

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE YOUNG GENERATION'S OPINION REGARDING ECONOMIC PRESSURE IN THE #KABURAJADULU PHENOMENON ON SOCIAL-MEDIA

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### Abstract

This study examines the viral hashtag #KaburAjaDulu as a form of social criticism of economic pressure, particularly felt by the younger generation in Indonesia. This hashtag reflects disappointment with the government regarding low wages and limited job opportunities domestically. As a result, many of them have begun considering working abroad for a better life, leading the hashtag to go viral. This study is a qualitative approach using digital fieldwork. This study utilizes symbolic interactionism, public space, and agenda setting in the sociology of communication subject, analyzed 150 comments from 15 posts on TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter from January to May 2025. The data was analyzed using NVivo software to identify key themes. The results show that #KaburAjaDulu has become a symbol of economic anxiety, social criticism, and the digital identity of the younger generation. Social media serves as a new space for expression and public space for expressing their emotions. This hashtag ultimately emerged and went viral, forming shared meanings that reflect public opinion on emerging social and economic issues. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of critical digital literacy in understanding economic anxiety and social discussions among young people in the digital age.

**Keywords:** Digital Communication, Economic Pressure, Public Opinion, Sociology of Communication.

### A. INTRODUCTION

Communication plays a crucial role in forming and maintaining social relationships. With the development of information and communication technology, the way humans communicate has undergone significant changes. Social media has become a primary platform that connects individuals, communities, and institutions quickly and efficiently, reaching a wide audience (Fuqoha & Firdausi, 2020). One interesting phenomenon that has been trending on social media recently is the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu, which emerged as a public response to the government. This hashtag first appeared in 2023, ahead of the cabinet reshuffle, and became widely discussed again in early 2025, just as President Prabowo Subianto's

administration entered its 100th day in office, marking an expression of public dissatisfaction in the digital realm (Abelia et al., 2025).

The hashtag #KaburAjaDulu emerged from public dissatisfaction with budget cuts, which were perceived as neglecting the public's welfare. Furthermore, the worsening national economic situation, marked by rising living costs, job insecurity, and income stagnation, has strengthened public sentiment on this issue, particularly among younger generations who feel they are not receiving a commensurate return on their education and hard work (Amidjono et al., 2020). In this context, "running away" has become a symbol of escape from structural economic pressures that have become increasingly severe over the years.

This phenomenon is further exacerbated by the fact that many economic policies, while purportedly beneficial on a macro scale, are perceived as detrimental by society at the micro level. The ever-increasing prices of basic necessities, education costs, and housing exacerbate the financial anxieties of younger generations. Previous studies on intergenerational mobility have shown that the socioeconomic crisis impacts the well-being and expectations of younger generations (Leontopoulou & Chletsos, 2023). The impact of this pressure is evident in the digital expressions of young people who view working abroad as a solution to secure well-being and clearer economic opportunities (De Wet, 2017).

The economic pressure expressed through the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu is also closely linked to intergenerational economic inequality. Research by Sulistyaningrum & Tjahjadi (2022) shows that today's younger generation faces a heavier economic burden than previous generations, particularly in terms of access to decent jobs, home ownership opportunities, and income stability, despite being a generation with a better education. According to Kawinata et al. (2023), this situation has led to the emergence of the frustrated career phenomenon, a situation where higher education no longer guarantees positive social and economic mobility. This is reflected in the increasing narrative of "working in your own country doesn't guarantee a future" circulating on social media.

While numerous studies have highlighted the economic pressures experienced by younger generations and their impact on social mobility, as well as the influence of social media in shaping public opinion, studies linking these two aspects in the context of viral phenomena like #KaburAjaDulu are still limited. Most previous literature tends to discuss economic pressures or digital communication practices separately (Leonida et al., 2025; Swastiningsih et al., 2024), thus not providing a complete picture of how concrete economic conditions can influence the construction of meaning and public discourse in the digital realm. The #KaburAjaDulu phenomenon demonstrates the complex interaction between economic

pressures, social criticism, humor, and forms of digital escapism, which has not been systematically studied. This lack of research integrating economic factors and the practices of young people constructing opinions on social media is the main research gap that this study aims to fill.

