

Citizens' resistance against repressive state apparatuses through music: a critical discourse analysis

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Abstract Although democracy promises civil liberties, the police often exert coercive power that generates public distrust. In Indonesia, this condition has sparked counter-discourses, one of which is expressed through the punk band Sukatani's song 'Bayar Bayar Bayar'. This study examines how lyrics construct a discourse of resistance and how the song operates as a symbolic action within social movements. Adopting a critical paradigm, this study applied a critical discourse analysis, integrating Althusser's theory of repressive state apparatuses, Barthes' semiotics, and Burke's symbolic action. Textual analysis of the lyrics and audiovisual documentation of demonstrations were used to collect data. The findings indicate that the song deconstructs the police myth as protectors, reframing them as agents of systemic repression. Furthermore, its performative use during protests demonstrates how music operates as a collective symbolic act of defiance. This study contributes to scholarship by highlighting the role of cultural texts in shaping political resistance and critique.

Keywords: critical discourse; protest music; repressive state apparatuses; semiotic; symbolic action

INTRODUCTION

The existence of a democratic political system does not inherently eliminate the presence of coercive state mechanisms. Coercive institutions, such as the police, continue to exercise repressive power in ways that stifle dissent and suppress civil liberties (Jackson et al., 2018). The supremacy of repressive state apparatuses poses a significant threat to democratic values, as it tends to silence criticism and hinder the expansion of civic freedoms (Liu & Sullivan, 2021). In Indonesia, this paradox is clearly visible: while democratic elections and legal reforms have progressed since the Reformation era, coercive state practices, especially within the police force, remain entrenched (Jackson et al., 2018). Such practices provoke growing public scepticism, as coercion increasingly replaces consent in state-society relations.

Althusser's (2014) concept of Repressive State Apparatuses (RSAs) provides a critical lens to examine these dynamics. According to Althusser, the police are not neutral enforcers of law but active instruments of ideological domination, sustaining the ruling class's hegemonic power through coercion (Gramsci, 1957). RSAs such as the police, military, and legal systems function not merely to enforce order but also to silence dissent and normalise inequality (Backer, 2018). These institutions are often reinforced by powerful political and economic interests and operate beyond public accountability (Curtice & Behlendorf, 2021; Liu & Sullivan, 2021).

Excessive policing and state-sponsored violence have prompted a crisis of legitimacy, provoked negative responses (Sullivan, 2016), and motivated citizens to construct counter-narratives to contest the dominant state discourse. As Mogoş and Berkers (2017) assert, these narratives often find form in creative expressions such as visual arts, literature, film, and particularly music. Music's communicative and affective power enables it to bypass formal

restrictions, giving voice to critiques that may otherwise be silenced by traditional political discourse.

Music has long served as a vehicle of resistance in various cultural and political contexts (Tahlia & Abrian, 2023). In the United States, rap has articulated Black resistance to institutional racism (Croteau & Hoynes, 2019). The Dalit community in India uses folk music to expose caste discrimination (Bhattacharyay, 2025). Punk music, in particular has developed as a transnational dissenting genre that challenges authoritarianism and state violence (Ambrosch, 2018; James & Walsh, 2019). This has been observed in countries such as China (Xiao & Qu, 2019), Thailand (Ramirez, 2015), Malaysia (Annuar et al., 2016), and Myanmar (Targosz, 2017), where youth subcultures use punk to express grievances against injustice. In Indonesia, the emergence of punk as a protest form during the Reformation has continued into the present, expanding through digital platforms and live street performances (Sasono, 2024).

In this context, the punk band Sukatani from Purbalingga represents a significant example of the role of music in Indonesian political resistance. Their song '*Bayar Bayar Bayar*' (released in 2023) has gained traction as a protest anthem against the police. Sung during mass demonstrations and widely circulated on digital platforms, the song critiques the commodification of justice, police extortion, and the repression of civil freedoms (Fahlevi, 2025; Putra, 2025; Rizki, 2025; Utomo, 2025). Its popularity has drawn sharp responses from state actors. Under police pressure, two band members were coerced into retracting the song and issuing public apologies (Anggraini, 2025; Utami, 2025).

