

Digital Activity Of Participatory Culture (A Virtual Ethnographic Study Of Criticism Toward The Government Among Followers Of The Jeromepolin Instagram Account)

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Abstract

Social media has undergone a functional shift from a space primarily associated with entertainment to an arena of public discourse that enables citizens to participate in opinion formation and criticism of government policies. In August 2025, Jerome Polin, a young digital influencer widely known for sharing educational content, along with several other influencers, voiced criticism regarding emerging political issues, particularly the size of the Indonesian House of Representatives' (DPR) budget, which was perceived as disproportionate to legislative performance and the economic conditions faced by the public. This criticism intensified as the public became increasingly aware of various budget allocations, allowances, and facilities granted to members of the DPR that were considered excessive, while at the same time the government encouraged budget efficiency and austerity measures among citizens. This study aims to analyze digital participatory cultural activities in the process of mobilizing criticism against the government among followers of the Instagram account @jeromepolin, specifically in relation to the issue of DPR allowances framed through the public demand narrative "17+8." Employing a qualitative approach with a virtual ethnography method, the study focuses on observing digital interactions, analyzing uploaded content, and conducting online interviews with active followers of the account. The findings indicate that Jerome Polin's posts functioned as catalysts for the formation of a participatory virtual public sphere. Audiences were not merely content consumers but also meaning producers through comments, discussions, reposts, and the redistribution of critical narratives. These practices reflect the core characteristics of participatory culture as conceptualized by Henry Jenkins, including low barriers to participation, support for collaboration, and social engagement in the production and circulation of discourse. The mobilization of criticism observed in this context was non-confrontational yet effective in increasing political awareness, particularly among younger generations, while simultaneously reducing apathy toward governmental issues. This study concludes that digital influencers such as Jerome Polin play a significant role in facilitating the cultural mobilization of criticism through participatory practices on social media. In this context, social media functions not only as a channel for individual expression but also as an informal space for political learning that contributes to the strengthening of civic participation and digital democracy in Indonesia.

Keywords: Participatory Culture, Influencer, Mobilization of Criticism, Instagram, Virtual Public Sphere

Abstrak

Media sosial telah mengalami pergeseran fungsi dari sekedar ruang hiburan menjadi arena diskursus publik yang memungkinkan masyarakat terlibat dalam pembentukan opini dan kritik terhadap pemerintah. Jerome Polin seorang influencer muda yang kerap membagikan konten-konten pendidikan, pada bulan agustus 2025 bersama dengan beberapa influencer lainnya menyampaikan kritik terkait isu-isu politik yang berkembang terkait besarnya anggaran DPR yang dinilai tidak sebanding dengan kinerja serta kondisi ekonomi rakyat. Kritik ini menguat ketika publik melihat adanya berbagai pos anggaran, tunjangan, dan fasilitas DPR yang dianggap berlebihan, sementara di sisi lain pemerintah mendorong efisiensi dan penghematan anggaran diberbagai bidang. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis aktivitas digital budaya partisipatif dalam proses mobilisasi kritik terhadap pemerintah yang terjadi pada pengikut akun Instagram @jeromepolin, khususnya terkait isu tunjangan DPR dengan narasi tuntutan rakyat "17+8". Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode etnografi virtual, yang berfokus pada observasi interaksi digital, analisis konten unggahan, serta wawancara daring dengan pengikut aktif akun tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa unggahan Jerome Polin berfungsi sebagai pemicu terbentuknya ruang publik virtual yang partisipatif. Audiens tidak hanya berperan sebagai konsumen konten, tetapi juga sebagai produsen makna melalui komentar, diskusi, repost, dan penyebaran ulang narasi kritik. Aktivitas ini mencerminkan karakteristik budaya partisipatif sebagaimana yaitu rendahnya hambatan partisipasi, dukungan terhadap kolaborasi, serta keterlibatan sosial dalam produksi dan sirkulasi wacana. Mobilisasi kritik yang terjadi bersifat non-konfrontatif namun efektif dalam meningkatkan kesadaran politik, khususnya di kalangan generasi muda, serta mengurangi sikap apatis terhadap isu pemerintahan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa peran digital influencer seperti Jerome Polin mampu memfasilitasi mobilisasi kritik secara kultural melalui praktik budaya partisipatif di media sosial. Tidak hanya menjadi saluran ekspresi individual, media sosial juga menjadi ruang pembelajaran politik informal yang berkontribusi pada penguatan partisipasi masyarakat sipil dan prinsip demokrasi diruang digital.

