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CRITICISM THROUGH MEMES FOR REPRESSIVE ACTIONS IN *PPKM DARURAT* IN WHATSAPP GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

In the current era of new media, social criticism as a form of freedom of expression and speech is easier tofacilitate. New media such as WhatsApp groups, provide various features, which allow criticism in the form of memes, to be produced, distributed, and consumed by virtual communities who are members of WhatsApp groups. This study examines how criticisms of the government's repressive actions in the policy of Imposing Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM) Emergency Level 4 and 3 Java-Bali through memes circulated in the new media platform WhatsApp group. Why criticisms expressed through memes were carried out through the WhatsApp group? What are the types of memes as a form of social criticism circulating in WhatsApp groups? The New Media theory and Ideology theory in the Critical Paradigm with Qualitative Approach, and Descriptive Method are used in this

study to explain how the new media WhatsApp facilitates criticism through memes on the PPKM Emergency/Level 4 and 3 Java-Bali policies. The results of this study shows that the PPKM Emergency/Level 4 and 3 Java-Bali policies are repressive in nature, drawing a lot of criticism in the WhatsApp group in the form of memes. Memes, which literally mean ideas that spread quickly from person to person, are becoming increasingly common as a result of WhatsApp, a new medium that is interactive, diffuse (not centralized), avoids state control, and is democratic. State actors in charge of PPKM are frequently the target of social criticism in WhatsApp groups via memes.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia has entered the second phase of attack in early June 2021 with a peak of new cases reaching 56,757 on July 15, 2021 (*Covid19.Go.Id*, n.d.15/07/2021). The surge in COVID-19 cases triggered by the emergence of the Delta variant forced the government of President Joko Widodo to take strategic action, namely *Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat (PPKM) Darurat* (Emergency Community Activity Restrictions Implementation) starting on July 3, 2021, which was extended several times until the name changed from PPKM Emergency to PPKM Level 4 and 3. This PPKM policy is in effect in all provinces of Java and Bali. President Joko Widodo announced the Java-Bali PPKM Darurat on July 1, 2021, and at the same time appointed Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment Luhut Binsar Panjaitan to explain the PPKM Darurat in Java-Bali (Sekretariat Presiden - YouTube, 01/07/2021). The operation of the Java-Bali *PPKM Darurat* was followed up by the Instruction of the Minister of Home Affairs (*Inmendagri*) Number 15 of 2021, Minister of Home Affairs *(Mendagri)* Tito Karnavian, dated July 2, 2021, which was addressed to Regional Heads in all provinces in Java-Bali. In the Instruction of the Minister of Home Affairs 15/2021 there are 13 dictums, including threats of sanctions for regional heads and for people who do not comply with this *PPKM Darurat.* In the 10th dictum, it is stated that regional heads (governors, regents or mayors) who do not implement PPKM can be subject to penalties ranging from two consecutive warnings to dismissal. Business owners, restaurants, shopping centers, and public transportation that do not comply with the

provisions, are threatened with administrative penalties up to business closure (*Covid19.Go.Id,* n.d.)02/07/2021).

The threat of penalties for regional heads who are considered to be disobedient to the *PPKM Darurat* was made by Minister Luhut Panjaitan, on the same day as the announcement of the Java-Bali *PPKM Darurat.* This penalty refers to Article 68 paragraphs 1 and 2 of Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government. In paragraph 1, regional heads who do not implement national strategic programs are subject to a written warning. Meanwhile, in paragraph 2, the regional head is suspended for three months if they do not heed the warning (Katadata.Co.Id, 01/07/2021).

Table 1. In one month of PPKM Darurat /Level 4 and 3 JavaBali, the average case per week decreased by about10 percent. Processed from *Google*

Period	New Case	Average/7 days
July 1, 2021	24,836	21.302
July 13, 2021	47,899	38,644
August 1, 2021	30,738	39,127
August 13, 2021	30,788	28,154

Strategic action in the perspective of communicative action theory is part of the teleological concept of action at the time of Aristotle, which is interpreted as a decision to choose one among various alternative actions, while adhering to the intention to realize the goal, which is directed by a number of maxims, and is based on the interpretation of the situation exists (Habermas, 2006). The Java-Bali *PPKM Darurat* policy was taken by the government as a strategic policy to stop the rate of COVID-19 cases which has jumped back to double digits since mid-June 2021. The Java-Bali *PPKM Darurat* strategic action, in this case, has not fulfilled the ideal intersubjective action, as communicative action. In communicative action, the actor attempts to understand the action situation while also acting to coordinate their actions through consensual agreement. The use of language is extremely important

