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Visual Arts of Sukatani Band on Social Media as Participatory Movement Affects the Government Policies

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the Sukatani Band case and their controversial song "Bayar Bayar Bayar," which criticized extortion practices by certain Indonesian police officers and became a voice against social injustice. Through a qualitative case study approach, this research investigates how social movement activity stimulates the emergence and proliferation of visual arts on social media as mechanisms of reflexive response and policy influence. The study analyzes the rise of public expression on Instagram triggered by pressure and alleged intimidation experienced by Sukatani from police institutions, including coercion to reveal their identity and its social impact. Findings reveal that institutional repression paradoxically intensified counter-hegemonic artistic production, with Sukatani's forced apology generating 255 posters from 140 artists within five days. Hashtags #KamiBersamaSukatani and #IndonesiaGelap generated over 600,000 social media posts, ultimately compelling police to reverse their prohibition stance. The study demonstrates how social media has become a strategic space for spreading critical messages, building solidarity, and pushing for policy change. Analysis highlights the role of artists as organic intellectuals who strengthen resistance against political hegemony through artwork and visual communication. The research operationalizes Gramscian hegemony theory for digital environments, revealing how apparatuses of power and apparatuses of hegemony operate simultaneously in social media spaces. Although freedom of expression remains hampered by state repression, public participation through visual arts proves an effective tool in contemporary democracy to voice inequality and dismantle oppressive structures.

Keywords: Counter-Hegemony, Participatory Movement, Policy Influence, Social Media Activism, Visual Arts

INTRODUCTION

In February 2025, Indonesia witnessed a significant wave of civic demonstrations known as "Indonesia Gelap" (Dark Indonesia), which originated in Jakarta and rapidly spread across the archipelago from February 17 to 21. These protests, predominantly led by student coalitions and civil society organizations, emerged in response to substantial budgetary reallocations that prioritized the free school lunch program while simultaneously implementing severe cuts to education and social welfare sectors. The involvement of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) and the Indonesian National Police (Polri) in program implementation intensified public anxiety regarding the potential resurgence of ABRI's dual function (Dwifungsi ABRI), a controversial political doctrine that had been formally abolished during the reform era (Khozen, 2025). The demonstrations mobilized thousands of participants who occupied legislative offices across multiple regions, marking a critical juncture in contemporary Indonesian civic activism (Berenschot et al., 2022).

During these protests, demonstrators adopted "Bayar Bayar" (Pay Pay Pay) by the band Sukatani as an unofficial anthem, transforming the song into a symbol of resistance against institutional corruption. The situation escalated dramatically on February 20, 2025, when Sukatani unexpectedly published an apology on their Instagram account (@sukatani.band) addressed to the National Police Chief, simultaneously revealing their previously concealed identities. Band member Lutfi stated, "We deeply apologize to the National Police Chief and the police institution for the song we wrote called 'Bayar Bayar Bayar'. The lyrics included the word 'pay the police,' which made the song go viral on several social media platforms. I wrote the song as a critique of police officers who violate regulations" (Ayu, 2025). Concurrently, the band announced the withdrawal of the song from all music platforms and urged social media users to delete content featuring their work, explicitly disclaiming future responsibility for its circulation. The unmasking of band members Alectroguy and TwisterAngel, who had maintained anonymity throughout their artistic career, represented a dramatic departure from their established practice. The aftermath proved severe for vocalist Indriyati, a professional educator, who faced immediate dismissal from her teaching position, raising fundamental questions about freedom of expression and artistic autonomy (Aisyah, 2022; Putra, 2025).

The public response to this apology was characterized by widespread skepticism and the proliferation of critical discourse across digital platforms. Despite official denials from the National Police (Polri) regarding allegations of intimidation, netizens circulated memes and commentary suggesting coercive pressure had been exerted on the band (Iman, 2025). The National Police Chief publicly asserted institutional openness to criticism and initiated an investigation through the Division of Professional and Security Affairs (Propam) targeting

Central Java Regional Police personnel who had contacted Sukatani members. However, Prof. Dr. Wahyudi Kumorotomo, a public policy management expert from Gadjah Mada University, contended that the incident demonstrated institutional unpreparedness to receive public criticism constructively. He emphasized that constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression, as enshrined in Law 39/1999 and Law 9/1998, appeared to be inadequately internalized within police institutional culture, arguing that criticism should function as constructive input for performance improvement rather than trigger defensive reactions (Grehenson, 2025).

