

Constructing Political Reality: Media Framing and Public Perceptions of the 17+8 Protest Movement in Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Media Framing, Framing Effect, Public Perception, Political Communication, Digital Media.

Received : 01, April

Revised : 20, May

Accepted: 30, June

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how media framing influences public perceptions of the 17+8 Protest Movement in Indonesia through a comparative analysis of Kompas.com and Detik.com. This study using a qualitative approach, and analyzes news articles published between August and September 2025 based on Entman's framing model, which includes problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and response recommendations. Audience responses in digital spaces are also examined to explore the effect of framing on public perceptions. The findings in this study shows that Kompas.com predominantly framed the movement as a democratic expression of citizen participation, accountability, and social justice, while Detik.com emphasized public order, security, and social stability. These contrasting frames resulted in different interpretations of the same political event and were reflected in audience responses. The study concludes that media framing significantly shapes public understanding of political protests, while audience interpretations in digital spaces play a crucial role in constructing and negotiating political meaning.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital communication technologies has fundamentally transformed how individuals access information, engage with public discourse, and construct social realities. Digital media have become the primary channels through which citizens receive political, social, and cultural information, allowing news organizations to play an increasingly influential role in shaping public understanding of contemporary events (Promma et al., 2024). In the digital era, media institutions no longer function merely as information providers but also as powerful actors that influence how issues are interpreted and debated within society (Sudarmo et al., 2021).

This transformation is reflected in the continuous growth of internet use worldwide. According to We Are Social (2025), the number of global internet users reached 5.64 billion in early 2025, representing approximately 68.7 percent of the world's population and marking an increase of 144 million users compared to the previous year. The widespread adoption of digital technologies has expanded the accessibility of online news platforms, social media, and other digital communication channels, making them central spaces for public discussion and opinion formation.

Indonesia represents one of the largest digital media markets in Southeast Asia, where internet penetration and social media engagement continue to increase significantly. Online news portals have become major sources of political information, particularly among younger generations who actively consume and share news through digital platforms (Sudarmo et al., 2021). As a result, media organizations have gained substantial influence in shaping public attitudes toward political issues, government policies, and social movements. In this environment, citizens are not merely passive recipients of information but active participants who engage in discussions, comment on news coverage, and contribute to the circulation of political narratives across digital spaces.

The growing influence of digital media has intensified scholarly interest in understanding how media shape public perceptions. News reporting does not simply convey factual information; rather, it involves processes of selection, emphasis, and interpretation that determine how events are presented to audiences. Through these processes, media organizations construct particular versions of reality and guide audiences toward specific understandings of social and political issues (White, 2022). Therefore, the same event may generate different public interpretations depending on how it is presented by different media outlets.

This phenomenon is closely associated with media framing, which refers to the process by which journalists and news organizations select certain aspects of reality, make them more salient, and provide interpretive frameworks that shape audience understanding (Hodges, 2025). Framing influences not only what people think about but also how they think about particular issues. Previous studies have demonstrated that media framing can significantly affect public attitudes toward political actors, public policies, and social movements by influencing cognitive evaluations, emotional responses, and behavioral intentions.

The significance of media framing becomes particularly evident in the coverage of political protests and social movements. Protest events often generate competing interpretations because different media organizations may emphasize different aspects of the same event. Some media may frame protests as legitimate democratic expressions of public aspirations, while others may highlight issues related to social disorder, security threats, or political instability.



Such framing differences can influence how citizens evaluate the legitimacy of collective actions and their broader implications for democratic governance.

Source: BBC News Indonesia (2025)

Figure 1. 17+8 Protest

Based on figure 1 above is one recent example about protest in Indonesia is the 17+8 Protest Movement, which emerged in Indonesia in August 2025 as a response to various political, economic, and social concerns. The movement attracted widespread public attention and generated extensive media coverage across major national news platforms (Ryska et al., 2026). Beyond its immediate political demands, the movement has become a symbol of digital civic engagement, demonstrating how citizens are leveraging online spaces to mobilize support, express dissent, and negotiate conflicting political narratives. At the same time, media coverage of the movement reveals stark differences in how the protests are interpreted and presented to the public (Patabang, 2025).