(Habermas, 2006:110). Instead of imposing a total regional quarantine (lockdown), the government employed a euphemism in the form of the Java-Bali PPKM Darurat. However, the Java-Bali *PPKM Darurat* policy can also be interpreted as a way for the government as an ideological apparatus to practice repressive actions. Althusser describes two ways of ideology. The first is through the so-called ideological state apparatus (ISA), which is a soft strategy through religion, education, family, media, and political and cultural institutions. The second method is called the repressive state apparatus (RSA), which is coercive or repressive (Resch, 1992). In the context of the PPKM Darurat 3-20 July 2021, it was initially pursued through the state's soft ideological apparatus, with consensual efforts. Consensual awareness made people aware that the sole purpose of the Java-Bali PPKM Emergency was to suppress the spread of COVID-19 as effectively as possible. Most of the soft strategies, reap success. Therefore, consensual ideology works according to plan. However, it must be acknowledged that consensual ideology is flawed and incapable of quieting groans without sound (Makroen Sanjaya, https://www.republika.co.id/19/07/2021). But then, in reality, massive acts of repression appeared. From state institutions, the Minister of Home Affairs has issued *Inmendagri 15/2021*, which among other things contains a dictum regarding the threat of reprimand sanctions to temporary dismissal for non-compliant regional heads. The threat to the regional head was then echoed again by Minister Luhut (*https://katadata.co.id/*01/07/2021). In fact, a group of state apparatus consisting of the Civil Service Police Unit (Satpol PP), usually accompanied by the National Police and the TNI, carried out a number of forced (repressive) closures of food stalls, street vendors, and coffee shops. In less than a week of *PPKM Darurat* in the DI Yogyakarta area, the Head of Satpol PP has taken action against 946 people who are deemed to have disobeyed the regulations. The penalties given by the DI Yogyakarta Satpol PP to 946 violators ranged from reprimands, warnings, dissolution, closure of business premises to sealing (*https://travel.tempo.co/*07/07/2021). Even in Mijen, Semarang City, Central Java, state apparatus sprayed the stalls of street vendors who disobeyed the *PPKM*

Darurat using fire engines. The spraying action was captured by members of the public and then went viral on social media (*https://www.voice.com/*06/07/2021).

Although it was later proven successful in reducing COVID-19 cases, the Joko Widodo government's repressive actions through the Java-Bali PPKM Darurat drew widespread criticism. The criticism was mainly directed at the two main PPKM actors, they are President Joko Widodo and the Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment Luhut Binsar Panjaitan. Specifically, it was Minister Luhut who received a lot of criticism, especially through social media. This was mainly triggered by Minister Luhut's statement which was considered inconsistent in terms of the effectiveness of the *PPKM Darurat* in controlling COVID-19 cases. Even the former Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Susi Pudjiastuti through her Twitter account @susipudjiastuti also criticized; "They said it was under control yesterday," tweeted Susi Pudjiastuti ("Sindiran dan Kritik untuk Luhut": https://www.republika.co.id/ 16/07/2021). Other criticisms expressed through memes are also circulating on social media platforms. Several themes appear in the WhatsApp (WAG) group in the form of memes. When Minister Luhut threatened to impose sanctios on regional heads, the statement became a meme titled "Disobedient regional heads fired, hoaxers punished," accompanied by a serious look on Luhut's face with sharp eyes. The meme sharer then wrote a comment: "*Kawan ini narasi gak jauh dari ancam-mengancam* (This person's narration is never far from threatening)", at the bottom of the meme.

The description of the form and content of memes through WhatsApp groups as a medium of criticism in the context of freedom of expression for repressive strategic actions for the Java-Bali PPKM Emergency Policy will provide an answer to the research questions, namely, how the government applies repressive ideology rather than communicative action in the Java-Bali Emergency PPKM? Why has WhatsApp group social media become a medium for conveying criticism of the government's repressive actions in the Java-Bali PPKM Emergency policy in the context of free expression? What are the different types and contents of memes about the Java-Bali Emergency PPKM that are circulating in WhatsApp groups? This academic study is

expected to add repertoire for studies on the use of memes through WhatsApp groups in expressing opinions and even criticisms of state actors in implementing a policy related to crisis conditions such as during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study is practically expected to add insight for state actors to take consensual and communicative ways in a policy that has broad implications and has multidimensional impact on society.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Richard Dawkins popularized the term meme in his book The Selfish Gene (1976). The meme diction is based on *mimeme*, which was a single syllable in ancient Greek that sounded similar to 'gene.' Dawkins then shortened *mimeme* to meme, which can be interpreted as 'memory', or in French pronunciation it rhymes with 'cream'. Meme literally means an idea that spreads quickly from person to person, according to the Dictionary of Computer and Internet Terms (2013, 312). Memes frequently become visual or textual jokes on the Internet, similar to jokes repeated in movies or books. When a meme spreads online, it can take the form of a popular song lyric, a behavior, a joke, or a portion of a popular dance.

Memes has become the dominant communication element in social media. Social media itself opens up opportunities for people to share information with a large group of other individuals very easily; Social networking websites support information sharing with social networks. Social media also allows users to share or embed rich media artifacts such as videos very easily. As a result of this convenience, content is shared across various media with anyone connected to the Internet, allowing information to go viral very quickly (Rosen, 2014). Memes are considered as a form of popular expression that are expressed in depth because they are facilitated by social media (Handayani et al., 2016). The internet, as the foundation of new media, including social media, has a distinct personality from traditional media, namely interactivity. Historically, broadcast media has been mass in nature. As a result, the internet is regarded as an infinite technical medium for the reproduction or two-way

reciprocal restoration of the public sphere (Holmes, 2012). There are at least six significant differences between new and old media, including new media's greater spread, two-way communication, avoidance of state control, and facilitation of democratization.