The digital transformation has fundamentally altered the landscape of political activism, with social media platforms serving as primary channels for creating, disseminating, and amplifying visual content in contemporary social movements (Castillo-Esparcia et al., 2023; Sahu & Gupta, 2024; Saifudin & Rosmaya, 2022). Digital platforms have served as powerful conduits for local cultural texts, enabling them to achieve not only widespread visibility but also significant success (Riyanto et al., 2025). Gibson et al. (2022) and Lane et al. (2024) argued that these technological affordances facilitate unprecedented connectivity and transnational collaboration, enabling rapid mobilization and message diffusion across geographical boundaries. Visual arts have historically functioned as catalysts for social transformation, and their significance persists in contemporary struggles for justice and equality (Adie et al., 2025; Kyomugisha, 2025). Social media has evolved beyond unidirectional information transmission to become a bidirectional communication medium where interactive features substantially influence audience engagement and response patterns (Martin & MacDonald, 2020; Shi & Dai, 2023; Widyaswari & Widnyana, 2018). Su et al. (2022) believed that the advent of spontaneous community participation, facilitated by social media infrastructure, has accelerated the dissemination of activist messages and collective sentiments to broader publics.

The emergence of social media platforms such as Instagram has transformed the manner in which individuals communicate and disseminate information. Instagram, as a visual platform that enables users to upload and share photographs and videos, has become an ideal space for digital rhetoric. Instagram provides a platform where individuals and organizations can share photographs, videos, and live updates, rendering it not merely a social media tool but a dynamic space for storytelling and persuasion (Baskara et al., 2025). Within this context, social media operates as a contested terrain where ideological control and political narratives are constructed, negotiated, and challenged (Mahendra & Nugroho, 2025). According to Gramsci, hegemony refers to the process through which dominant groups in society exercise leadership over others through culture, values, and ideological frameworks. This form of control transcends mere coercion or forced compliance. Rather, it operates when particular modes of thinking become so pervasive and accepted that individuals, including those who are subordinate, perceive them as

normal or natural. Civil society constitutes a terrain where various groups endeavor to influence others by promoting their own ideological constructs, establishing them as legitimate ways of thinking and living. This positioning reinforces their beliefs and ensures continued support within mainstream societal structures (Sardar, 2024).

Few researchers also stated that digital platforms mediate the dynamics of hegemony and counter-hegemony, providing subordinate groups with mechanisms to resist ideological domination propagated through media channels (Kristiyono et al., 2020; Pepe-Oliva & Casero-Ripollés, 2023; Sevignani, 2022; Suhardi, 2024). Antonio Gramsci's theoretical framework distinguishes between apparatuses of power and apparatuses of hegemony. The former encompasses institutions exercising direct coercion, including police, military, and judicial systems, while the latter comprises social and cultural institutions that secure and maintain dominance through ideological consent and intellectual leadership rather than force (Adamson, 1980; Zucchetti & Cimino, 2021). This distinction illuminates how power operates through both violence and persuasion, with hegemonic apparatuses relying on ideological consensus to achieve social control (Siswati, 2018).

Existing scholarship has extensively examined the intersection of digital activism, visual arts, and social movements across various contexts. Satria and Nurmandi (2024) explored how social media users (netizens) respond when new policies are introduced and how their behavior connects with public policy discourse on social media platforms. Their findings demonstrate that netizens actively respond to various public policies and that these responses influence behavioral patterns. The relationship between social media and public policy affects netizens' actions on social media and shapes their reactions to government policies (Satria & Nurmandi, 2024). Similarly, Abadi et al. (2024) investigated how viral news is becoming increasingly common and affecting judicial processes. Their research revealed that institutions react to the opinions and demands expressed online, and that viral news can influence the outcomes of legal cases and institutional decisions (Abadi et al., 2024).