Kata Kunci: Budaya Partisipatif, Influencer, Mobilisasi Kritik, Instagram, Ruang Publik Virtual

INTRODUCTION

Digital technology has transformed the way people interact and communicate, transcending the spatial and temporal boundaries that once limited the exchange of information. Social media and the internet enable social connections without direct physical contact. With this shift, digital space has become an integral part of everyday life rather than a separate realm from social contexts. In such circumstances, people have grown increasingly accustomed to using digital platforms to express their opinions, experiences, and emotions (Suyono, 2020). This transformation highlights the need to understand social media not merely as technology, but as a social space that shapes how people think. Furthermore, the virtual ethnography approach emphasizes practices, conversations, and processes of meaning-making within digital spaces (Injany, 2023).

Cyberspace, initially recognized as a communication medium, has rapidly evolved into a new public sphere that allows various social groups to participate openly. Individuals from diverse backgrounds can directly engage in public discussions without going through formal institutional intermediaries, thanks to the accessibility of digital technology and reduced barriers to participation. The public is encouraged to use social media as a platform to express opinions, articulate interests, organize criticism, and build collective support for public policies and social issues. Consequently, social media has shifted from being merely a space for individual expression into a broader and more dynamic arena for public debate. This change demonstrates that social representation and public opinion formation are no longer monopolized by institutional actors, but are instead shaped through ongoing digital conversations involving active citizen participation.

According to Jürgen Habermas, the public

sphere is a space where individuals engage in rational discourse about shared interests to influence policy. Social media has evolved into a virtual public sphere characterized by the rapid flow of information, open access, and mass user participation. This virtual public sphere shortens the distance between policy issues and citizens' everyday experiences, as people can respond directly when issues arise in digital spaces. Previously centralized political communication systems have become more fragmented through these communication patterns, although they remain interconnected within digital networks. In this context, public voices have greater opportunities to gain widespread attention without relying entirely on mainstream media as a channel of legitimacy. In the virtual public sphere, the position of society shifts from passive recipients of messages to active subjects who produce and interpret discourse. Activities such as commenting, discussing, and resharing content demonstrate that audiences do not merely receive messages, but also construct meaning through open interaction. This shift aligns with the perspective of Henry Jenkins (2006) on participatory culture, which positions users as drivers of information and value circulation. When users introduce new experiences or perspectives in comments, their role shifts from consumers to co-creators of discourse. Thus, digital spaces not only accommodate opinions but also mediate the process of collective meaning-making.

Participatory culture is characterized by low barriers to participation, support for collaborative creativity, and social interactions that enrich the circulation of discourse (Jenkins, 2006). Within this framework, the public does not merely extend messages but modifies meaning by incorporating personal experiences and interpretations. This participatory process allows public issues to remain alive, as their meanings are

continuously revised through repeated conversations. Such conditions indicate that the sustainability of critical discourse in digital spaces depends not only on the original content creator but also on the collective energy of the audience. This provides a theoretical basis that public criticism gains strength through the circulation of meaning, not merely the intensity of the message.