This study aims to analyze how economic pressures felt by young people influence the construction of their public opinion in the #KaburAjaDulu phenomenon and how social media becomes a means of framing and disseminating this discourse. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the study of the sociology of communication by highlighting the relationship between structural economic conditions and the production of meaning in the digital realm, particularly in the context of viral expressions among young people. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for policymakers, media observers, and educators in understanding the dynamics of young people's opinions and formulating communication strategies and economic policies that are more responsive to their aspirations. Thus, this study offers strategic insights to understand the complex interactions between economic pressures, digital communication practices, and the construction of public opinion among young people.

## B. METHOD

This research is a digital field study using qualitative methods through descriptive thematic analysis to examine 15 posts and 150 comments related to the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu on TikTok, Instagram, and X between January and May 2025, when the intensity of public conversation around the hashtag was at its peak. This approach to social media analysis aligns with previous studies that emphasize the importance of direct observation of digital content in understanding the construction of meaning and the dynamics of social interactions on online platforms (Sejati et al., 2025). The use of NVivo in this study follows common practices in digital qualitative research to identify communication patterns, meaning relationships, and dominant themes in posts and comments. The findings regarding expressions of economic anxiety, cultural resistance, and emotional attachment among young people emerging in similar viral hashtags also corroborate previous research, which suggests that the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu functions as a space for the articulation of structural experiences and collective responses to socio-economic pressures (Ardianti et al., 2025; Rahim & Bayu, 2025). Thus, this research is expected to enrich the literature on the sociology of communication and digital communication, while also encouraging critical digital literacy so that people are wiser in producing and consuming content on social media.

A sociology of communication approach provides an appropriate foundation for understanding this phenomenon, with communication viewed as a social act involving the exchange of symbols and the creation of shared meaning, as explained in symbolic interactionism theory (Blumer, 1969). This framework allows for analysis of how the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu serves as a medium for constructing collective meaning, reflecting social conditions, psychological pressures, and the search for existence for the younger generation in modern society. Furthermore, Habermas (1991) concept of the public sphere provides an important perspective on how digital media functions as a discursive arena where individuals participate, debate, and produce discourse on the social issues they face. As a supporting theory, Agenda Setting Theory is also applied to understand how media has the capacity to determine the priority of public attention to certain issues through their salience in the flow of digital information (Mccombs & Shaw, 1972)

### C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The #KaburAjaDulu phenomenon did not emerge suddenly, but rather represents an emotional and rational response to the perceived instability of Indonesia's younger generation in the socio-economic conditions. Recent studies have shown that social media has become an arena for young people to voice social unrest, organize collective identities, and construct a discourse of resistance through digital expression (Ardianti et al., 2025; Nugroho, 2025). In this process, hashtags function not only as digital markers but also as "social symbols" that reinforce shared meanings of dissatisfaction, disappointment, and hope regarding the state of the country (Ardianti et al., 2025). Thus, this phenomenon is not born of a momentary emotional impulse, but reflects a deep-seated anxiety regarding economic and social life in Indonesia.

This anxiety was further reflected when #KaburAjaDulu emerged as a collective expression on platforms like TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram, particularly among young people who aspire to work or move abroad. This hashtag spread rapidly due to economic pressures, low wages, and limited job opportunities within the country, in line with research showing that youth migration trends are heavily influenced by dissatisfaction with economic stability and domestic job prospects (Rosiana & Wijayanti, 2021). Through various digital content, ranging from personal stories to memes and satire, #KaburAjaDulu has evolved into a symbol of aspiration and broad social critique, so that it can be understood as a form of digital articulation of structural unrest, not simply an emotional call to "leave Indonesia."