Sociologically, the 17+8 Protest Movement represents a contemporary form of collective resistance in response to declining public trust and perceived democratic challenges. The movement illustrates how digital spaces have become arenas for constructing alternative political narratives and fostering new forms of civic participation (Marwanti & Hermawan, 2025). Thus, this movement provides a valuable context for examining how media framing contributes to the formation of public perceptions in a digitally mediated political environment (Rojabi, 2025).

The diversity of media coverage surrounding the 17+8 Protest Movement illustrates how different news organizations construct distinct interpretations of the same political event. As two of Indonesia's most influential online news portals, Kompas.com and Detik.com possess substantial agenda-setting and framing power in shaping public discourse. Although both outlets reported on

the same protest movement, differences in editorial orientation, source selection, narrative emphasis, and journalistic practices may have resulted in contrasting representations of the event. Such differences are particularly important in politically sensitive contexts, where media representations can influence how citizens evaluate democratic participation, public accountability, and social movements.

The potential impact of framing becomes even more pronounced within contemporary digital environments characterized by interactivity and user participation. Unlike traditional audiences, digital users actively engage with news content through commenting, sharing, and discussing information across multiple platforms. Generation Z and Millennials, who constitute the largest and most active groups of digital media users in Indonesia, play a significant role in amplifying, negotiating, or contesting media narratives. Consequently, understanding the relationship between media framing and public responses is essential for explaining how political meanings are constructed and circulated within Indonesia's digital public sphere.

Although previous studies have extensively examined media framing in political communication, most research has focused either on identifying framing patterns in media content or on measuring audience perceptions separately. Limited research has investigated the interaction between media framing strategies and public responses in digital spaces, particularly in the context of contemporary protest movements in Indonesia. Furthermore, studies integrating framing analysis with framing effect perspectives to explain how different media narratives shape public interpretations remain relatively scarce.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze how Kompas.com and Detik.com framed the 17+8 Protest Movement and how these framing strategies influenced public perceptions in digital spaces. By integrating media framing theory with the framing effect perspective, this research contributes to the broader literature on political communication, digital media, and democratic participation while providing empirical insights into the role of online news media in shaping public understanding of political protest in contemporary Indonesia.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Mass Communication Theory

Mass communication refers to the process of transmitting messages through media channels to large, diverse, and geographically dispersed audiences. Unlike interpersonal communication, mass communication is characterized by indirect interaction between communicators and audiences, with feedback often occurring in delayed or mediated forms. The development of digital media has transformed traditional mass communication by enabling greater audience participation through online interactions, comments, and content sharing (Rabbi & Pan, 2025).

Mass communication can be understood as an activity carried out by individuals or groups in conveying messages through mass media, whether print, electronic, or digital, with the aim of reaching broad audiences and facilitating social interaction (Völker, 2024). Through mass media, information can be disseminated rapidly across geographical and social boundaries, allowing audiences to access news and public affairs in real time.

Although mass communication has traditionally been described as a one-way process, contemporary digital environments have introduced more interactive forms of communication. Audiences are now able to respond to, share, and reinterpret media messages through digital platforms. Nevertheless, media organizations continue to play a central role in determining which issues receive attention and how information is presented to the public (Mustofa et al., 2026).

Mass media play a crucial role in disseminating information, shaping public opinion, and influencing social behavior (Scheufele, 2022). In contemporary digital environments, online news portals and social media platforms have become significant sources of political information and public discourse. As a result, mass communication serves not only as a mechanism for information transmission but also as a process through which meanings, values, and social realities are constructed and negotiated within society.

From a constructivist perspective, media are not neutral channels that merely reflect reality. Instead, media actively participate in constructing social reality by selecting certain facts, emphasizing particular aspects of events, and providing interpretive frameworks through which audiences understand social and political issues (Abdurrahman & ..., 2026). The process through which media organizations define and present reality is particularly important in the coverage of public affairs and political events, where different representations of the same issue may lead to different public interpretations. This perspective provides the foundation for understanding media framing theory, which explains how media construct meaning and shape audience perceptions through specific patterns of selection and emphasis (Völker, 2024).