Within the landscape of the virtual public sphere, digital influencers emerge as strategic actors capable of directing public attention to specific issues. Influencers gain trust through credibility, emotional proximity, and consistency of values reflected in their content (Freberg et al., 2011; Ilham et al., 2022). When an influencer voices criticism, their influence stems not only from the substance of the message but also from the perception of social role modeling built over time. Therefore, influencers can function as catalysts for discussion that broaden public engagement with political issues. This condition underscores the importance of influencers' symbolic authority in mobilizing public attention.

Public attention toward the large parliamentary allowances in August 2025 illustrates how policy issues can easily attract widespread attention when they intersect with sensitive social conditions. Public dissatisfaction with economic pressures further reinforced the relevance of the issue, particularly when the use of state budgets was perceived as not reflecting citizens' lived realities. As criticism spread on social media, public reactions expanded, as many individuals felt their aspirations and experiences were represented. This demonstrates that digital spaces are capable of connecting individuals' personal experiences with structural issues, making social media a channel for expressing and amplifying social concerns.

In this context, Jerome Polin emerged as a figure who stimulated public participation through

posts regarding the "17+8" demand. His reputation as an educational influencer contributed to the perception that his criticism carried legitimacy and was worthy of discussion. Various responses, including comments, reposts, and the development of extended narratives, indicate that audiences do not passively receive messages but actively interpret and reproduce them. This interaction pattern highlights that influencer accounts can act as initial triggers for the expansion of criticism within the digital public sphere. These findings suggest that influence in the digital realm is not merely reactive to issues but can actively mobilize the public to sustain and expand discourse.

Although numerous studies have examined the role of influencers and digital public spheres, the direct relationship between influencer influence and audience participatory culture practices remains relatively underexplored. This gap is significant, as the effectiveness of mobilizing criticism is largely determined by how the public expands and transforms the meaning of influencer messages through digital interactions. The virtual ethnography approach provides an appropriate framework to understand these dynamics contextually, as it emphasizes practices, conversations, and meaning-making processes within digital spaces (Rosaliza et al., 2023). Through this approach, the relationship between influencers' symbolic influence and collective audience actions can be empirically analyzed. This connection is crucial to explain how criticism in digital spaces acquires its social power.

Building on this perspective, this study analyzes how digital activities on the Instagram account @jeromepolin shape participatory culture practices in responding to the issue of parliamentary allowances. The focus lies on the relationship between influencer messages, audience participation, and the transformation of criticism

into shared discourse. Through virtual ethnography, this research interprets interaction patterns, meaning negotiations, and the sustainability of criticism as reflected in comments, reposts, and digital discussions. The findings are expected to contribute to the study of digital communication and participatory culture, particularly in understanding how public criticism can be sustained through audience interaction. More broadly, this research emphasizes the importance of digital spaces as arenas for the collaborative formation of political awareness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Participatory Culture in Digital Media

Participatory culture marks a fundamental shift in the communication ecology, where audiences are no longer understood as passive recipients of messages but as subjects actively involved in constructing, interpreting, and expanding meaning. Henry Jenkins (2006) explains that power relations in digital communication have shifted from a top-down model to a more polycentric configuration, where authority over meaning is not solely held by content producers but also by the communities that interpret and respond to it. This characteristic positions participatory culture as a space for negotiating meaning, as every form of response, addition, or redistribution is not merely a personal expression but also an epistemic intervention that influences the direction of discourse. Within this framework, participation is not merely technical but forms part of a symbolic process that sustains issues through active user engagement.

The interconnectedness among users in participatory culture, according to Jenkins (2006), is understood as *collective intelligence*, a condition in which knowledge is not centralized in a single source but distributed and developed through

shared contributions. This concept emphasizes that truth and the relevance of discourse are not fixed but are shaped through repeated social validation processes, such as when users link information, make corrections, or question the validity of claims. Therefore, participatory culture not only expands message distribution but also activates mechanisms of social verification through dialogue, mutual correction, and open feedback. This mechanism is essential for understanding how audiences sustain the power of criticism, as the continuity of discourse depends on collective actions in reviewing and clarifying the original message.