Saud and Margono (2021) have documented how social media platforms facilitate collective action and political participation, particularly among youth populations mobilizing against authoritarianism and corruption. Amon (2025) and Espada-Brignoni (2024) has also explored the role of music and performative arts in resistance movements, demonstrating how cultural productions become vehicles for political dissent and identity formation. Additionally, Megiddo (2019) and Silwal and Kshetri (2025) have analyzed state responses to digital activism, including surveillance, censorship, and legal mechanisms deployed to suppress critical voices. In contrast to these previous studies, which primarily focused on textual discourse and policy responses, this research investigates how the public articulates protest through visual arts on social media platforms, thereby capturing societal attention and inspiring broader participation in expressing dissent through visual artistic practices within digital spaces.

However, several critical gaps persist in the existing literature. First, limited research has specifically investigated the mechanisms through which visual arts on social media generate reflexive responses that influence government policy modifications, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts. Second, while studies have examined either artist activism or public mobilization separately, few have analyzed the dialectical relationship between artist expression, institutional repression, and subsequent public counter-responses as an integrated process. Third, existing frameworks inadequately address how the forced revelation of anonymous artists' identities functions as a form of disciplinary power and its cascading effects on civic discourse. Finally, scholarship has insufficiently theorized how Gramscian concepts of hegemony and organic intellectuals manifest specifically through visual arts practices in digital environments within hybrid democratic regimes.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the Sukatani Band case as a paradigmatic instance of how visual arts function as reflexive media within participatory movements that impact governmental policy. The research novelty lies in its integrated analysis of three interconnected dimensions: the artistic production as social critique, the institutional response as hegemonic apparatus, and the public's visual counter-response as counter-hegemonic practice. Unlike previous studies that focus on isolated aspects of digital activism, this research traces the complete cycle of artistic intervention, institutional suppression, and collective resistance, demonstrating how each phase generates the conditions for subsequent actions. Furthermore, this study contributes theoretically by operationalizing Gramscian hegemony theory specifically for analyzing visual arts activism in social media contexts, providing a framework for understanding how cultural productions challenge dominant power structures in contemporary democracies.

The central research question guiding this inquiry is: How does social movement activity stimulate the emergence and proliferation of visual arts on social media platforms as mechanisms of reflexive response and policy influence? This research examines the dynamics of public expression on social media triggered by the pressure and alleged intimidation experienced by Sukatani from police institutions, including the coercion to reveal their identity and its broader social ramifications. The study investigates the complex interplay between artistic expression, institutional power, public mobilization, and policy discourse within Indonesia's evolving democratic landscape.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a case study approach to investigate the Sukatani Band phenomenon and its broader implications for visual arts activism on social media. The case study method was selected due to its capacity to provide in-depth understanding of complex contemporary phenomena within their real-life contexts, particularly when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly

evident (Yin, 2003). Following Creswell and Poth (2024), the research design encompasses multiple data sources including observations of social media content, documentary materials, visual artifacts, and relevant media coverage. The analytical approach focuses on understanding the case's complexity rather than generating broad generalizations, emphasizing the specific contextual factors that shape the phenomenon under investigation. As Merriam (1988) articulates, case study analysis derives particular richness from its attention to the specific environment and circumstances in which events unfold. The iterative analytical process, conducted concurrently with data collection, enables researchers to develop nuanced interpretations that capture both the chronological progression of events and the underlying meanings embedded within them.

Data collection for this study incorporated both primary and secondary sources to ensure comprehensive coverage of the phenomenon. Primary data consisted of visual arts materials circulated on social media platforms, particularly Instagram, during the critical period between February 20 and February 26, 2025, corresponding to the police response to Sukatani Band and the Indonesia Gelap demonstrations. This corpus included memes, posters, digital illustrations, and other visual expressions created and disseminated by the public as reflexive responses to institutional actions. Secondary data were gathered through systematic literature review encompassing peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and verified news reports from reputable media sources. The research process followed six sequential stages: first, determining the appropriateness and boundaries of the case; second, formulating the central research questions and analytical focus; third, collecting data from multiple sources as outlined by Yin (2003), including documents, archival records, and visual artifacts; fourth, conducting iterative data analysis to identify patterns and themes; fifth, developing detailed case descriptions that illuminate contextual factors and event sequences; and sixth, synthesizing findings to articulate the lessons learned from the case, following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) interpretive framework as discussed in Creswell and Poth (2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Case Selection and Contextual Background

This study examines the Sukatani Band case as a paradigmatic instance of how visual arts function as reflexive media within participatory movements. The selection of this case was motivated by the band's central role in triggering widespread public expression through visual artworks on Instagram, as well as the broader concerns regarding the protection of freedom of expression in Indonesia. Despite constitutional guarantees and legislative frameworks protecting freedom of expression, the practical implementation of these rights remains tenuous. The state has demonstrably failed to provide secure spaces for artistic criticism, a fundamental component of democratic governance. The intimidation tactics, forced identity disclosure, and employment termination experienced by Sukatani Band

members exemplify systematic efforts to suppress critical voices (Puannandini et al., 2025).