While several studies have explored the use of music in political resistance globally (Fluxman, 1991; Kusriani et al., 2024; Richardson, 2022; Rohmah et al., 2019), limited attention has been given to how songs are used both textually and performatively as tools of dissent in Southeast Asia. Most studies on music and protest focus on either textual analysis or sociological accounts of activism, rarely integrating semiotic and performative dimensions. This creates a gap in understanding music as a dynamic cultural object that not only conveys critique but also enacts resistance.

Although Sutrisno et al. (2025) offer valuable insights into how the lyrics of '*Bayar, Bayar, Bayar*' reflect power asymmetries through Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, their study remains limited to textual interpretation and does not explore the performative dimension of protest music. In contrast, this study adopts an integrative approach by combining Barthes' semiotics and Burke's (1978) concept of symbolic action to interpret protest music as a form of motivated, rhetorical behaviour and not merely as representation.

This study's semiotics analysis builds on Barthes' semiotic framework, which categorises meaning making into three levels: denotation (literal meaning), connotation (cultural associations), and myth (ideological naturalisation) (Barthes, 1972). These concepts enable a deep reading of musical texts as ideological sites where meanings are produced, contested, and potentially transformed. As Djonov and Van Leeuwen (2018) note, such analysis is essential for understanding how cultural forms, such as music, participate in constructing social reality.

Conceptually, music operates not merely as art but as symbolic discourse. Burke's (1978) theory of symbolic action posits that language and, by extension, music can motivate collective behaviour, especially when it is aligned with social grievances. This study also adopts the concept of symbolic action to move beyond reading music as a representational text and instead approach it as a performative mechanism that mobilises collective emotions and political agency. The concept will be applied to analyse the performative use of the song during demonstrations using Graham and Ward's (2024) framework. Specifically, symbolic action is operationalised by identifying patterns of collective behaviour, such as gestures, chanting, positioning, and repetition, that emerge consistently across protest events where '*Bayar Bayar Bayar*' is performed. These recurring performative elements are treated as symbolic rituals through which protesters publicly articulate dissent and challenge state authority, transforming the song into a shared tool of embodied resistance (Graham & Ward, 2024).

Therefore, this study seeks to address a gap in the field of critical music discourse by formulating two central research questions. First, it investigates how the lyrics of '*Bayar Bayar Bayar*' construct a discourse of citizen resistance against the state apparatus, examining the linguistic and symbolic strategies used to articulate dissent. Second, it explores how the song functions as a symbol within political protests, focusing on its performative and mobilising roles in shaping collective expressions of opposition.

The study's contribution is twofold. Empirically, it offers a rare insight into a contemporary Indonesian protest song as a political text. Methodologically, it combines semiotic and symbolic-action perspectives in analysing music, a rarely used fusion in communication research. Theoretically, it challenges the dominant views of music as passive reflection and instead positions it as an active discourse within democratic contestation. As Graham and Ward (2024) emphasise, understanding music as symbolic action expands the analytical scope of political communication, especially in contexts where direct critique invites repression. Thus, this research sheds light on resistance through music and reaffirms the political potential of cultural texts in transitional democracies.

METHODOLOGY

This study is grounded in a critical paradigm to explore how cultural texts, specifically protest music, articulate and perform resistance to repressive state apparatuses. The research adopts a qualitative interpretive approach, using semiotic and symbolic action to examine the construction and enactment of resistance discourse. The primary data consist of the lyrics of '*Bayar Bayar Bayar*' a song by the Indonesian punk band Sukatani. The song, released as part of the 2023 album *Gelap Gempita*, is publicly accessible via the YouTube channel @AvantGardenClub. The selection is purposeful and theoretically driven, based on its real-life circulation as a protest anthem, its explicit confrontation of police authority, and its documented impact in public demonstrations, making it a critical case of music functioning both as discourse and symbolic action (Fahlevi, 2025; Utami, 2025). Its genre (Punk New Wave) is also consistent with counter-hegemonic music's global patterns (Ambrosch, 2018).