The essence of the historical distinction of new media from old media is the aspect of democratization through the creation of electronic public spaces by the internet. According to Holmes (2010, 19), while the old media is characterized as a one-to-many relationship as a one-way relationship, as a centralized communication, the old media is also accused of being a geographically fragmentary tool of society. Meanwhile, the architecture of relationships through cyberspace creates a newer and expanded electronic public realm, as well as opposes monopolized types of centralized control. Compared to old media, new internet-based media offer the possibility of free political expression and the rights of electronic assembly (2010, 20). Internet connection that creates an electronic public space, can be accessed and owned by anyone at a relatively cheaper price. This opens the opportunity for anyone to become a producer as well as a consumer (prosumer) of messages in a democratic, equal manner and avoid state control in the form of complicated regulations.

The circulation of memes through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Path, and YouTube, then is more widespread through the WhatsApp platform. This is more because the latest generation of social media applications, WhatsApp, tends to be dominant in Indonesia. Based on a digital literacy survey conducted by the Katadata Insight Center (KCI) in collaboration with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology in 2020, WhatsApp is the most popular social media in Indonesia based on ownership. The WhatsApp application is owned by 98.9 percent of respondents, compared to Facebook and YouTube, which are at 89.8 percent and 87.8 percent (https://databoks.katadata.co.id/ 23/11/2020). In 2014, WhatsApp had 600 million users worldwide, but by 2020, that figure had risen to 2 billion (https://databoks.katadata.co.id/ 21/01/2021). Aside from gaining more users, the

WhatsApp application is also capable of quickly and evenly disseminating information (Primary & Kartikawati, 2017).

Table 2. Historical differences between first media age and second media age according to Holmes (2010, 21)

First media age (broadcast)	*Second media age* (interactivity)
Centralized (speaks little to many)	Scattered (talk to many)
One-way communication	Two-way communication
Tend to state control	Avoid state control
Instruments for stratification and inequality regimes	Democratization: facilitating universal citizenship
Participants are fragmented and seen as a mass	Participants can still maintain their identity
Affect consciousness	Influence individual experiences

WhatsApp is one of the popular media to share and connect with people (Dey & Parabhoi, 2017). The "share" and "connect" functions are used by users to share or send messages, images, videos, and audio media. The WhatsApp application is also an effective chat room through community groups (WhatsApp Group/WAG). WhatsApp groups are useful for spreading information practically and massively. The use of this chat group feature can be formed based on similarity in profession, family, or on the basis of friendship (Dewi, et al, 2021). With the functions to "share", "connect", and "form a chat group", it allows WhatsApp to be a social media platform for disseminating various content, including about actual issues developing in society. In this context, communication actors on social media discuss the latest issues surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic through various WhatsApp groups, of course. One piece of content that stands out is the spread of memes centered on the issue of Emergency PPKM, which has emerged as the main theme from early July to mid-August 2021.

The content of the Java-Bali Emergency PPKM, which was valid from 3 to 20 July 2021 and later changed to PPKM Level 4 and 3, from 26 July to 9 August, which extended again until August 23, 2021, became the subject of discussion in the two WhatsApp groups that became the subject of this study, namely the RTA and GN groups, not to mention the sharing of memes. The memes shared by members of the WhatsApp group are in the form of screen shots of news from print and online media, digital magazine covers, screen shots uploaded on social media, and parody videos.

Criticism is defined as criticism, response, or opinion expressed through mass media or social media (Depdiknas, 2008). According to the terminology in UU 40/1999 on the Press, criticism through mass media can take the form of writing, images, sound or sound and images, caricatures. Meanwhile, social media criticism in the form of memes is generally more open. However, any form of criticism, whether through mass media or social media, falls within the realm of free expression. The right of everyone to seek, receive, and disseminate information and ideas in any form and by any means is defined as freedom of expression. This includes oral expression, both in print and through audiovisual materials, as well as cultural, artistic, and political expressions (https://www.amnesty.id/). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights chapter 29 states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and share information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." The United Nations Education Scientific Culture Organization (UNESCO) emphasizes that freedom of expression includes a wider range of expressions, including freedom of expression through oral, printed and audiovisual materials, as well as cultural, artistic, and political expression (http://www.unesco.org/). However, freedom of expression and opinion is a limited right. Furthermore, in order to prevent the violation of one of these human rights, the application of these restrictions does not have to go through a criminal process (Marwandianto & Nasution, 2020).

Habermas also reminded that criticism can advance only if it is based on a communicative ratio which is understood as communication praxis or communicative action (Hardiman, 2009). The communicative action that Habermas intended, requires the achievement of understanding in language, through an agreement that is driven by rational motivation among participants and can be measured based on claims of validity. The claim of validity as the key word for the occurrence of communicative actions, consists of three aspects, namely proportional truth, normative accuracy, and subjective honesty (Habermas, 2006).