Participatory culture also demonstrates that user engagement is not singular but layered, ranging from affective responses, such as liking content, to cognitive involvement, such as adding context and reformulating meaning. Jenkins et al. (2006) position this diversity of participation as a foundation of digital culture, as it allows users to determine how they contribute without structural limitations. These varying levels of participation create a spectrum of contributions, where actions such as commenting, resharing, or creating derivative content all help maintain the visibility of an issue, albeit with different intensities. Within this framework, the meaning of an issue does not originate solely from the influencer's message but is shaped through networks of interpretation as multiple voices process the message based on their own experiences.

From a sociological perspective, participatory culture can be understood as a form of digital citizenship, as it involves the public in interpreting social issues without requiring direct participation in formal political arenas. When public issues are reinterpreted through users' personal experiences, digital spaces function as arenas of collective reflection, enabling individuals to understand and evaluate their positions within

the social order. Qalbuadi et al. (2025) show that this pattern of participation facilitates political engagement among younger generations, not through direct calls to action but through the connection between digital experiences and everyday life. Thus, participatory culture provides a representational infrastructure that makes policy issues feel immediate and lived rather than merely consumed as information, encouraging audiences to pay attention to issues they find meaningful.

Theoretically, participatory culture suggests that the effectiveness of mobilizing criticism is not determined solely by the level of content virality, but by the sustainability of meaning maintained through shared interpretation. When users engage in negotiating the substance of criticism, verifying the accuracy of information, or demanding consistency from the figures who voice it, they activate participatory culture mechanisms to maintain the focus and direction of criticism. In this condition, influencers serve as initial triggers, while the power of mobilization depends on the public's ability to distribute, reinterpret, and monitor the development of issues. Participatory Culture Theory is used in this study to analyze patterns of audience engagement with critical content shared by Jerome Polin. As part of an active digital community, Jerome's followers are not merely passive consumers but also contribute to spreading, responding to, and reinforcing the criticism presented. This underscores that the formation of public opinion no longer occurs in a top-down manner but through collaborative processes within digital cultural practices. Therefore, participatory culture theory provides an analytical framework to explain how digital criticism remains alive as a collective discourse, even when the original source is no longer actively voicing the issue.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Influencers as Digital Opinion Leaders in Mobilizing Criticism

The findings show that Jerome Polin's academic background, educational persona, and emotional closeness to younger audiences provide moral legitimacy to the "17+8" criticism, allowing it to be understood as a representation of social anxiety rather than merely a personal opinion. The absence of partisan content in the criticism makes the public more comfortable engaging, enabling his post to function as a trigger that encourages audiences to enter the space of critique without fear of stigma. By presenting the issue in clear and accessible everyday language, Jerome Polin positions himself as an opinion leader who fosters awareness rather than directing action. Thus, his influence is grounded in trust and value alignment with the audience, rather than pressure or explicit calls to action.

The post also dissolves the boundary between entertainment content and the digital public sphere, allowing criticism to emerge naturally within an educational-themed account. The public reinterprets the issue of parliamentary allowances as something directly connected to their lived experiences, increasing the reach of criticism while transforming digital space into a discursive arena without formal institutional involvement. These findings emphasize that figures with an understanding of digital culture can mobilize political opinion through cultural pathways. Moreover, the quality of influencer impact is determined more by the consistency of value resonance than by the number of followers or the strength of persuasion.