To analyse how the song encodes meaning, this study applies Barthes' semiotic model (1967), which is operationalised through three analytical stages. The first stage, denotative analysis, focuses on the literal interpretation of the lyrics and identifies their primary sign meanings. The second stage, connotative analysis, examines the ideological, emotional, and socio-cultural associations that emerge beyond the literal level. The final stage, myth analysis, interprets how the lyrics naturalise or contest dominant power narratives, following the theoretical insights of Barthes (1972) and Chandler (2022). Through these sequential stages, the analysis reveals both the explicit and implicit dimensions of meaning embedded within the song's semiotic structure.

For secondary data, the study compiles thirteen pieces of audiovisual news coverage of protests where the song was actively performed or played. The keywords '*Lagu Bayar Bayar Bayar*' and '*Massa Aksi Demo*' were used to search for and filter relevant news coverage from various credible online media sources. Graham and Ward's (2024) elaboration of Burke's symbolic action theory, focusing on how the song functions as a collective, embodied, and repeated act of resistance, is used to analyse these. Here, symbolic action is defined not merely as message transmission but as motivated, rhetorical behaviour in public settings.

Semiotic and symbolic analyses are employed to examine distinct yet interconnected aspects of the research object. The semiotic analysis concentrates on the textual structure of the song, exploring its linguistic and musical signs to uncover layers of meaning within the composition. On the other hand, the symbolic action analysis addresses the song's role as a form of social performance, focusing on how it functions within political demonstrations.

The study uses triangulation between textual and performative data sources to ensure validity. The analysis's reliability is enhanced through repeated coding of textual and visual material using operational definitions drawn from Barthes and Burke. While generalisability is not sought, analytical generalisation is pursued, allowing insights from this case to inform broader theories of cultural resistance in semi-authoritarian democracies.

The researcher's positionality in this critical study is grounded in the intention to uncover forms of counter-hegemony embedded within the lyrics. This stance reflects a commitment to identifying how subordinate voices challenge dominant power structures. Such an approach is crucial, as Gramsci (1971) emphasises the importance of tracing patterns of social consciousness that emerge in opposition to hegemonic control. While maintaining analytical rigor, the researcher remains reflexive about how this emancipatory orientation shapes interpretive choices (Ghafur, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To ensure a systematic and coherent analysis, this chapter presents the discussion in accordance with the original verse structure of the song 'Bayar Bayar Bayar' as composed by the Sukatani band. This segmentation is based on the linguistic and syntactic organisation intentionally crafted by the creator of the text. Syntax is a crucial element in discourse analysis, alongside semantics, in shaping how meaning is constructed, and knowledge is produced. As Givón (2020) argues, syntactic structuring plays a central role in revealing how language constructs, sequences, and emphasises particular realities.

The following are the original lyrics of "Bayar Bayar Bayar" by the band Sukatani.

[Verse One]

Mau bikin SIM bayar polisi
(Want to get a licence? Pay the police)
Ketilang di jalan bayar polisi
(Caught on the road? Pay the police)
Touring motor gede bayar polisi
(Big motorbike touring? Pay the police)
Angkot mau ngetem bayar polisi
(Minibus wants to stop? Pay the police)

[Refrain]

Aduh aduh ku tak punya uang,
(Oh no, I don't have money,)
untuk bisa bayar polisi
(to pay the police)

[Verse Two]

Mau bikin gigs bayar polisi
(Want to hold a gig? Pay the police)
Lapor barang hilang bayar polisi
(Report something lost? Pay the police)
Masuk ke penjara bayar polisi
(Go to prison? Pay the police)
Keluar penjara bayar polisi
(Get out of prison? Pay the police)

[Refrain]

Aduh aduh ku tak punya uang,
(Oh no, I don't have money,)
untuk bisa bayar polisi
(to pay the police)

[Verse Three]

Mau korupsi bayar polisi
(Want to commit corruption? Pay the police)
Mau gusur rumah bayar polisi
(Want to evict homes? Pay the police)
Mau babat hutan bayar polisi
(Want to clear the forest? Pay the police)
Mau jadi polisi bayar polisi
(Want to be a police officer? Pay the police)