In the Emergency PPKM/Level 4 and 3 Java-Bali policies, the government at least made efforts to reproduce social formations to maintain its power by acting repressively, which in Althusser's terminology is referred to as the State Repressive Apparatus (RSA). In contrast to the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), which is consensual in nature through religious institutions, education, family, political parties, trade unions and mass media, RSA refers to the state apparatus that functions massively and dominantly through acts of violence (repressive) in the public sphere by using military, police, law enforcement, and so on (Resch, 1992). In practice, to enforce the so-called Emergency PPKM/Level 4 and 3 Java Bali policy, the government applies the RSA concept. The government's repressive actions include raids on people who are active in public places, the application of fines, physical sanctions to the threat of administrative sanctions for regional heads who try to oppose the policy. The word repressive implies that the state apparatus functions through violence, including administrative repression that takes non-physical forms (Althusser, 1984). All these forms of repression then drew a lot of criticism, especially through memes in WhatsApp groups.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a descriptive study in a critical paradigm with a qualitative approach. Descriptive studies are designed primarily to document what is going on. Descriptive studies, for example, were conducted through public opinion polls, which sought to

describe the proportion of people who hold various opinions (Trochim et al., 2016, n.d.). Descriptive research method in subjective perspective, requires participant observation, performs document analysis, and emphasizes interpretation rather than objective observation (Mulyana, 2013, n.d.). Paradigm is a set of beliefs basis that guides the action and discipline of investigation (Guba, 1990, n.d.), as well as a comprehensive understanding model for researchers about a point of view and rules for viewing problems in the field and how to solve them (Liliweri, 2018). The critical paradigm used in this study is labeled "ideologically oriented inquiry" and belongs to participatory research, according to Guba (1990, n.d. 24-25). This study is subjective from an epistemological standpoint, because it believes that values mediate inquiry. In the meantime, this research methodology is dialogical, transformative, and eliminates false consciousness while energizing and facilitating transformation.

Meanwhile, the qualitative approach is used to study objects in their natural context, with the goal of understanding or interpreting phenomena through the meanings assigned to them by humans (researchers) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009). Definitively, qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of an interpretive/theoretical framework that forms or influences the study of research problems related to the meanings imposed by individuals or groups on a social or human problem (Creswell, 2015, n.d.).

This study is equipped with a literature review in the form of relevant theories. The information is in the form of meme content circulating in two WhatsApp groups, GN and RTA, namely uploads with nuances of criticism of the PPKM Emergency/Level 4 and 3 Java-Bali policies, downloaded from two WA groups, "RTA" and "GN," and then placed in a folder. Next, downloads are categorized into tables based on origin, upload format, and text "RTA" and "GN". All the data is then analyzed using relevant theories, especially in the perspective of critical theory, namely David Holmes' New Media Theory and Louis Althusser's Ideological Theory. From this analysis, it can be revealed why the repressive actions of the state apparatus in the

Java-Bali Emergency PPKM policy received resistance in the form of criticism in the form of memes through the WhatsApp group social media platform.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Marcuse (1991: 6) mentions that since the era of modern industrialization, "free society" can no longer be adequately defined in an economic, political, and intellectual context, not because this freedom has become unimportant, but because "free society" is too important to be limited in traditional forms. In what Marcuse calls a "one-dimensional man", the situation of an advanced industrial society is described as a single-dimensional society. With the loss of the second dimension, namely negation (denial or resistance) to the system, society only adapts to the total dominance of technocratism (Hardiman, 2009). Marcuse categorizes five "one-dimensional human" characters which include total administration, language functionalization, historical obscuration, false needs, and image empires (1992:88-254).

Marcuse's critique of modernity was made in his 1964 book, One-Dimensional Dimension, but the criticism is still relevant today. The relevance of Marcuse's "one-dimensional human" criticism is because every society is ruled by ideology. In Althusser's view (2005, 232), ideology is an organic part of any social totality. In the Java-Bali PPKM Darurat policy, the authorities that function as state apparatus—consisting of the government, administration, armed forces, police, courts, and prisons—hereinafter by Althusser (2010, 19) are referred to as repressive state apparatus (RSA). Althusser emphasized that although repression implies that the state apparatus is called 'functioning through violence,' it is not merely physical violence,

The Java-Bali PPKM Darurat, is an effort of administrative repression combined with physical repression in case of resistance, by the government to prevent an increase in COVID-19 cases. Forms of administrative repression have occurred since the beginning of Indonesia, including from the global community which was hit by a

pandemic in March 2020 through various sets of regulations ranging from Government Regulations (PP), Presidential Decrees (Kepres), Ministerial Regulations (Permen) to Governor Regulations (Pergub) on a local scale. The first regulatory product that has high coercive power, PP Number 21/2020 dated March 31, 2020 concerning Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar (Large-Scale Social Restrictions) or PSBB (Covid19..go.id, n.d.). With the implementation of this PSBB, all activities in areas designated as red zones are restricted. Schools and campuses are completely closed, as are places of worship. Offices that are not part of the strategic sector use a hybrid system of work from home (WFH) and work from the office (WFO) in turn. Public places or facilities such as malls, recreational areas, and locations that allow crowds of people, are temporarily closed.