Media Framing Theory

Media Framing Theory explains how news organizations construct and present social reality through the selection, emphasis, and interpretation of specific aspects of events. Rather than functioning as neutral transmitters of information, media actively shape public understanding by highlighting particular elements of reality while downplaying or excluding others. Consequently, audiences are exposed not to reality itself, but to mediated representations of reality that have been organized through specific interpretive frameworks.

The concept of framing was systematically developed by Entman (1993), who defining framing as the process of selecting certain aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient within a communication text. According to Entman (1993), framing serves to promote a particular interpretation of an issue by emphasizing specific meanings, causes, evaluations, and solutions. Through this process, media organizations influence not only what audiences know about an issue but also how they understand and evaluate it (Entman, 1993).

Entman (1993), identifies four core functions of framing. **First**, framing defines problems by determining what is at stake and why an issue should receive public attention. **Second**, framing diagnoses causes by identifying the actors, conditions, or circumstances responsible for the problem. **Third**, framing makes moral judgments by evaluating actions or events according to particular social, political, or ethical standards. Finally, **the fourth** is framing suggests remedies by proposing solutions or courses of action to address the identified problem. These

four functions enable media organizations to construct coherent narratives that guide audience interpretations of complex social and political events.

Beyond its textual function, framing also represents a mechanism of symbolic power. Entman (Scheufele, 2022), argues that framing influences the distribution of political and social power because it determines which perspectives become dominant in public discourse. By selecting particular facts, sources, and narratives, media organizations contribute to the construction of social reality and shape the boundaries of public debate. In political communication, framing therefore becomes a strategic process through which competing actors seek to define issues, influence public opinion, and legitimize particular interpretations of reality.

The framing process operates through various journalistic practices, including source selection, headline construction, language choice, visual representation, and narrative organization (Rabbi & Pan, 2025). As a result, different media organizations may report the same event using different frames, producing distinct understandings and emotional responses among audiences.

In the context of political protest coverage, framing plays a particularly significant role because protest events are often open to multiple interpretations. The media can frame demonstrations as legitimate expressions of democratic participation, as challenges to political authority, or as threats to public order and stability (Kustiawan et al., 2025). These framing choices shape public perceptions of the legitimacy, significance, and consequences of collective action. Therefore, framing analysis provides an important analytical framework for examining how the media construct meaning and influence public understanding of controversial political events.

Framing Effect Theory

The Framing Effect Theory stems from Prospect Theory developed by Kahneman and Tversky (1979). According to Kahneman and Tversky (in Littlejohn, 2017) describe that individuals do not always make decisions based on objective rationality. Instead, judgments and decisions are heavily influenced by how information is presented. Different presentations of identical information can result in different interpretations, evaluations, and behavioral responses, even when the factual content remains unchanged.

In that line, framing effects occur when alternative descriptions of the same issue lead individuals to make different judgments or choices. This phenomenon demonstrates that people often rely on cognitive shortcuts, or heuristics, when processing information. As a result, individuals respond not only to the content of information but also to the manner in which that information is framed and communicated unchanged.

As we know, in communication research, the framing effect explains how media messages influence audience perceptions by activating specific cognitive and emotional responses. When audiences encounter news coverage, they do not process the information neutrally. Instead, they interpret events through the cognitive framework provided by the media narrative (Rabbi & Pan, 2025). Consequently, media framing can influence how individuals assess the responsibility, legitimacy, risk, and significance of social and political issues.

Kahneman and Tversky (in Littlejohn, 2017) distinguish between two primary forms of framing: gain framing and loss framing. **First**, Gain framing emphasizes positive outcomes, opportunities, benefits, and achievements associated with a particular action or event. Messages presented through gain frames tend to encourage supportive attitudes, optimism, and favorable evaluations. **Second**, loss framing highlights risks, threats, costs, or negative consequences. In that way the frames often generate concern, caution, fear, or opposition toward an issue.

In the context of political communication, framing effects are particularly relevant because political events are often characterized by uncertainty and conflicting interpretations. Media organizations can present the same event using different frames, thus encouraging audiences to focus on different aspects of reality (Geise & Xu, 2025). For example, a political protest can be framed as a democratic expression of public participation and social justice, leading audiences to perceive it positively. Conversely, the same protest can be framed as a source of disruption, instability, or security concerns, leading to more negative evaluations. Thus, the way information is framed can significantly influence public attitudes without changing the underlying facts of the event.