Figure 1 Sukatani Band in punk style and always wearing masks when performing **Source:** Instagram @sukatani.band (2025)

Sukatani is a punk band originating from Purbalingga, Central Java, Indonesia, established in 2022. The band comprises Muhammad Syifa Al Lutfi, known by the stage name Alectroguy, who serves as guitarist and producer, and Novi Citra Indrivati, performing as Twister Angel, who functions as vocalist. Their musical aesthetic encompasses punk, post-punk, and new wave genres, drawing inspiration from 1980s anarcho-punk and proto-punk traditions. Band members consistently performed while wearing masks, maintaining anonymity as a deliberate artistic choice (Nurrijal, 2025). Their lyrical content addresses social inequality and the struggles confronting ordinary citizens, garnering recognition for its critical perspective on societal issues. The band has established a distinctive performance practice of distributing vegetables on stage, a symbolic gesture reflecting their commitment to agricultural and social justice causes. The song "Bayar Bayar" delivers incisive social critique of extortion practices perpetrated by certain Indonesian police officers. The composition articulates public anxieties regarding corruption in public services, particularly concerning driver's licenses and traffic violations requiring illegal payments. The song achieved viral status across social media platforms, subsequently generating controversy that culminated in legal threats against the band.

The punk subculture in Indonesia emerged during the late 1980s to early 1990s, as documented in various publications from that period (Al-Ramadhan & Mangoenkoesoemo, 2025). Punk fundamentally represents an anti-establishment orientation, demonstrating resistance within power relations. The punk subculture functions as an antithesis to conventional social norms and established rules created by dominant culture to maintain existing social orders. Punk subculture proliferates because it provides channels for political and social discourse while facilitating individual expression (Fathmawati & Adi, 2023). Indonesian punk culture does not

merely replicate global aesthetics but embodies a resistance ethos that addresses frequently marginalized local issues. Its resilience derives from consistently maintained do-it-yourself culture (Al-Ramadhan & Mangoenkoesoemo, 2025). Given its predominance among youth populations, punk serves as a mechanism for identity construction. Adherents create autonomous identities through punk values, particularly the DIY ethic. The DIY principle constitutes a fundamental component of punk culture, manifesting resistance to mainstream conventions and enabling political expression within the punk community (Fathmawati & Adi, 2023).

The Indonesia Gelap Movement and Political Context

The "Indonesia Gelap" protests persisted for at least one week, led by student organizations including the Student Executive Board (Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa Seluruh Indonesia – BEM SI). These sustained protests criticized the Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka administration, which had been in office for more than 100 days. Four primary clusters constituted the focal points of the "Indonesia Gelap" protests on February 20, 2025. First, demands for passage of pro-people legislation including the Indigenous Peoples Bill, the Asset Confiscation Bill, and the Domestic Workers Protection Bill. Second, rejection of anti-people regulations, specifically revisions to the TNI Law, the Polri Law, the House of Representatives' Rules of Procedure, the Mineral and Coal Mining Law, and the Attorney General's Office Law. Third, evaluation of budget efficiency policies, the oversized cabinet, the free nutritious meal program (Makan Bergizi Gratis – MBG), problematic national strategic projects (PSN), and the proposed elimination of performance allowances for lecturers and teachers. The fourth cluster demanded cancellation of problematic policies, including the multifunctional role of TNI/Polri, Presidential Instruction No. 1 of 2025 concerning budget efficiency, state budget allocation for Danantara, and the development of Indonesian National Capital (IKN Nusantara). Parallel demonstrations occurred in other cities including Yogyakarta, Solo, and Makassar (CNN Indonesia, 2025).