Comment Sections as Spaces of Discourse and Participatory Culture

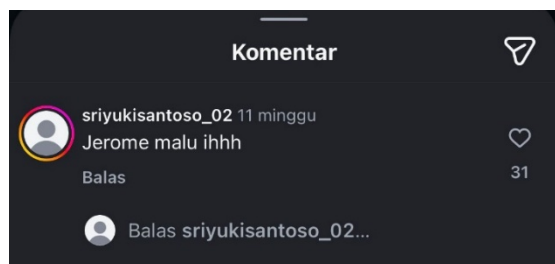


Figure 1. Comments on Jerome Polin's Post

The comment section on posts related to parliamentary allowance demands serves as an initial space for the public to respond directly through support, questions, and clarification. More than 32,000 comments indicate that audience responses do not stop at the influencer's expression but develop into ongoing conversations, reflecting resonance among users. Audiences reinterpret the demands based on personal experiences and social conditions, making the criticism relevant to everyday life. This interaction transforms the comment section into an entry point for public discussion rather than merely a space for momentary opinion expression.

Conversations in the comments also include corrections and additional explanations that enrich understanding of the issue, especially when certain comments receive significant support from other users. This pattern shows how the public informally reconstructs the meaning of criticism through user contributions. Criticism is not treated as a final message but is continuously tested through collective questioning and evaluation. In this way, comments function as mechanisms for negotiating meaning, keeping criticism relevant and valuable.

The continuity of discussion is evident when audiences revisit the issue in subsequent posts and request updates on the development of the demands. This pattern indicates that the

comment section serves as a participatory channel that sustains public attention even after the viral moment has passed. The diversity of expressions, ranging from support to skepticism, does not disrupt the flow of criticism but instead deepens collective understanding. These findings highlight the crucial role of comments in maintaining the continuity of criticism as part of participatory culture actively sustained by the public.

Negotiation of Meaning and Social Control over Influencers

Interactions in the comment section of the "17+8" posts show that audiences do not passively receive messages but reinterpret the boundaries and relevance of the demands according to their social experiences. Questions regarding the direction of criticism, types of demands, and their consequences indicate that the meaning of the message evolves through user reinterpretation. This makes criticism dynamic, developing as audiences actively question and evaluate the content. These interaction patterns demonstrate that comment discussions are a primary pathway for collective meaning-making.

Some users relate the criticism to personal experiences, such as economic hardship and inequality, making the list of demands more tangible and relevant to the public. The exchange of personal stories expands the context of criticism, bringing it closer to audiences' daily lives. This process shows that understanding of criticism is shaped not only by influencer narratives but also by shared social experiences, transforming criticism into a reflection of collective experience that strengthens its relevance.

Audiences also monitor Jerome's consistency after the viral post, requesting updates and reminding him to remain aligned with values they consider important. Comments in the form of

criticism, encouragement, or moral reminders indicate that public support is accompanied by demands for accountability. This pattern reflects social control mechanisms that ensure criticism remains focused on collective interests rather than shifting toward personal agendas. The findings emphasize that the success of criticism depends on a combination of meaning negotiation and audience moral oversight, which maintains both direction and strength in the digital sphere.

Transformation of Individual Criticism into Collective Criticism

The findings reveal that the “17+8” criticism transforms from a personal opinion into a public issue when audiences expand its meaning through repeated interaction. The consistency of the issue across 12 posts and 58 story highlights, combined with strong responses to the initial post (approximately 2.7 million likes and 32,000 comments), provides space for the public to reinterpret the criticism based on their experiences. Comments, reposts, and personal narratives create pathways for the circulation of meaning, allowing the criticism to extend beyond Jerome’s content and evolve into active audience discourse.

Public attention continues in subsequent posts (approximately 789,000 likes), indicating that engagement persists even after initial virality declines. Audiences highlight and reinforce aspects of the demands most relevant to their conditions, while comments receiving hundreds or thousands of likes act as markers of collective legitimacy. This pattern confirms that the strength of criticism lies not only in its originator but also in the multitude of voices that reinterpret and amplify it.

The transformation into collective discourse becomes more evident when users share the issue in their own digital spaces through quotes, memes, or personal experiences, without always

referencing the original post. This practice—also observed among six informants—shows that criticism spreads through user adaptation while maintaining its core message. Follow-up comments requesting updates indicate that the public feels responsible for sustaining the issue, making mobilization independent of a single figure. Thus, criticism becomes collective through repeated participation, forming part of an ongoing public conversation.