[Refrain]

Aduh aduh ku tak punya uang,
(Oh no, I don't have money,)
untuk bisa bayar polisi
(to pay the police)

Verse one: every day public space transactions

On a denotative level, the first verse explicitly describes everyday traffic-related encounters in which citizens are expected to pay the police, whether they apply for a driver's licence, are ticketed, go on a motorbike tour, or simply operate a public minivan. This literal interpretation reflects common bureaucratic experiences in the public sphere. In this context, the road becomes a symbolic space of socio-economic mobility and capital access. However, the lyrics suggest that such access is frequently disrupted by imbalanced power dynamics between ordinary citizens and law enforcement, highlighting the breakdown of equitable access to public infrastructure.

These lyrics offer a cultural critique of the deeply embedded power relations between the police and the public in everyday urban life at the connotative level. The repetition of the phrase '*bayar polisi*' (pay the police) invokes a negative connotation of systemic corruption, illegal fees, and extortion practices that have become normalised within the police institution. Rather than embodying the principles of law and justice, the police are portrayed as transactional agents who prioritise personal economic gain over public service. This connotation extends into the mythic dimension of Barthesian semiotics, where the institution of the police, commonly idealised as protectors of justice, is deconstructed and re-signified as an instrument of oppression and exploitation.

The myth encoded in these lyrics challenges the police's hegemonic image as neutral enforcers of justice. Instead, it reveals a counter-narrative in which law enforcement is depicted as complicit in perpetuating systemic inequality. This resonates with Antonio Gramsci's (1999) notion of hegemony, where the state does not rely solely on coercion but also on cultural and ideological leadership to secure consent. The repeated invocation of '*bayar polisi*' articulates societal resistance to entrenched structural injustice. It functions rhetorically to subvert dominant ideological representations and exposes the police as beneficiaries of institutionalised coercion rather than as defenders of civil order. In doing so, the lyrics reinforce a collective critique of state power and assert the legitimacy of popular resistance through cultural expression. As Gramsci (1999) elucidates, the process of counter-hegemony entails the formation of a new 'historical bloc' capable of supplanting the dominant position through the construction of alternative ideas and counter-narratives to the existing order within the context of political struggle.

Verse two: civil services commodification

At the denotative level, verse two depicts several bureaucratic and administrative interactions between citizens and the police contingent on informal payments. Activities that should ideally be protected as public freedoms, such as organising a music event, are subject to financial transactions. Similarly, even the most basic legal procedures, such as reporting a lost item or navigating the criminal justice system (from incarceration to release), are portrayed as monetised processes. These lyrics reveal a reality in which access to state services, particularly those involving law enforcement, is contingent on one's ability to pay rather than legal entitlement.

The lyrics offer a powerful cultural and political critique of the state's service delivery mechanisms from a connotative perspective. They suggest that the state has commodified legal and administrative functions. The implication is that citizens are subjected to informal financial demands even in critical or vulnerable situations, such as filing a criminal report or engaging with the penal system. These conditions reflect a systemic failure in the functioning of the state and point to corruption and discrimination. This resonates with Neo-Marxist theories of the state, which argue that bureaucratic institutions, far from being neutral, operate as extensions of capitalist logic by embedding the principle of commodification into governance (Barrow, 1993).

In this context, the lyrics generate a myth about the state's current condition: it no longer operates on the basis of ethics or equality but on transactional logic. Public services are no longer viewed as civic entitlements, but as marketable commodities controlled by state actors for personal or institutional gain. As Lukács (1971) conceptualises, this phenomenon constitutes the process of reification, where social relations are transformed into seemingly objective, thing-like entities that obscure their human origins and reinforce capitalist social structures.

Verse three: collusion and power networks

At the denotative level, verse three describes scenarios in which individuals offer financial compensation to the police to engage in illicit or destructive actions, such as corruption, forced evictions, and environmental degradation. The lyrics imply that such acts are not only tolerated but also actively facilitated by law enforcement in exchange for bribes. The final line introduces a striking contradiction: one must pay to become part of the police force itself. This indicates that financial transactions are not limited to external actors seeking impunity but are also embedded within the structure of institutional recruitment. Therefore, this section emphasises that the police's financial gain does not stem solely from extorting marginalised communities but also from colluding with powerful actors who violate the law.