The issue propagated rapidly across social media platforms, prompting swift public response through creative production subsequently shared on these platforms. Social media has transformed into a mechanism for public empowerment by providing direct access to political discourse. The paradigm previously centered on political elites is shifting as the public actively participates in opinion expression and political decision-making processes. The role of social media in shaping public opinion proves crucial through information dissemination, facilitation of discussions, and provision of platforms for diverse voices across the political spectrum, thereby creating a dynamic public sphere. Public opinion is influenced not solely by conventional media but also by interactions and content on social media, which demonstrate greater interactivity (Arsyad et al., 2024).

Legal Framework and Freedom of Expression

Law regulates rights by granting those rights to individuals while simultaneously imposing obligations. Human rights represent inherent powers possessed by individuals, enabling defense of those rights, with universal recognition and respect obligatory. Human rights are regulated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Articles 28A through 28J, and in Law No. 39 of 1999. Legal protection for freedom of artistic expression from an international convention perspective is established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. From a national legal instrument perspective, legal protection for freedom of artistic expression is categorized as a form of freedom of expression (Wijaya et al., 2022). Over time, freedom of opinion and expression has deteriorated, impeded by ambiguous policies and regulations that generate divergent interpretations between the public and government. Freedom of opinion is no longer defined as freedom without interference from others. Spaces for expression have become targets for those antagonistic to public criticism (Adhanurrizqi, 2024).

The pressure exerted by police on artists for expressing criticism of police officers demonstrates governmental incapacity to handle criticism constructively. Although police ultimately stated that Propam investigated officers who met with the artists and did not prohibit performance of the song, public perception of sensitive and aggressive officers had already been established. A survey conducted by Kompas Research and Development on July 1, 2024, indicated that 73.1 percent of respondents maintained a positive image of the Indonesian National Police (Nugraheny & Ihsanuddin, 2024). However, a subsequent survey report dated January 24, 2025, ranked the Polri as the state institution with a positive image, with 65.7 percent rating it positively (Wiryono & Belarminus, 2025). These data reveal a decline in public trust toward the police institution.

Chronology of Events and Institutional Response

The following chronology documents events experienced by Sukatani Band in early 2025. On February 5, authorities visited the school where Novi taught. According to Khairul Mudakir, Chairman of the Al Madani Foundation, a police officer from the local police station visited the foundation one day before Novi's dismissal. However, Khairul confirmed that Novi's dismissal was unrelated to the police officer's statement but rather to Novi's code of ethics violation (Kurniawan & Juliati, 2025). On February 6, Novi was unilaterally dismissed by the school. The Education and Teachers Association (P2G) condemned the allegedly arbitrary dismissal of the Sukatani vocalist, subsequently revealed to be a teacher at an elementary school in Banjarnegara. P2G asserted that the action experienced by Novi constituted discriminatory treatment, potentially violating Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, Government Regulation Number 19 of 2017 concerning Teachers, and Minister of Education and Culture Regulation

Number 10 of 2017 concerning Protection of Teachers and Education Personnel (Putra, 2025).

On February 21, demonstrations against "Indonesia Gelap" occurred, with Sukatani's song performed by protesters. Participants gathered at Taman Ismail Marzuki commenced a long march to the Horse Statue area in Central Jakarta for the culminating "Indonesia Gelap" demonstration, proceeding toward Jalan Medan Merdeka Barat towards the State Palace. Hundreds of protesters sang "Bayar, bayar, bayar" in the Horse Statue area. Demonstrators wore black clothing and carried posters and banners criticizing the movement. No protesters wore university jackets during the long march. Tegar Afriansyah, spokesperson for the Dark Indonesia Action, stated this reflected the consolidation agreement held on Thursday night. The agreement emphasized relinquishing individual egos by not wearing university jackets during the demonstration (CNN Indonesia, 2025).



Figure 2 Two members of the Sukatani band opened their mask while apologized to the police via their Instagram account "Bayar Bayar" song Source: Instagram @sukatani.band (2025)

On February 20, news emerged that the song "Bayar Bayar Bayar" had been banned. Sukatani issued an apology to the National Police Chief while removing their masks. After issuing an apology to the Indonesian National Police, the band revealed that the song was written as a critique of police officers deemed to have violated regulations. However, following intense public criticism, they decided to withdraw the song from various digital platforms and requested others to remove it (Rosa, 2025). The Central Java Regional Police subsequently addressed negative responses from netizens and the public, who accused the police of intimidating and repressing Sukatani personnel, compelling them to issue an apology and withdraw the song. The Head of Public Relations for the Central Java Regional Police, Senior Commissioner Artanto, emphasized that the police are not anti-criticism and continue to respect freedom of expression through art. He acknowledged summoning Sukatani personnel for clarification, stating that the police respect the act of expressing opinions through art and are not anti-criticism (Detik Jatim, 2025).