Instead of implementing a regional quarantine, which is popularly known in the world as a lockdown, through this PSBB concept, the government does not have to bear the entire consumption of all elements of society, as regulated in UU Number 6/2018 concerning Health Quarantine. Chapter 7 UU 6/2018 explains that "everyone has the right to receive equal treatment in the implementation of health quarantine, as well as to obtain basic health services according to medical needs, food needs, and other daily life needs throughout the quarantine." Many parties question the way the government takes the PSBB policy, because it is considered to be evading the obligation to guarantee the needs of all communities in quarantined areas (http://lppm.unpam.ac.id/).

During the implementation of the PSBB, the government issued penalties for anyone who did not comply. Regional leaders as implementers in the region, issue a number of regulations, which contain threats of penalties. Through the DKI Jakarta Governor Regulation (Pergub) Number 41/2020, for example, Article 17 includes criminal sanctions for PSBB violators, especially those who do not comply with the 3M health protocol (wearing masks, washing hands and maintaining distance). The first stage is taking action, starting from reprimands, push-up, and social work penalties. However, if they resist the officer who administers the sanction, the officer will elevate the sanction to the criminal realm (Https://Megapolitan.Kompas.Com/n.d. 12/05/2020).

Figure 1. Repressive measures for citizens in
the implementation of PSBB.

Source: Screen shot (Https://Megapolitan.Kompas.Com/, n.d.) 12/05/2020)

Civil Service Police Unit (Satpol PP) officials, accompanied by police and soldiers, conducted random raids in a variety of locations, including markets, terminals, stations, and other places where crowds could form. Many people who were caught without masks were dealt with by demanding push-ups and social work sweeping the streets. Until September 2020, in the DKI Jakarta area alone there were 158,000 violations with a fine of Rp. 4.3 billion collected (CNN Indonesia, n.d.)13/09/2020).

The government's repressive actions in efforts to deal with COVID-19 became more evident in mid-2021 through the Java-Bali PPKM Darurat policy, and then continued with PPKM Levels 4 and 3. The Java-Bali PPKM Darurat showed more repressive forms than the 2020 PSBB. The repressive actions of the state apparatus (RSA) occurred at the level of high-ranking officials such as Minister of Maritime Affairs and Investment, Luhut Binsar Panjaitan. Minister Luhut had bullied anyone into complying with the Java-Bali Emergency PPKM two days before it went into effect, if they did not want to face legal consequences. Regional heads who do not comply will be subject to administrative penalties in the form of warnings to temporary dismissals. Spreaders of fake news (hoax) are also threatened with criminal sanctions. The dissemination of information on the Java-Bali PPKM Darurat through the mass media, in Althusser's perspective, is a soft act of the ideological state

apparatus (ISA). Media, religion, education, law, politics and the family are institutions that are used to instill a consensual ideology (Althusser, 2010). However, the consensual ideological action was then followed by repressive actions, both administratively and physically.

Figure 2. Minister Luhut issues a threat of penalties for Regional Heads who do not obey with the Java *PPKM* Darurat a-Bali,

Source: BeritaSatu TV screen shot, July 1, 2021.

The implementation of the physical repressive state apparatus (ISA) in the field is carried out by the Satpol PP, which is generally accompanied by the police and the armed forces. This began with soft forms of repression, such as raids on offices and places of business, food stalls, coffee shops, and street vendors' stalls, and progressed to the forced closure of places of business. DKI Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan, for example, went down to the field himself to participate in the raid. On July 6, 2021, Governor Anies Baswedan conducted a surprise inspection of the office on Jl. Jendral Sudirman, Jakarta, among others, found that the Ray White property marketing office, which belongs to the non-essential sectors, were still operating normally. Governor Anies Baswedan scolded the head of the office, at the same time ordered the office to be closed with a seal and asked all employees to go home (Https://www.Liputan6.Com, 06/07/2021). Governor Anies Baswedan also fired eight DKI Jakarta Transportation Service officers who violated the PPKM

Daruratby eating and drinking on the spot, and not participating in the PPKM Darurat patrol (Https://www.Liputan6.Com, 09/07/2021).

Several incidents involving physical conflict occurred in several places. A coffee shop owner on Jl. Gatot Subroto, Medan city, North Sumatra, was sentenced to two days in prison and a fine of Rp. 300,000, after the small trader doused a Satpol PP officer with hot water, because his shop was raided (KOMPASTV - YouTube, 16/07/2021). A cafe owner in Gowa, South Sulawesi suffered injuries due to being mistreated by seven Satpol PP officers (KOMPASTV - YouTube, 16/07/2021). In Surabaya, the COVID-19 Task Force (Satgas) officers were attacked by hundreds of residents for ordering coffee shops to close after 20.00 pm. Instead of obeying orders, the shop owner resisted, so that the community members were provoked to join in defending the shop owner, which ended up attacking the officers and damaging the Kenjeran Police patrol car (CNN Indonesia - YouTube, 12/07/2021). In the city of Padang, West Sumatra, a street vendor went on a rampage by hitting his own merchandise cart, because the Satpol PP ordered it to close. The Padang City Satpol PP then arrested 40 other street vendors, as well as sentenced them to fines.