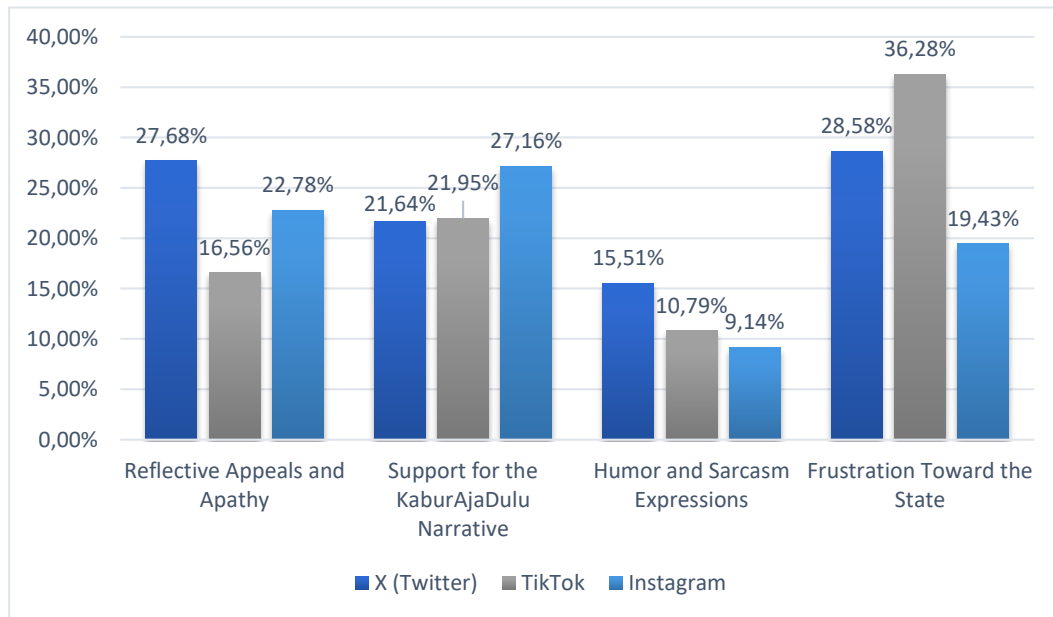
**Table 1.** Word Frequency in the #KaburAjaDulu Phenomenon on Social Media

No	Word	Occurrence	Percentage of Occurrence (%)
1	Kaburajadulu	37	84
2	Government	14	32
3	Opportunity	6	14
4	Community	5	11
5	Education	5	11
6	Leaving	3	7
7	Governance	3	7

Based on the results of the word frequency analysis, the word “kaburajadulu” was found to be the most frequently occurring word, appearing 37 times (equivalent to 0.84% of the total text), indicating that this word may be a major theme or prominent keyword in the discussion. Next in position is the word “pemerintah” (government), which appears 14 times (0.32%), followed by words such as “kesempatan” (opportunity), “masyarakat” (community), and “pendidikan” (education), which also have a fairly high frequency. Other words such as “meninggalkan” (leaving) and “pemerintahan” (government) have a lower frequency, occurring 3 times each (0.07%). Based on this data, we can conclude that the main focus of the text is closely related to the topic of escape (kaburajadulu) and government, with social issues such as education and society also playing a significant role.

More than just a social media trend, #KaburAjaDulu reflects complex social dynamics. Social media has now become a space where the younger generation not only shares information but also expresses their anxieties and hopes. For many of them, the dream of “escape” isn’t simply about seeking a more comfortable life abroad, but also about finding a space where they feel more valued, heard, and have the opportunity to thrive. This phenomenon needs to be understood as a signal of unresolved structural issues. If not addressed promptly with more inclusive policies that support the future of the younger generation, the desire to “escape” could result in a significant loss of potential for national development.

Table 2. Public Opinion Expressions on Three Social Media Platforms Regarding the #KaburAjaDulu Issue



Source: Data processed from observations of social media content on X (Twitter), TikTok, and Instagram using the hashtag #KaburAjaDulu, May 2025.

The data shows that the dominant expression emerging is frustration with the state, particularly on TikTok, with the highest percentage at 36.28%. This indicates that TikTok has become the primary channel for the public to vent their disappointment with the current socio-political situation. Meanwhile, platform X shows a strong tendency toward calls for reflection and apathy (27.68%), as well as support for the KaburAjaDulu narrative (21.95%), demonstrating how users position themselves more analytically and critically in responding to this issue. On the other hand, Instagram is relatively more widely used for humor and sarcasm, although the figures are still low compared to other expressions.