On a connotative level, the lyrics offer a sharp critique of systemic collusion between law enforcement and the economic and political elites who seek to circumvent legal accountability. In this portrayal, the police are no longer guardians of the law but brokers of corruption, agents who facilitate, rather than prevent, illegal conduct. Law enforcement is depicted not as a mechanism of justice but as a tool of power legitimisation. In this framing, justice is transactional and negotiable, accessible only to those who can afford it.

This connotation constructs a myth that dismantles the long-standing narrative of the police as impartial defenders of justice. Instead, the lyrics suggest that the law itself can be purchased and that positions within the law enforcement apparatus are reserved for those willing to pay. This imagery lays bare the exclusivity and opacity of power within the state apparatus, where economic capital governs entry and advancement not by merit or public service. By foregrounding a counter-discourse through lyrics, cultural agents contest and reconfigure the hegemonic meanings attached to the state actors (Sutrisno et al., 2025).

Refrain: irony and helplessness

The refrain's denotative meaning offers a unique and emphatic insight into the song's core message. This refrain is repeated three times throughout the track and reinforces the central theme of financial coercion in citizen-police relations. On a literal level, the lyrics express a sense of frustration and anxiety experienced by individuals who lack the financial means to 'pay' for access to police services. This lyrical segment serves as a summarising statement that captures the injustices described in the earlier verses.

At the connotative level, the refrain conveys a deeper critique of culture and society. It reflects the resignation of economically marginalised communities who find themselves excluded from justice by systemic corruption. The lyrics underscore the power asymmetry embedded in a bureaucratic system that monetises public services, positioning the poor as perpetual outsiders in a transactional state structure. This connotation also introduces tones of despair and biting sarcasm, amplifying unfair legal enforcement and bureaucracy. Through this connotative reading, the refrain constructs a myth in which justice becomes a luxury, something unattainable for ordinary citizens. It reinforces the notion that corruption within law enforcement is not incidental but systemic, rendering police services effectively out of reach for those without economic capital. Consequently, the refrain illustrates the popular perception that justice is 'sharp downward, blunt upward,' harsh on the powerless, and lenient on the powerful.

'Bayar Bayar Bayar' as a symbolic action

In the second stage of the research, the analysis focused on the secondary data. The search resulted in 13 news items from mainstream online media featuring audiovisual coverage of demonstrations in which the band Sukatani's song 'Bayar Bayar Bayar' was performed. The results demonstrate that the critical discourse constructed within the song '*Bayar Bayar Bayar*' contributes to the formation of a powerful myth depicting the Indonesian National Police as a corrupt and discriminatory institution. This discourse is materialised through the performative use of the song during public demonstrations. Protesters repeatedly sang and performed '*Bayar Bayar Bayar*' directly in front of police barricades. As Hamad (2006) suggests, such acts of communication can be understood as processes of reality construction, revealing how the public actively shapes discourse.

One of the most prominent examples of this occurred during the mass protests under the #IndonesiaGelap banner on 21st February 2025, in both Surabaya and Jakarta. These protests prominently featured the song as a form of public expression and critique directed at

the state apparatus. In Jakarta, protestors sang the song continuously during a long march, turning it into a form of collective ritual. Similarly, on 20th February 2025, during 'Aksi Kamisan' demonstration by human rights activists in front of the Presidential Palace, the same song was amplified through loudspeakers and sung in unison by demonstrators. In several cases, protesters pointed directly at the police while repeating the lyric '*bayar polisi*', a gesture loaded with accusatory symbolism.

Although mainstream online media most prominently covered these two events, the pattern was also evident in other demonstrations. For example, on 25th February 2025, protestors in Surabaya rallied against a corruption case, while another demonstration was held on 24th February 2025, in Purbalingga in response to repressive actions taken against the band Sukatani. Both events were reported by nationally recognised private news portals.