WhatsApp Group Communication situations that characterize "one-dimensional humans" as described by Marcuse, or strategic actions instead of Habermas' communicative actions that require equality, also took place during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Instead of carrying out four functions (according to the terminology of UU40/1999 on the Press and Law 32/2002 on Broadcasting) such as information, education, entertainment, and social control independently, the mass media, as "the biological child of communication technology," only appear as information and entertainment media. Except for a few individuals, the majority of the mainstream media is rarely critical of the authorities. The Tempo media group, for example, or Rakyat Media Online (RMOL), are just a few of the remaining mass media outlets that criticize. "Indonesia's mainstream media is becoming increasingly partisan" (Tapsel, 2017). Commercial mass media is also chastised for being a cultural industry that promotes exploitative capitalism (Armando, 2016).

However, since the public launch of the internet in 1990, there has been a shift in the mass communication model. Through the self-mass communication model, critical voices become more facilitated. Mass communication itself, introduced by Castells (2009, 65), is a form of communication that emerged through the development of Web 2.0 and Web 3.0, or a group of other technologies, devices, and applications that support the proliferation of social spaces on the Internet with increased broadband capacity, device innovation open-source software, and improvements to computer graphics and interfaces, including avatar interactions in three-dimensional virtual spaces. The profiling of social spaces on the Internet that Castells refers to is the growth of social media as an alternative medium, which allows almost any population with Internet access to use social media as a mass-independent communication medium. WhatsApp, which was founded in 2009 by Jan Koum and Brian Acton with only 250,000 users, has grown to 2 billion users, with the service sending 100 billion messages and making 1 billion calls per day by 2021 (https://www.Liputan6.Com, 26/02/2021).

As a social media, WhatsApp has at least 25 features, ranging from taking photos and videos from the camera, managing files and galleries, blocking contacts, sending texts, images, videos, sounds, and global positioning satellite (GPS) or Google Map locations. In the form of links, to video calls, deleting messages to everyone, to broadcasts, group chats to share messages with fellow communities (Wikipedia, n.d.). Through this group chat on WhatsApp, what is called a virtual community occurs, people in virtual communities use words on screen for small talk and debate, engage in intellectual discourse, trade, exchange knowledge, share emotional supports, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, find and lose, playing around, flirting, making a little high art and a lot of nonsense (Rheingold, 1993).

WhatsApp groups, where virtual communities congregate as described by Rheingold, are proof of the proliferation of internet-facilitated social spaces in the context of self-mass communication. WhatsApp groups are generally an existential means for certain community groups, such as a classmate at school/college, a group of the same profession and hobby, a group in a work or office unit, a religious group, a

group in a residential neighborhood, or a group of a family. WhatsApp group members do not have to be in one location, but can be geographically separated up to thousands of miles away. Members of the WhatsApp group generally know each other, but many also do not know each other.

There are various benefits that someone gets from being a member of a WhatsApp group, ranging from studying for high school students and online lectures (Nabilla & Kartika, 2020; Rahmadi, 2020). English language courses (Prihatmi, 2021), family communication vehicles through the Family Group (Prasanti & Indriani, 2017), information media, discussion and education, entertainment media and even influence policy within the faculty (Sukirillah Ahmad, n.d.), and socializing with friends, family and organizational communication vehicles (Wariara, 2017), as well as many other benefits. WhatsApp, especially through various groups formed by certain communities, can also be used as a medium to express opinions, ideas, and social criticism. As with the historical differences between old and new media, one of which is that new media avoids state control and democratization (Holmes, 2005), sharp criticism channeled through WhatsApp groups can be done freely, unreachable by state control while facilitating universal citizenship (democratization). The nature of WhatsApp group membership is closed and within admin autonomy, the content in the WhatsApp group can only be accessed by those who are invited (invited) as group members, so the content shared in the WhatsApp group is only consumed by the members themselves. WhatsApp group members who re-share to other WhatsApp groups or other social media platforms are not acting on behalf of the WhatsApp group as a whole, but rather on their own. Content shared in a WhatsApp group does not have to be produced by its members. In two WhatsApp groups, namely "RTA" and "GN" as the object of this study became a medium for criticism of the government. One of the hot topics that became an arena for the expression of opinions, ideas, and criticisms was the Java-Bali PPKM Darurat policy, which later became PPKM Level 4 and 3. WhatsApp Group "RTA" is made up of 136 people from various professions such as preachers, lecturers, activists of mass organizations (ormas), philanthropic organizations, journalists, researchers, musicians, and ministers.