The #KaburAjaDulu phenomenon can be explained through Herbert Blumer's Symbolic Interactionism Theory, where meaning is formed through social interactions and symbols in everyday communication (Husin et al., 2021). This hashtag has become a collective symbol on social media, allowing the younger generation to express criticism and aspirations regarding socio-political conditions (Yang & Fatimah, 2024). Meanwhile, Habermas's concept of the public sphere describes social media as a place of discourse for citizens to exchange opinions and shape public opinion (Ausat, 2023). This phenomenon demonstrates how the digital public sphere supports the emergence of critical voices against the government and social issues, expressing a variety of issues, from frustration to humor, reinforcing social media's role as a

space for political participation among the younger generation (Dagher, 2024; Lestari et al., 2024).

From a sociological perspective, the #KaburAjaDulu phenomenon can also be analyzed through the Agenda-Setting Theory developed by McCombs & Shaw (1972), as explained in the 10th edition of *\*A First Look at Communication Theory\** by E.M. Griffin, Andrew Ledbetter, and Glenn Sparks. This theory states that media not only tells people what to think, but also what to think about (Griffin et al., 2019). In the context of social media, algorithms and patterns of interaction between users create a distinct agenda outside of mainstream media, where issues such as #KaburAjaDulu gain a dominant place in the public sphere. This hashtag has become a collective agenda highlighting young people's concerns about socio-political conditions and demonstrating how public opinion can be shaped, reshaped, and disseminated horizontally among citizens. Thus, social media is not merely a channel for expression but also a key platform for shaping shared awareness that influences public perception of social reality.

Research findings indicate that economic incentives are one of the most prominent factors behind the spread of the #KaburAjaDulu narrative. Many social media users associate this hashtag with low wages, the difficulty of finding decent work, an opaque recruitment system, and the obligation to work long hours with incomes insufficient to meet living expenses. Posts repeatedly highlighting comparisons between Indonesian wages and other countries reinforce the perception that prosperity can only be achieved through labor migration. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of economic insecurity among young people, where a generation faces financial pressures that trigger expressions of frustration and criticism through digital spaces (Maroto, 2017).

Furthermore, this phenomenon also demonstrates the emergence of what can be called a “digital economic escape,” where the expression “escape” is not merely a fantasy, but rather part of a future projection considered rational due to realistic considerations regarding well-being. Research on the readiness of Indonesia's younger generation to face the digital economy era shows that financial literacy and digital skills remain major obstacles (Amidjono et al., 2020). In the process of constructing public opinion, economic aspects are a strong determinant of the formation of collective meaning: the greater the financial pressure, the stronger the support for the #KaburAjaDulu narrative.

## D. CONCLUSION

The viral hashtag #KaburAjaDulu demonstrates a shift in how society, particularly young people, expresses their opinions and feelings about social situations and government policies

in the digital age. Through social media platforms like TikTok, X, and Instagram, this hashtag has become a form of expression for young people's anxieties, hopes, and identities amidst the uncertainty of the future. From the perspective of the sociology of communication, particularly through the theories of symbolic interactionism and the digital public sphere, it appears that social meaning is formed from symbols and shared interactions. Social media has now become an open space for discussion and the formation of public opinion on an equal footing, no longer dominated by major media outlets. In this regard, Agenda Setting theory also helps explain how issues like #KaburAjaDulu can become a major concern and foster shared awareness. This research demonstrates that social media is not just a means of sharing information, but has evolved into a space for young people to voice their opinions, shape their stories, and express their hopes for social change and a better future.

This research confirms that the viral hashtag #KaburAjaDulu not only reflects socio-political criticism but is also closely related to the economic dynamics affecting the well-being of the younger generation. The emerging digital expressions demonstrate that the demands of life, job instability, and uncertainty about the future are the main triggers for the emergence of the "runaway" narrative as an effort to seek economic security and well-being. Therefore, understanding this phenomenon is not sufficient from a communication and political perspective alone, but also through the realities of the economic pressures experienced by society. This phenomenon serves as a social warning that the younger generation needs space for participation, social protection, and fairer economic opportunities for the sustainability of national development.

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