In digital communication environments, framing effects may become even more pronounced due to the rapid circulation of information and the interactive nature of online media (Swain, 2025). News content is frequently amplified through comments, sharing practices, and discussions across social media platforms, allowing frames to spread beyond their original sources. Thus, framing effects are no longer confined to traditional news consumption but are continuously reinforced, challenged, or negotiated through digital interactions.

Public Perception of Political Protest

Political protests constitute an important form of civic participation through which citizens express grievances, challenge existing power structures, and advocate social or political change (Lauro, 2026). As a form of collective action, protests provide opportunities for individuals and groups to communicate dissatisfaction with government policies, social inequalities, or broader political conditions. In democratic societies, political protests are often regarded as legitimate mechanisms for public participation and accountability, enabling citizens to influence political agendas and decision-making processes.

Public perceptions of political protests, however, are not formed solely through direct experience. As we know, most citizens encounter protest events through mediated communication, particularly news media and digital platforms. Consequently, public understanding of protests is strongly influenced by how these events are represented, interpreted, and discussed within the media environment (Akinwalere et al., 2025). Media coverage plays a critical role in shaping whether protests are perceived as legitimate democratic expressions, disruptive social disturbances, or threats to political stability.

The relationship between media framing and public perception becomes increasingly complex in digital communication environments. Contemporary audiences are exposed not only to news reports from mainstream media but also to alternative narratives circulating through social media platforms, online

communities, and citizen-generated content (Xiaoshan & Hang, 2026). As a result, individuals may encounter multiple and sometimes conflicting interpretations of the same protest event. Digital platforms enable audiences to participate actively in discussions, share opinions, and challenge dominant narratives, thereby contributing to the construction of collective meanings surrounding political events.

This perspective is consistent with the active audience approach, which argues that media audiences are not passive recipients of information but active interpreters of media messages. Hall's encoding-decoding model suggests that audiences may adopt dominant, negotiated, or oppositional readings of media content depending on their social experiences, values, and political orientations. Therefore, the influence of media framing on public perception should not be understood as a direct or deterministic process but rather as a dynamic interaction between media representations and audience interpretations.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research method to examine how media framing contributes to the formation of public perceptions regarding the 17+8 Protest Movement in Indonesia. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for investigating social phenomena that involve meanings, interpretations, and subjective understandings rather than measurable variables (Cresswell & Sullivan, 2020). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research seeks to explore and understand how individuals or groups make sense of social and human problems by examining experiences, perspectives, and contextual realities. Therefore, this approach enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of how media narratives construct meaning and how audiences interpret those narratives within specific social contexts (Butler, 2023).

Qualitative research is crucial for understanding complex phenomena and has the unique ability to capture the nuances of individual experiences (Morgan, 2023). This study is grounded in a constructivist paradigm, which assumes that reality is socially constructed through communication, interaction, and shared interpretation. From this perspective, media representations are not viewed as objective reflections of reality, but as socially generated constructions that shape public understanding of social and political events (Leeming, 2018).

The study focused on news coverage of the 17+8 Protest Movement published by Kompas.com and Detik.com between August and September 2025. These two media outlets were selected because they are among Indonesia's most influential online news platforms and play a significant role in shaping public discourse on political and social issues.

Data collection in this study was conducted through documentation, digital observation, and literature review. **First**, documentation techniques were used to collect news articles concerning the 17+8 Protest Movement from Kompas.com and Detik.com. Articles were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and publication within the designated timeframe.

Second, digital observation, particularly netnographic observation, was conducted to examine audience interactions within online discussion spaces. Public comments and discussions related to the selected news reports were

observed to identify patterns of audience interpretation and engagement with media narratives.

Third, a literature review was undertaken to establish the theoretical foundation of the study and to contextualize the findings within broader discussions of media framing, framing effects, and political communication.

Therefore the findings were subsequently interpreted through the lens of Framing Effect Theory. This theoretical perspective was used to explore how different media frames potentially influenced public perceptions of the protest movement. Particular attention was given to identifying gain-framing and loss-framing tendencies within media narratives and examining how these framing patterns shaped audience evaluations of the protest's legitimacy, significance, and consequences.