Their residence and location vary, but the majority live in Jakarta. Meanwhile, the WhatsApp Group "GN" has 53 members, including journalists (the majority), economists and former ministers, heads of mosque foundations, lawyers, politicians, activists of women's organizations, and ordinary housewives. Some WhatsApp Group GN members are also members of WhatsApp Group RTA. It enables people with multiple memberships to share content from WhatsApp Group RTA to WhatsApp Group GN and vice versa. **Criticism via Meme** While the mainstream media, with their editorial system, use photos and words that are in accordance with journalistic rules, new media have unlimited creativities to express public anger. Through meme images, netizens created satire to satirize the political elite (Dwiana, 2015). WhatsApp groups RTA and GN are also used as a medium to criticize the authorities as a form of criticism and satire in the context of the expression of opinions and ideas, during the Java-Bali PPKM Darurat, then Java-Bali Level 4 and 3 PPKM, from 1 July to 23 August 2021. Social criticism is a form of communication in society that aims or functions as a control over the course of a system or community process (Christin & Rahayu, 2017). These forms of criticism were vented through memes and prank videos, which were shared by members of the WhatsApp group, for viewing, reading, commenting, or re-sharing.

Memes which contain satire or criticism of the Java-Bali PPKM Darurat, has appeared since July 1, 2021, coinciding with the announcement of the implementation of the Java-Bali PPKM Darurat from 3 to 20 July 2021 by President Joko Widodo. On that day, the mass media reported the appointment of the Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment Luhut Binsar Panjaitan as the coordinator of the Java-Bali PPKM Darurat. In an online press statement, Minister Luhut emphasized, among other things, that if there is a Regional Head (Governor, Regent or Mayor) who does not implement the Java-Bali PPKM Darurat rules, he can be subject to administrative sanctions in the form of written warnings twice in a row, up to temporary dismissal.

This is shown through a screen shot from Tempo.co.id July 1, 2021 edition, entitled "Aturan di PPKM Darurat: Kepala Daerah Tak Taat Bisa Dipecat, Pelaku Hoax

Dihukum" (Rules in PPKM Darurat: Disobedient Regional Heads Can Be Fired and hoaxers sentenced). An RTA member with contact number xxx shared the title of the news along with a photo of Minister Luhut, with an added comment: "*Kawan ini narasi gak jauh dari ancam mengancam* (This guy, his narration is never far from threatening)." Meanwhile, in the WhatsApp group GN on July 7, 2021, memes appeared in the form of videos which were shared by the contact number xxx, in the form of news clips from Kompas TV regarding the protest rally of Brazilian citizens demanding the President of Brazil to resign because they were considered to have failed to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Another form of meme is taking a screenshot of someone's status on social media. Contact number xxx in WhatsApp Group RTA on July 26, 2021 uploaded a screen shot from the Instagram account @WhyPolitik which was quoted from detik.com news. about limiting the duration of eating time at a restaurant. This meme about Coordinating Minister Luhut's statement on limiting the duration of eating seems to respond to a previous meme that was shared by the contact number xxxx in the form of a photo of the atmosphere in the queue for eating in a Tegal diner (*warteg*). Then, on July 28, 2021 through the contact xxxx, a meme appeared about the reason why eating at a *warung* or restaurant was limited to 20 minutes, but in the form of satire.

As a form of satire or criticism, a meme literally means an idea that spreads quickly from person to person. Often, on the Internet, memes then—other than satire and criticism—become a form of visual or textual joke (Ware, 2014). The form of memes is generally in the form of edited photos, posters, screen shots of news from print media or online media, social media uploads or photojournalism affixed with text or emoticons. All forms of memes, as well as the meanings contained in them, are ideas that have a connection (peg) with issues or events that are being discussed in society. Meme content, apart from relating to actual issues or events, is also related to actors who are news sources (news makers). Minister Luhut, apart from President Joko Widodo, is a high-ranking state official who has become the target of criticism in the form of memes. Minister Luhut, who was appointed by President Joko Widodo to coordinate the implementation of *PPKM Darurat,* from the

beginning has applied a one-way communication style and chose a repressive diction. One of the memes in the **GA** WhatsApp Group on August 23, 2021, shows the repressive choice of words from Minister Luhut, when describing the success of overcoming COVID-19 in Bali Province.

Figure 3. 3. the shot 2021.

The meme sourced from Jawa Pos twitter screen was uploaded on August 23,

President Joko Widodo has also become the target of criticism through memes, especially with photo editing techniques. Among the memes circulating in the WhatsApp Groups RTA and GN at the same time is an edited photo of President Joko Widodo's face that appears fatter, a manipulation of his real face. In the WhatsApp Group RTA, the meme photo of edited President Joko Widodo's face was shared by xxx on August 21, 2021. The day before, on August 20, 2021, this meme photo was already circulating in the GA WhatsApp Group, which was shared by the contact number xxx.

Other memes targeting President Joko Widodo circulated in the two WhatsApp groups, such as editing a photo of President Joko Widodo, who appeared to be pulling the ear of a teenager in the WhatsApp Group RTA.

Figure 4. *Memes* spread in the WhatsApp RTA Group on July 28, 2021.

When the issue of vaccination was raised related to PPKM Level 4 and 3 Java-Bali, in the WhatsApp Group there was a meme that was shared by contact number xxx on August 12, 2021 in the form of a photo of a public toilet (water closet/WC) with the text "*Yang belum vaksin DILARANG KENCING* [Those who haven't been vaccinated are prohibited to pee]."