Implications of Criticism Mobilization for Public Political Awareness



Figure 2. Post on the Content of the “17+8” Demands

The “17+8” post on August 31, 2025, which gained approximately 2.7 million likes, 32,100 comments, 915,000 reposts, and 609,000 shares, demonstrates that the issue of parliamentary allowances successfully attracted widespread public attention. Continued engagement in the September 4, 2025 post (approximately 789,000

likes and 11,800 comments) indicates sustained audience interest beyond the initial viral peak. Audiences connect the criticism to their personal economic conditions, making public policy issues feel closely tied to social experience. These findings show that digital interaction serves as an initial pathway for connecting state policies with everyday life.

Highly supported comments, such as those receiving 31,700 likes regarding work efficiency criticism, reinforce narratives perceived as representing public concerns. Meanwhile, comments with lower support, such as those questioning representation, indicate space for evaluating the criticism itself. Responses from six informant accounts show that political awareness is formed not only through agreement but also through clarification and skepticism. This pattern suggests that audiences construct their political positions through layered evaluations of the same issue.

Repeated interactions through likes, comments, reposts, and shares indicate that digital engagement fosters a sense of responsibility to follow issue developments beyond the initial criticism. Comments requesting updates show that public attention evolves from initial emotional reactions into a deeper desire to understand the direction of demands. These findings indicate that criticism mobilization not only generates momentary discussion but also fosters political awareness through direct digital engagement. Thus, online participation becomes a pathway that strengthens the public's role as monitors of state issues in digital spaces.

The mobilization of criticism in the "17+8" post demonstrates how interpersonal influence operates through figures perceived as credible and emotionally connected to audiences. As an opinion leader, Jerome Polin draws public attention to the

issue of parliamentary allowances without direct instruction, but through accessible narratives. Perceptions of authenticity, consistency, and value alignment make his criticism widely accepted as a socially legitimate expression (Freberg et al., 2011). Similar studies show that public figures can trigger the expansion of meaning through collective audience responses (Fidela et al., 2024). This indicates that criticism mobilization occurs not spontaneously but through emotional resonance built from track records and interpersonal relationships. This resonance becomes the entry point for the public to understand criticism as a shared concern rather than a personal expression.

Audience trust in Jerome is based on consistent attitudes, a track record of educational content, and emotional closeness, making his criticism feel like a public voice. This aligns with the view that public trust enhances acceptance of political ideas when audiences perceive value congruence (Freberg et al., 2011). The findings show that his posts create a symbolic space where followers position themselves as part of the discourse rather than mere observers. This transforms individual criticism into collective meaning through responses and redistribution. Shared ownership reduces social distance between influencer and audience, enabling rapid diffusion of criticism within digital networks. Trust thus becomes a crucial foundation of effective digital influence, as legitimacy depends on repeated collective acceptance.

Jerome not only voices criticism but also creates a reflective space for audiences to understand broader social contexts. This positions him as part of civil society that sustains democratic legitimacy through measured public criticism (Saputra, 2025). Through agenda-setting mechanisms, he directs public attention to parliamentary allowances without acting as a

formal political actor (El Yana, 2025). These findings align with the idea that digital spaces expand traditional public spheres, enabling citizens to collectively negotiate issues. His criticism functions not merely as a call to action but as a trigger for awareness, allowing audiences to participate in shaping the issue. Thus, criticism becomes an instrument of understanding rather than merely a tool for debate.

The shift of audiences from passive consumers to active participants can be understood through participatory culture, which enables low-barrier engagement, collaboration, and collective meaning-making, as described by Henry Jenkins (2006). The findings show that comments, discussions, and content redistribution serve as concrete mechanisms of digital participation that expand the context of criticism. These activities reflect four dimensions of participatory culture: affiliation, expression, collaborative problem-solving, and circulation (Rohimah et al., 2021). Audiences move beyond emotional support by enriching discussions with data links, personal experiences, and reinterpretations. This transforms one-way communication into open dialogue that can refine and expand criticism.