To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation was employed by comparing information obtained from multiple news articles, audience responses, and relevant scholarly literature (Moleong & Surjaman, 2014). This approach enabled the researcher to validate interpretations across different sources of evidence.

In addition, the analytical process involved repeated examination of the data to ensure consistency in coding, categorization, and interpretation. Research transparency was maintained by documenting data selection procedures, analytical decisions, and interpretative processes throughout the study. These measures helped ensure that the findings accurately reflected the framing patterns identified in media coverage and the corresponding audience responses observed within digital public discourse.

RESULTS

The 17+8 Protest Movement emerged in Indonesia in August 2025 as a large-scale civil society movement expressing public dissatisfaction with various political, economic, and social issues. This movement was initiated through coordinated actions in various cities and quickly gained visibility through digital platforms, particularly social media. The name "17+8" refers to seventeen short-term and eight long-term demands directed at the government. These demands encompass issues related to democratic governance, anti-corruption reform, labor rights, economic inequality, environmental justice, and government accountability.

Different from conventional protest movements that primarily rely on physical mobilization, the 17+8 Protest Movement was characterized by its strong integration with digital communication technologies. Social media functioned not only as a medium for information dissemination but also as a space for collective identity formation and public participation. Through hashtags, visual symbols, online campaigns, and user-generated content, the movement attracted widespread support, particularly among younger generations who actively engage with political issues through digital platforms.

The movement quickly developed into a national issue due to its scale, visibility, and political significance. Public discussions surrounding the protest extended beyond demonstrations on the streets into online news portals, social

media platforms, and digital public forums. As mainstream media organizations reported on the protest, different interpretations of the movement emerged. Some narratives portrayed the movement as a legitimate expression of democratic participation and public accountability, while others emphasized concerns regarding public order, political stability, and social disruption.

The extensive media coverage surrounding the 17+8 Protest Movement demonstrated that the event was not represented through a single, uniform narrative. Instead, different media organizations highlighted particular aspects of the protest, selected different sources, and emphasized distinct interpretations of its causes, significance, and consequences. These variations suggest that media outlets actively participated in constructing social reality rather than merely reporting events as they occurred.

To examine how these representations were constructed, this study employed Entman's (1993) framing model, which conceptualizes framing as a process of defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral evaluations, and recommending treatments. Through this analytical framework, the study explored how Kompas.com and Detik.com framed the 17+8 Protest Movement and how these framing strategies contributed to different interpretations of the same political event. The following sections present the findings of the framing analysis based on Entman's four framing dimensions.

Framing Analysis of Kompas.com

First, problem definition. Based on the Entman's (1993) framing, this study findings indicated that Kompas.com predominantly framed the 17+8 Protest Movement as a democratic expression of public aspirations and civic participation. News reports frequently presented the demonstrations as a legitimate response to public concerns regarding governance, transparency, and accountability. The movement was portrayed as part of a broader democratic process through which citizens sought to communicate their demands and participate in public affairs. Headlines and lead paragraphs consistently emphasized citizens' rights to express opinions and engage in democratic discourse. As a result, the protest was primarily defined as a socio-political issue associated with democratic participation rather than as a threat to public order.

Second is causal interpretation, the findings further revealed that Kompas.com attributed the emergence of the protest movement to structural and institutional challenges within Indonesian society. News reports highlighted issues such as economic inequality, perceived weaknesses in governance, corruption, labor concerns, and public dissatisfaction with government performance. The media frequently cited academics, civil society representatives, activists, and protest participants as primary sources. Therefore the selection of these sources contributed to a narrative that portrayed the movement as a response to broader systemic issues rather than as an isolated political event.

Third, Moral Evaluation. Kompas.com's coverage generally conveyed a positive moral evaluation of the protest movement. Demonstrators were often portrayed as active citizens exercising their democratic rights and advocating for social justice. The reporting emphasized values such as participation,

accountability, transparency, and democratic engagement. Although the coverage acknowledged disagreements and political tensions surrounding the movement, the overall narrative suggested that public criticism and collective action constituted legitimate and necessary elements of democratic governance.