Public Response and Digital Counter-Hegemony

Volume and trend

On February 20, netizens expressed outrage, and resistance-themed posters appeared on social media. Netizens became uneasy after viewing Sukatani's video clarification. In the video, Alectro Guy and Twisted Angel apologized to the police for allegedly tarnishing their reputation. The song contained explicit lyrics depicting the corrupt police system, specifically how officers frequently charge extra fees when handling public matters. Sukatani argued they simply wanted to criticize individuals who engage in extortion (Azka, 2025). Subsequently, social media, particularly Instagram, was populated with visual arts created spontaneously and sporadically by Indonesians. They participated in art activism by creating and displaying numerous graphic design posters as expressions of support for Sukatani (Azka, 2025).

| 10 days | 14 days | 2 days | Today | 1 Feb - 24 Feb | 25 Feb | 2

Figure 3 Conversation trends about Sukatani on various social media platforms **Source:** BBC News Indonesia (2025)

The hashtag #Kamibersamasukatani topped trending topics on X with 192,000 tweets, followed by #IndonesiaGelap with over 420,000 tweets. On Google Trends, "bayar bayar bayar" search volume reached over 200, representing a 100 percent increase (Detik Jatim, 2025). Conversations using the words "Sukatani," "Police," and "Indonesian Police" increased between February 20 and 22, mentioned 17,000 times, peaking on February 21 (BBC News Indonesia, 2025).



Figure 4 The atmosphere of the exhibition at LibStudio, Yogyakarta, featuring 255 works of visual arts by netizens, supporting the Sukatani Band **Source**: Instagram @arsita_pinandita (2025)

Between February 23 and 25, submissions for the Poster Exhibition "Visual Propaganda Call: After Darkness Comes Darkness" were opened. The hashtag #KamiBersamaSukatani rapidly gained traction. Netizens responded through various means, including remixing the song "Bayar Bayar Bayar" with touches of various genres and creating protest posters with aggressive tones and imagery (Azka, 2025). A total of 255 posters were collected and exhibited from February 27 to March 1 at the Libstud exhibition space in Yogyakarta. Approximately 140 artists from across Indonesia expressed solidarity with Sukatani (Azka, 2025). Most posters displayed at Libstud appeared aggressively critical of the police, unconstrained by prevailing Indonesian politeness norms. Masks symbolized anonymous manual laborers and representations of marginalized communities (Azka, 2025).



Figure 5 Some visual arts created by netizens are displayed on Instagram **Source:** Instagram @bams.art, @corner10side, @aktivis.mahasiswa @mbutzgambutz, @pemudatersesat.406 @tirto.id, @hambayomann, @mistakesmachine, @muklay (2025)

On March 1, 2025, Sukatani rejected the position of National Police ambassador offered by the National Police Chief, claiming to have experienced repeated intimidation since July 2024 (Purbaya, 2025). Artist Dolorosa Sinaga stated that the state must protect artists' intellectual works, as these have legal validity as a medium for socio-political communication. Usman Hamid, Executive Director of Amnesty International Indonesia, reminded the National Police not to rush into rebuttal, as this would only exacerbate the blunder amid low public trust (Khudori, 2025). The hashtag #kamibersamasukatani trended with 191,000 posts on X. Several musicians, including Baskara Putra, Fanny Soegi, Bisma Karisma, Awan Feast, and Voice of Baceprot, deliberately re-uploaded Sukatani's song (Khudori, 2025; Rosa, 2025).

Theoretical Analysis: Hegemony, Counter-Hegemony, and Organic Intellectuals

Art activism functions not merely as visual appeal but as a catalyst for social change, playing a role in influencing social perceptions and mobilizing social transformation (Gupta, 2021). Indonesia has a history demonstrating the

relationship between art, artists, and society, with painter S. Sudjojono believing in the importance of freedom, with the nation's mental strength and quality cultivated and built through art (Negara, 2013). Art has great potential as an instrument for advocacy and community empowerment in public spaces (Isvara & Ismoyo, 2025).

Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony explains that power is maintained not solely through force but also through securing consent to the ruling class's ideas. The dominant class controls not only the economy but also shapes collective thinking through culture, education, and media (Suhardi, 2019). Gramsci comprehended three-dimensional power relationships identifiable in societal forces: relationships between social classes; the awareness people have of themselves concerning political consciousness; and the military and political systems that the government uses to control people (Daldal, 2014). Hegemony occurs when a powerful group influences the beliefs, values, and institutions of society in ways that maintain their control. Counter-hegemony constitutes the act of challenging, resisting, or opposing this powerful control, involving efforts by those who are less powerful or marginalized to resist and challenge this control (Suhardi, 2024).

In "Prison Notebooks," Gramsci introduced the concept of organic intellectuals, describing their role not merely as passive observers but as active agents of social change. Unlike traditional intellectuals who develop theories from academia, organic intellectuals engage directly with society and specific social classes, working for their interests. They play a crucial role in articulating the interests, needs, and aspirations of groups they represent, building collective consciousness that can mobilize social action and challenging the hegemony of the ruling class by disseminating ideas that raise critical consciousness (Muallif, 2024). In today's digital age, organic intellectuals are increasingly common in public spaces, with social media and digital platforms allowing individuals to share thoughts widely, even without formal academic affiliations (Nadid, 2024).

From Gramsci's perspective, the military and political systems that the government uses to control people limit the freedom of creativity through the power it possesses. The public disagreed and counter-hegemonized by replaying the song "Bayar Bayar Bayar" in different formats. Many visual arts appeared on Instagram with the hashtags #KamiBersamaSukatani #ACAB #1312 #BayarBayarBayar. This resistance movement emerged organically and peaked when several artists played their roles as organic intellectuals, thus further encouraging the resistance movement. The power of netizens who voiced their resistance en masse changed the police's stance, so they stated that they would not ban the playing of the song. Despite the pressure Sukatani faced, they received substantial moral support from various levels of society, encouraging them to continue to be critical and express their opinions through entertaining works.

The numerous digital posters circulated by netizens on Instagram demonstrate public anger regarding authorities' treatment of Sukatani band members, including

protests against arbitrary actions, suppression of voice, character persecution, and institutional failure to accept public criticism constructively. Creators consistently portray band members wearing masks, demonstrating support for their right to maintain artistic identity and continue critiquing social conditions through music. The visuals employ various aesthetic approaches including photographs, illustrations, caricatures, and comics, reflecting each creator's technical skill. Color palettes are predominantly somber, representing the "Indonesia Gelap" atmosphere, though some works utilize brighter tones that convey humorous contrasts. Additionally, numerous posters incorporate song lyrics, critical commentary, and the numerical code 1312. Within punk subculture, 1312 signifies ACAB (All Coppers are Bastards), terminology that originated in 1920s United Kingdom and gained wider recognition in the 1970s when the Daily Mirror employed it as a front-page headline. ACAB, represented numerically as 1312 to indicate each letter's alphabetical position, has evolved into a widely adopted slogan utilized by political groups across ideological spectrums internationally (DIY Conspiracy, 2021).

The findings of this study extend existing scholarship on digital activism and visual arts while revealing distinctive characteristics of resistance in Southeast Asian contexts. This research confirms earlier observations by Satria and Nurmandi (2024) regarding how social media users actively respond to various public policies and how these responses influence behavioral patterns. The Sukatani case exemplifies this pattern, demonstrating how public policy controversies trigger spontaneous digital mobilization. This study corroborates Kyomugisha's (2025) findings that digital technologies have emerged as central conduits for producing, circulating, and amplifying activist imagery, illustrating how platforms enable message propagation and transnational cooperation. The Sukatani case exemplifies this pattern, with Instagram serving as the principal medium for spontaneous artistic production by 140 artists who created 255 posters within days. Additionally, the findings align with Abadi et al. (2024), who revealed that institutions react to opinions and demands expressed online, and that viral content can influence institutional decisions. The Sukatani case demonstrates this phenomenon, as the viral spread of protest art compelled police institutional response and policy reversal. However, this study extends beyond general observations by revealing specific mechanisms through which forced identity disclosure functions as a disciplinary technology that paradoxically intensifies rather than suppresses counter-hegemonic responses.