Figure 5. *Memes* spreading in the WhatsApp Group GN on August 12, 2021 when the Java-Bali PPKM Darurat is changed to PPKM Darurat Level 4 and 3

During the period from July 1, 2021 to August 23, 2021 when PPKM Levels 4 and 3 of Java-Bali were again extended, there were a total of 93 memes circulating in two WhatsApp groups, namely RTA and GN The most common types of memes are screen shots of news from print media and online media (SSBerita), followed by video memes, then status screen shots on social media (SSTMeds), the three photo and photo shop memes (Photo/PS), and finally memes in the form of poster.

Table 3. Types and numbers of memes in WhatsApp RTA and GN during July 1 to August 23, 2021

SSNews	SSTmeds	Poster	Photo/PS	Videos
28	18	11	16	20

	Amount	93

Memes with the themes PPKM Emergency Java-Bali and PPKM Level 4 and 3 Java-Bali became a mash-up of various forms of criticism and innuendo conveyed by members of the WhatsApp Group RTA and GN in the context of free expression and opinion spreading. It is interactive because comments and discussions are occasionally interspersed, it is free of state control, democratic, and WhatsApp group members continue to see themselves as individual universal citizens rather than masses. Because new media is interactive, when meme content is spread in the WhatsApp group's new media, the literal meaning of memes is also obvious. A meme is an idea that spreads quickly from person to person, from people in a WhatsApp group to people in another WhatsApp group. A member of the WhatsApp group who spreads a meme, even though they do not act as a producer, at the same time they become a distributor and also a consumer. Meme content, even with an audience reaching hundreds of people, is circulating freely in various WhatsApp groups, without state censorship. For example, if criticism is in the form of murals on concrete walls on the roadside in various cities, it is immediately censored. Various forms of murals containing criticisms of President Joko Widodo to "screams of hunger" appeared in at least six cities, Jakarta, Bandung, Tangerang City and South Tangerang City, Batam, and Yogyakarta, which were later deleted by the state apparatus (Kumparan.Com, 27/08/2021).

This is not the same as content uploaded on a public social media page, such as in a WhatsApp group—including memes—which can only be consumed by members of one WhatsApp group, unless the content is later distributed to other WhatsApp groups. The 25 features available allow virtual communities formed in WhatsApp groups to share content with one another by sending text, images, videos, and sounds, as well as sharing locations, blocking unwanted contacts, and even simultaneously broadcasting content online. Because of this, WhatsApp has become a favorite application, with users in Indonesia reaching 98.9 percent of the total social media user respondents, and reaching 2 billion users globally.

CONCLUSION

The Java-Bali PPKM Darurat policy was implemented by President Joko Widodo's administration on July 3, 2020, with the goal of limiting the spread of COVID-19. The Java-Bali PPKM Darurat policy, which was later changed to Java-Bali Level 4 and 3 PPKM, was later shown to have widespread socioeconomic consequences in addition to reducing the number of COVID-19 transmissions. As an ideological state apparatus, President Joko Widodo's government continues to enforce the Java-Bali PPKM Darurat, which is followed by repressive measures, both physical and administrative, against both the general public and local administrators. Of course, this repressive measure drew a number of criticisms from some people. Repressive actions not only have the potential to cause victims but also cause public antipathy towards the government.

Social criticism, as a form of free expression protected by law, was traditionally carried out through mass media (print, radio, or television), which was classified as old media. Criticism or satire, such as in the form of memes, is difficult to achieve in the old media, particularly because communication occurs in one direction, is controlled by the state through a series of regulations and codes of ethics, and media and audience relations are unequal because they are instruments of a stratified regime, and participants in communication are fragmented as a mass. However, as new media emerged, such as the WhatsApp group application, criticism as a form of expression of freedom of expression became necessary. Critics switch to WhatsApp because it is not facilitated by the old media, which is often controlled by the state and does not facilitate democratization.

WhatsApp group social media, with various features available, allows criticism through memes, to spread from one medium to another, quickly, and without being covered by state regulation and control. This is evidenced by the mix of meme themes circulating in WhatsApp groups RTA and GN in the period July 1 to August 23,

2021. Various meme productions—mostly anonymous, distributed individually by WhatsApp group members without incurring any risk. Although criticism through memes does not affect government policies, but at least as a medium for freedom of expression and speech, WhatsApp groups promise a better democratization of communication in the future.

Criticism of repressive actions through the new media WhatsApp should not be ignored, and should be an introspection and corrective stance for the government. This is because it is feared that ignoring such criticism will harm the government's authority in the long run. On the other hand, a corrective attitude is required to evaluate policy implementation in the field, ensuring that there is no abuse of power while avoiding public hostility.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

This study only analyzes criticism through memes in WhatsApp Groups descriptively, employing a subjective perspective that emphasizes interpretation rather than objective observation and in-depth interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' backgrounds, ideologies, and responses to the object of criticism. Furthermore, future research can look into more sociopolitical relationships and the impact of criticism made through this new media.

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