Layered comments reflect *collective intelligence*, where individual experiences are assembled into shared knowledge (Jenkins, 2006). Digital space functions as a medium of meaning production shaped by symbolic interaction and technology (Nasrullah, 2015). Network infrastructure supports the distribution and reinterpretation of information, sustaining conversations within socially distributed rhythms (Van Dijk, 2020). The findings show that criticism of parliamentary allowances becomes not only a political issue but also a process of social knowledge formation, where the public learns through active participation. This collective meaning keeps criticism contextually relevant and

adaptable to changing social conditions. Thus, social media functions not only as a channel of opinion but also as a medium for constructing shared reality.

Audience-driven social control demonstrates that influencer legitimacy is not permanent but must be continuously reinforced through value consistency and ethical presence. Audiences question meanings, request clarification, and remind influencers to avoid shifting criticism into provocation or personal interests (Freberg et al., 2011). This pattern prevents the emergence of personality cults, as influencer power is constantly evaluated by the public. Within participatory culture, this mechanism serves as value negotiation that maintains the relevance and integrity of criticism. Public oversight thus acts as a balancing force in political discourse.

Finally, the transformation of criticism from individual to collective occurs through the circulation of meaning carried by audiences into their respective social spaces. Users reinterpret the “17+8” narrative based on personal experience and redistribute it, continuously renewing its meaning (Freberg et al., 2011). This process shows that mobilization success depends not only on influencer activity but also on the audience’s ability to sustain criticism independently. The chain of meaning circulation extends the lifespan of the issue and maintains its visibility beyond viral moments. This pattern forms the basis of decentralized and layered public opinion mobilization. Therefore, participatory culture provides the social infrastructure that enables criticism to evolve into collective awareness, demonstrating that active publics can reshape the position of criticism within national discourse.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Jerome Polin acts as a digital opinion leader with significant capacity to mobilize public criticism through social media. This role is built upon strong personal credibility, a large follower base, and an image as an educational figure closely connected to younger generations. Audience trust in him enables the critical messages he delivers to resonate strongly within digital spaces. The criticism is not confrontational or coercive; rather, it is framed through a rational and symbolic approach that emphasizes the institutional responsibility of the government. In this way, Jerome Polin is able to bring policy issues into the digital public sphere persuasively, while directing audience attention toward structural demands without provoking horizontal conflict or excessive societal polarization.

Furthermore, audience interaction in Instagram comment sections demonstrates that this space functions as a participatory arena of public discourse. Audiences are not passive; instead, they actively interpret, evaluate, and respond to influencer posts through comments, likes, and user-to-user replies. These interactions reflect the dynamics of participatory culture, where support, criticism, and skepticism coexist as forms of meaning negotiation regarding the issues raised. The comment section is not merely a space for personal opinion expression but also serves as a mechanism of social control and idea exchange. Through this process, a form of public discourse based on citizen participation emerges, illustrating how social media can expand political deliberation beyond formal channels.

The findings also indicate that criticism

initially expressed at an individual level can transform into collective criticism through social media mechanisms. Posts related to the “17+8” demands demonstrate how Jerome Polin’s personal criticism is curated, visualized, and interpreted as a representation of public voice. This transformation occurs through practices such as sharing, reposting, and cross-platform dissemination, which broaden the reach of the message while strengthening its legitimacy. Social media functions as a medium that consolidates previously fragmented public concerns and bridges digital criticism with the potential for collective action in the real world. The implications of this mobilization are reflected in increased political awareness and participation, particularly among younger generations, and position social media as an informal space for political learning that contributes to strengthening democratic awareness in society.

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