Fourth, treatment recommendation. The findings demonstrated that Kompas.com consistently emphasized dialogue, policy reform, and constructive engagement between citizens and government institutions as appropriate responses to the protest movement. News reports highlighted the importance of listening to public concerns and addressing the underlying issues raised by protesters through democratic mechanisms. This framing implied that the most effective solution involved responding to citizens' demands and improving public accountability rather than focusing exclusively on controlling protest activities.

Based on the finding above, this result can be conclude that Kompas.com framed the 17+8 Protest Movement primarily as an issue of democracy and citizenship. Across all four framing dimensions, the coverage consistently emphasized citizen participation, public accountability, and social justice. The movement was portrayed as a legitimate response to structural and institutional challenges, while dialogue and policy reform were presented as the most appropriate solutions. This pattern reflects a predominantly positive or profit-oriented framing, in which the protests were interpreted as an opportunity to strengthen democratic participation and encourage government responses to public concerns.

Framing Analysis of Detik.com

First, problem definition. The findings indicated that Detik.com predominantly framed the 17+8 Protest Movement as an issue associated with public order, security, and social stability. Coverage frequently focused on the operational dimensions of the demonstrations, including crowd management, traffic disruptions, public safety, and law enforcement preparations. Rather than emphasizing democratic participation as the primary issue, the reports often highlighted the practical consequences of large-scale mobilization. Consequently, the movement was frequently defined as a situation requiring careful management and supervision.

Second, causal interpretation. Detik.com generally attributed the emergence of the protest movement to immediate political tensions and public dissatisfaction while placing greater emphasis on the consequences of collective action. News reports frequently relied on statements from government officials, law enforcement agencies, and public authorities responsible for maintaining order and security. The selection of these sources contributed to a narrative that focused more heavily on the management of protest activities than on the structural grievances that motivated the demonstrations.

Third, moral evaluation. The moral evaluation presented by Detik.com emphasized stability, security, and social order. Coverage frequently highlighted concerns regarding potential disruptions to public activities, economic consequences, traffic congestion, and the possibility of conflict during

demonstrations. Although the legitimacy of public expression was acknowledged, the overall narrative often portrayed the movement through a lens of caution and risk management. As a result, the protest was more frequently represented as a challenge to stability than as an opportunity for democratic participation.

Fourth, treatment recommendation. The findings revealed that Detik.com primarily emphasized security measures, law enforcement preparedness, and conflict prevention as appropriate responses to the protest movement. News reports frequently highlighted coordination among government agencies, police authorities, and other institutions responsible for maintaining public order. This framing suggested that effective management of demonstrations and the preservation of social stability were essential priorities in responding to the movement.

Based on finding and result above, the findings revealed that Detik.com framed the 17+8 Protest Movement primarily through the lens of public order, security, and social stability. Across the four framing dimensions, the coverage focused on the operational consequences of mass mobilization, potential disruptions, and the importance of maintaining public order. While the legitimacy of public expression was acknowledged, the movement was more frequently represented as a situation requiring management and supervision. This pattern reflects a predominantly loss-oriented framing, in which the protest was associated with risks, uncertainty, and potential social consequences rather than democratic opportunities.

Comparative Framing Analysis

A comparison between Kompas.com and Detik.com reveals significant differences in the framing of the 17+8 Protest Movement. Although both media organizations reported on the same events, they emphasized different aspects of reality and constructed different interpretations of the protests.

Kompas.com primarily framed the movement as an issue of democracy and citizenship, emphasizing public participation, accountability, and social justice. While, Detik.com framed the movement primarily as a security and public order issue, emphasizing stability, risk management, and the operational consequences of mass mobilization. Based on the theory, the summary of framing analysis as below.

Tabel 1. the framing analysis.

Framing Dimension	Kompas.com	Detik.com
Problem Definition	Democratic participation and public aspirations	Public order and social stability
Causal Interpretation	Structural grievances and policy dissatisfaction	Political tensions and operational challenges

Moral Evaluation	Legitimate civic engagement and democratic rights	Stability, risk, and social order concerns
Treatment Recommendation	Dialogue, reform, and public consultation	Security management and conflict prevention

Source: Processed research data (2026)

These result in table 1 above, demonstrated that different framing strategies encouraged audiences to focus on different dimensions of the same political event, thereby shaping distinct interpretations of the protest movement.

