. Soerjono Soekanto explains that public legal awareness does not stop at normative knowledge, but also includes legal understanding, attitudes, and behavior. When procedural understanding and legal risk awareness have not yet been formed, the compliance that emerges tends to be passive and situational (Hutahayan et al., 2023).

This finding is relevant when linked to the purpose of land registration as formulated in Article 19 of the Basic Agrarian Law, namely to guarantee legal certainty. Legal certainty in this context cannot be reduced to the mere existence of certificates as administrative products, but must be understood as a condition in which legal subjects

understand their rights, obligations, and legal protection mechanisms. Therefore, a comparison of variables between certificate ownership and procedural literacy indicates that the legal certainty perceived by the community is still formalistic in nature.

In the framework of land digitalization, this condition has the potential to give rise to what this article refers to as trust-based compliance, namely compliance that arises from trust in authorities and officials, rather than from an adequate understanding of the law. Conceptually, this pattern has structural weaknesses because it is highly vulnerable to crises of trust in the event of system disruptions, administrative errors, or data leaks.

9. Normative and Jurisprudential Implications of Land Digitalization

Legal Certainty in Digital Matters and the Limitations of Certificates as Evidence

In judicial practice, the Supreme Court has consistently emphasized that land title certificates are strong evidence, but not absolute. Supreme Court Decision No. 109 K/Sip/1971 emphasizes that certificates provide evidentiary strength as long as the physical and legal data cannot be proven otherwise. This principle has important implications in the context of electronic certificates (Situngkir et al., 2025).

Electronic certificates, even though they are issued through an integrated digital system, are still subject to the same principles of evidence. Thus, the quality of legal certainty is not only determined by the electronic medium, but also by the accuracy of the data, procedural correctness, and the diligence of officials in the land registration process. Supreme Court Decision Number 821 K/Pdt/2011 emphasizes that administrative flaws in the land registration process can weaken the legal force of certificates, even if they are issued by authorized officials.

A comparison of the variables in this study shows that the low level of procedural understanding among the public has the potential to increase the risk of disputes in the future, especially when electronic certificates begin to be widely used. Without adequate legal literacy, the public tends to regard both physical and electronic certificates as absolute evidence, even though legally, certificates can still be challenged.

Personal Data Protection as Part of Legal Certainty in Land Affairs

The comparison between the level of public trust and the low level of understanding of the risks of personal data leaks shows that there is a significant gap in the design of land digitization policies. Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection stipulates that every personal data controller is obliged to ensure the security and confidentiality of the data they manage. In the context of electronic land registration, land data is not only related to land objects, but also to the identities of legal subjects that have high strategic and economic value.

If public literacy regarding personal data risks is low, then the legal protection mechanisms provided by the law have the potential to not be utilized optimally. This reinforces the argument that digital legal certainty must be understood holistically, covering not only the guarantee of land rights, but also the guarantee of personal data protection as part of the constitutional rights of citizens.

The Role of PPAT in Bridging the Literacy and Trust Gap

The results of the variable comparison show that 72.4% of respondents consider the role of PPAT to be very important in preventing land disputes. This figure confirms the position of PPAT as a key actor trusted by the community in the land system. From a notarial law perspective, this trust is not only social in nature, but also has legal consequences in the form of a duty of care.

In the context of electronic certificates, the role of PPATs has become increasingly strategic. PPATs not only function as officials who draw up deeds, but also as mediators of legal knowledge who bridge the complexity of the digital system with the understanding of the community. Tan Thong Kie emphasizes that the prudence and accuracy of officials are key elements in preventing disputes and protecting the interests of the parties (Putra, 2025).

The trust-based compliance conditions identified in this study place PPAT in a crucial yet vulnerable position. High public trust without balanced legal literacy has the potential to shift an excessive burden of responsibility to PPAT in the event of disputes or digital system failures. Therefore, strengthening the educational role of PPAT needs to be positioned as an integral part of land digitalization policy.

Land Digitalization and Local Legal Culture Challenges

A comparison of variables related to dispute resolution shows that the majority of respondents still rely on non-litigation mechanisms, such as family deliberation (41.9%) and village mediation (29%). These findings reinforce the view that the legal culture of Indonesian society is still heavily influenced by family values and restorative conflict resolution.

In this context, land digitalization cannot be positioned as a wholly technocratic system. Instead, electronic systems need to be designed to be compatible with the local legal culture that exists within society. Supreme Court Decision Number 255 K/TUN/2016, which affirms that administrative errors by the state cannot be imposed on the community, can be read as a reinforcement of the principle of citizen protection in modern administrative systems.

Analytical Synthesis: From Variable Comparison to Policy Recommendations

Based on the overall comparative analysis of variables, it can be concluded that public readiness for electronic certificates is not linear. High public trust and appreciation for the role of PPAT does not automatically correlate with legal literacy and understanding of digital risks. This condition requires a policy approach that is not only oriented towards accelerating digitization, but also towards building public legal capacity.

Normatively, land digitalization must be positioned as an instrument to strengthen the objectives of land registration as mandated by the Basic Agrarian Law, not merely as administrative modernization. Jurisprudentially, the prudence of officials and the protection of community rights remain non-negotiable principles, both in conventional and electronic systems.

Conclusion

Based on the results of research conducted on residents of Duri Kepa Village, it can be concluded that community readiness for the implementation of electronic certificates is still in a critical transition phase, characterized by low legal literacy, poor understanding of land registration procedures, and a lack of knowledge about electronic certificates and personal data protection. Although land registration is understood as a means of obtaining legal certainty, the community's legal and digital readiness is not yet adequate to support the optimal implementation of electronic certificates.

This study also shows a gap between the high level of public trust in the National Land Agency (BPN) and the Notary Public (PPAT) and the low level of legal literacy among the community. Compliance with digital land services is driven more by institutional legitimacy than substantive legal understanding, which is reflected in a pattern of trust-based compliance. This condition has the potential to support the implementation of

electronic certificates in the short term, but in the long term, the sustainability of land digitalization through electronic certificates will only be effective if accompanied by systematic strengthening of public legal literacy, a humanistic approach based on local culture, and optimization of the role of PPAT as a link between the legal system and social reality so as not to cause legal uncertainty in the future.

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