The findings substantiate Widyaswari and Widnyana's (2018) assertion that social media has evolved beyond unidirectional information transmission to become a bidirectional communication medium where interactive features substantially influence audience engagement. The chronology demonstrates this bidirectionality, as Sukatani's forced apology generated not merely sympathetic responses but an explosion of original visual artworks by ordinary citizens,

transforming passive supporters into active creators. This pattern reveals how institutional repression targeting artists specifically triggers distinctive forms of artistic counter-mobilization. Furthermore, the research validates Mahendra and Nugroho's (2025) argument that social media shapes ideological control and political narratives influencing discourse, while simultaneously confirming Suhardi's (2024) observation that digital platforms mediate dynamics of hegemony and counter-hegemony. The Sukatani case demonstrates both dimensions simultaneously: the police initially attempted to assert hegemonic control through forced apology and song withdrawal, while the public's visual arts proliferation on Instagram constituted counter-hegemonic resistance that ultimately compelled police to reverse their stance. This dialectical process illuminates how apparatuses of power and apparatuses of hegemony, as distinguished by Siswati (2018) following Gramscian theory, operate in digital environments. The police functioned as an apparatus of power through direct coercion of Sukatani, while the subsequent public response deployed social media as an apparatus of counter-hegemony through persuasion and ideological contestation rather than violence, ultimately proving more effective in achieving policy modification than direct confrontation would have accomplished.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how social movement activity stimulates visual arts emergence on social media as mechanisms of reflexive response and policy influence through the Sukatani Band case in Indonesia. The research reveals three critical findings. First, institutional repression targeting artists paradoxically intensifies rather than suppresses counter-hegemonic artistic production, with Sukatani's forced apology generating 255 posters from 140 artists within five days. Second, forced identity disclosure of anonymous artists functions as disciplinary technology that transforms individual critique into mass visual resistance, with hashtags #KamiBersamaSukatani and #IndonesiaGelap generating over 600,000 posts and compelling police to reverse their prohibition stance. Third, visual arts on Instagram operate as organic intellectual practice in Gramscian terms, where citizens spontaneously produce counter-hegemonic imagery challenging state power through persuasion rather than violence, proving more effective in achieving policy modification than direct confrontation. The study's primary contribution demonstrates the complete dialectical cycle of artistic intervention, institutional suppression, and collective resistance as an integrated process, operationalizing Gramscian hegemony theory for digital environments and revealing how apparatuses of power and counter-hegemony operate simultaneously in social media spaces.

The findings carry significant implications for policy and practice. State institutions must recognize that repression of artistic expression generates counterproductive outcomes, amplifying rather than containing criticism through

backfire effects. The Indonesian government should strengthen legal protections for artistic freedom and establish institutional mechanisms for receiving criticism constructively rather than punitively, while educational institutions must safeguard academic freedom by resisting external pressure to dismiss educators for political expression. For artists and activists, visual arts production coupled with strategic hashtag deployment constitutes effective repertoires of contention in digital environments, particularly in hybrid democratic regimes where formal democratic channels face constraints. Civil society organizations should invest in protecting digital spaces for artistic expression as crucial infrastructure for democratic participation, recognizing that visual arts activism on social media provides effective mechanisms for policy influence, as evidenced by measurable shifts in institutional positions following viral circulation of artworks.

This study encountered methodological limitations that suggest directions for future research. Limited access to key informants, including Sukatani Band members and exhibition curators, constrained examination of artists' motivations and creative processes, while reliance on publicly available social media data precluded analysis of platform algorithms and network structures shaping message dissemination. Future research should employ digital ethnography methodologies and conduct in-depth interviews with artists, curators, and audiences to illuminate subjective dimensions of digital art activism. Subsequent investigations should incorporate computational methods to analyze how algorithmic curation influences viral circulation of protest imagery. Comparative research examining similar phenomena across Southeast Asian nations experiencing democratic backsliding would clarify how institutional configurations mediate relationships between visual arts activism and policy outcomes, advancing understanding of digital resistance in hybrid regimes and contributing to theories of contentious politics in the social media age.

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