Public Perceptions in Digital Spaces

The findings shows that audience responses in digital spaces generally reflected the dominant frames presented by each media outlet. Public discussions associated with Kompas.com coverage frequently emphasized democratic participation, accountability, transparency, and social justice. Many users interpreted the 17+8 Protest Movement as a legitimate form of civic engagement aimed at encouraging political reform and strengthening democratic governance.

Furthermore, audience responses linked to Detik.com coverage more frequently focused on issues related to public order, security, and social stability. Users often expressed concerns regarding the potential consequences of large-scale demonstrations, including social disruption, public inconvenience, and political uncertainty. These responses reflected the dominant narrative promoted within Detik.com’s coverage of the protest movement.

Although many audience responses aligned with the dominant media frames, the findings revealed that public interpretations were not uniform. Audience members demonstrated varying degrees of acceptance, negotiation, and resistance toward media narratives. Some users adopted the dominant interpretation presented by the media and reproduced similar arguments in online discussions.

Others negotiated media messages by accepting certain aspects of the coverage while simultaneously questioning or modifying particular interpretations. A third group challenged the dominant narratives altogether by introducing alternative perspectives derived from personal experiences, political beliefs, or information obtained through social media and independent sources. Thus, these findings suggest that audiences actively participated in the construction of meaning rather than passively consuming media content.

The analysis demonstrated that media framing contributed significantly to how audiences evaluated the legitimacy, significance, and implications of the 17+8 Protest Movement. Exposure to frames emphasizing democratic participation tended to encourage supportive attitudes toward the protesters and their demands. Conversely, exposure to frames emphasizing security risks and social disruption was more likely to generate cautious or critical evaluations of the movement.

However, public perception was not shaped exclusively by media narratives. Digital communication environments enabled users to engage with

multiple information sources and participate in ongoing discussions, allowing them to compare, reinterpret, and challenge dominant media frames. As a result, public perception emerged through a dynamic interaction between media representations and audience interpretations.

Therefore, these results indicate that public perception is best understood as a dynamic process shaped by both media framing and audience agency. Within Indonesia's digital public sphere, media organizations continue to play an important role in providing interpretive frameworks, while audiences simultaneously contribute to the construction and circulation of political meanings through digital interaction and public discourse.

DISCUSSION

The findings before, demonstrated that Kompas.com and Detik.com constructed substantially different interpretations of the 17+8 Protest Movement despite reporting on the same political event. Kompas.com predominantly framed the movement as a democratic expression of civic participation, whereas Detik.com emphasized issues related to public order, security, and social stability. These differences support Entman's (1993) argument that framing involves selecting certain aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in communication texts (Mustofa et al., 2026).

The analysis revealed that the two media outlets differed not only in the issues they emphasized but also in the sources they selected, the narratives they developed, and the solutions they proposed (Kustiawan et al., 2025). Through these framing practices, each outlet constructed a particular interpretation of the protest movement. Kompas.com defined the movement as a response to structural and political grievances and evaluated it as a legitimate form of democratic engagement. In contrast, Detik.com focused more heavily on the operational consequences of collective action and framed the movement as an issue requiring effective management and supervision.

These findings further support Entman (1993) proposition that framing functions as a form of symbolic power. Media organizations do not merely report events; they actively shape public discourse by determining which perspectives receive attention and which interpretations become dominant. Consequently, framing serves as an important mechanism through which political meanings are constructed and circulated within society.

The findings before also demonstrated that different framing strategies were associated with different patterns of public perception. Audience responses associated with Kompas.com coverage frequently reflected support for democratic participation, accountability, and social justice, whereas responses linked to Detik.com coverage more commonly emphasized security concerns and social stability.

As line with the results are consistent with Framing Effect Theory developed by Kahneman and Tversky (1979), which argues that individuals respond differently to information depending on how it is presented (Littlejohn, 2017). Although both media outlets reported on the same protest movement, differences in framing encouraged audiences to focus on different dimensions of the event.

The framing employed by Kompas.com exhibited characteristics of gain framing because it emphasized democratic opportunities, civic participation, and the potential for political reform. Such framing encouraged audiences to perceive the protest movement as a constructive effort to improve governance and strengthen democratic accountability. While, Detik.com demonstrated characteristics of loss framing by emphasizing risks, disruptions, and potential threats to public order. Thus framing encouraged audiences to evaluate the movement through a lens of caution and risk management (Scheufele, 2022).

Therefore suggest that framing effects extended beyond information processing and influenced broader evaluations regarding the legitimacy, significance, and consequences of political protest. This supports previous research indicating that media framing can shape public attitudes toward political actors, social movements, and public issues.

Although audience responses generally reflected the dominant frames presented by each media outlet, the findings also revealed evidence of negotiated and oppositional interpretations. Not all audiences accepted media narratives in the same manner. Some users reproduced dominant media frames, while others questioned, modified, or challenged those interpretations by introducing alternative viewpoints.

The findings before are consistent with Hall's encoding-decoding perspective, which argues that audiences are active interpreters rather than passive recipients of media messages. According to Hall, media texts may generate dominant, negotiated, or oppositional readings depending on audiences' social experiences, values, and political orientations (Wahab et al., 2025).

The interactive nature of digital communication environments further strengthened audience participation in meaning-making processes. Unlike traditional mass communication models characterized by limited feedback, contemporary digital platforms enable users to comment, share, reinterpret, and contest media narratives in real time (Dhiman, 2023). Therefore, public perceptions emerged not solely from media influence but from ongoing interactions between media representations and audience interpretations.

The contrasting frames identified in Kompas.com and Detik.com illustrate how media organizations contribute to shaping public understanding of political events. By emphasizing different aspects of reality, media outlets influence the ways citizens interpret democratic participation, political accountability, and collective action (Ahmad & Hashmat, 2024).

The case of the 17+8 Protest Movement demonstrates that political meaning is not produced solely by media institutions or political elites but is continuously constructed through communication processes occurring across digital public spaces. Consequently, understanding contemporary political communication requires attention not only to media content but also to the ways audiences engage with, negotiate, and transform media narratives within digital environments.

Therefore, this study confirms that media framing remains a powerful mechanism for shaping public perceptions of political protest. However, the findings also highlight the growing role of audience agency in interpreting and

contesting media narratives, reflecting the increasingly participatory nature of democratic communication in the digital era.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examines how Kompas.com and Detik.com framed the 17+8 Protest Movement and how these framing strategies influenced public perceptions in Indonesia's digital communication environment. Findings indicate that the two media outlets constructed very different interpretations of the same political event. Kompas.com largely framed the movement as a democratic expression of citizen participation, public accountability, and social justice, while Detik.com emphasized issues related to public order, security, and social stability. These contrasting frames were reflected in audience responses, with public discussions generally aligned with the dominant narratives promoted by each media outlet. Findings further reveal that public perceptions were shaped not only by media representations but also by audiences' active interpretations in the digital space. Based on these findings, media organizations are encouraged to promote more balanced and comprehensive reporting on political protests by presenting diverse perspectives and contextual information. Furthermore, strengthening digital media literacy among citizens is crucial to support critical engagement with media content and to encourage more informed participation in democratic discourse. Through responsible media practices and active public engagement, the digital communications environment can contribute more effectively to democratic participation and public understanding of social and political issues.

FURTHER STUDY

This study was limited to the analysis of Kompas.com and Detik.com coverage of the 17+8 Protest Movement and audience responses within digital spaces. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent media framing practices across other news platforms or political events. Future research is encouraged to examine a wider range of media outlets, incorporate social media platforms, and employ quantitative or mixed-method approaches to further explore the relationship between media framing, public perception, and political participation in digital communication environments.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to all individuals and institutions who contributed to the completion of this research. Special appreciation is extended to the academic colleagues, reviewers, and participants who provided valuable insights, constructive feedback, and support throughout the research process. Their contributions significantly enhanced the quality and rigor of this study.

The authors also acknowledge the role of media organizations, public information sources, and digital platforms that provided access to relevant data and materials necessary for analyzing media framing and public perceptions of the 17+8 Protest Movement in Indonesia. The support and availability of these resources were instrumental in facilitating the successful completion of this research.

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