This stage applies Kenneth Burke's dramatic pentad to analyse symbolic action within protest contexts. Five interrelated elements are examined to reveal how music functions as a vehicle of collective resistance. The act refers to the performance of the protest song '*Bayar Bayar Bayar*', a repeated ritualistic vocalisation of dissent during mass demonstrations. The scene encompasses the act's spatial and temporal contexts, such as protest sites, including police barricades and government buildings, particularly during events like #IndonesiaGelap and Aksi Kamisan in February 2025. The agent consists of protest participants, demonstrators, human rights activists, and musicians who actively engage in the performance. The agency describes how the act is carried out, including the use of megaphones, synchronised chanting, bodily gestures (e.g., pointing at police), and visual symbols that amplify the song's message. Lastly, the purpose represents the underlying motive: to delegitimise institutional authority, articulate collective grievances, and construct a counter-hegemonic narrative through performative engagement.

Music is understood not only as an artistic expression (Barthes, 1977) but also as a cultural site where social agents (Aleshinskaya, 2013) and ideological struggles are actively contested (Sasono, 2024). It functions as a rhetorical device that confronts state domination over its citizens while simultaneously affirming resistance through symbol, sound, and language (Way & McKerrell, 2017). From this corpus of secondary data, a distinctive pattern is identified across the demonstrations. First, following the public revelation of police intimidation against Sukatani and the subsequent rise in the song's popularity, '*Bayar Bayar Bayar*' has become a recurring fixture in protest culture. It serves as a symbolic anthem that encapsulates citizen grievances against the state. Second, the song's performance often transcends vocalisation; demonstrators express physical gestures of defiance, such as pointing at police officers or chanting lyrics with aggressive intonation. These actions indicate that the song has evolved into a tool of performative resistance. Third, the song demonstrates the capacity to involve broader audiences by encouraging collective participation in the repetition of key lyrics, particularly the phrase '*bayar polisi*' and the emotionally charged refrain.

Within the symbolic action theory framework (Burke, 1978), such performances constitute acts of symbolic resistance enacted by social agents within the structures of power (Graham & Ward, 2024). From this perspective, music cannot be reduced to a mere nominal object or aesthetic symbol alone. As Djonov and Van Leeuwen (2018) and Hirsch (2012) argue, music functions as a form of social action, carrying strategic intent within political contexts. The case of '*Bayar Bayar Bayar*' demonstrates how the discourse of injustice and discrimination embedded in music can be collectively appropriated and reproduced as a shared mode of resistance against the status quo. This aligns with Attali's (1985) concept of music as 'noise', a disruptive force that challenges hegemonic power structures and reclaims public space for dissent.

In this framework, noise is not merely an auditory disturbance but a symbolic act of dissent, an interruption of the hegemonic order that precedes structural transformation. As Attali argues, protest music functions as both a prefiguration of societal crisis and an agent of historical rupture. The performance of '*Bayar Bayar Bayar*', particularly when amplified during public demonstrations, aligns with Attali's (1985) thesis that music can articulate future social structures by destabilising current ones (Attali, 1985).

Hirsch (2011) posits that the emergence of various forms of 'noise', including music, signifies a vibrant democracy. Therefore, it is not surprising that the song '*Bayar Bayar Bayar*', as a form of 'noise', within Indonesia's democratic dynamics, has faced significant intimidation from

state apparatuses. This situation appears to confirm Qureshi's (2002) prediction that no power can be solidified without noise control. The theoretical implications of these analyses are presented in Figure 1.

The evolution of music has become a compelling subject for arts and culture scholars. Initially, music had no significant ties to society's economic, social, and political spheres. However, following the industrialisation of culture in the post-18th century, it dramatically transformed into a central economic and political conduit (Kohl, 1997). Beyond its economic implications, the widespread influence of music sharply escalated after the invention of recording devices and radio signals. Consequently, recorded sound and music have emerged as crucial bargaining tools in political and power dynamics. Musical genres were created to express emotional, social, and political sentiments. For instance, in fascist groups, music served as a unifying tool and a means to shape the dominant discourse among members (Machin & Richardson, 2012).

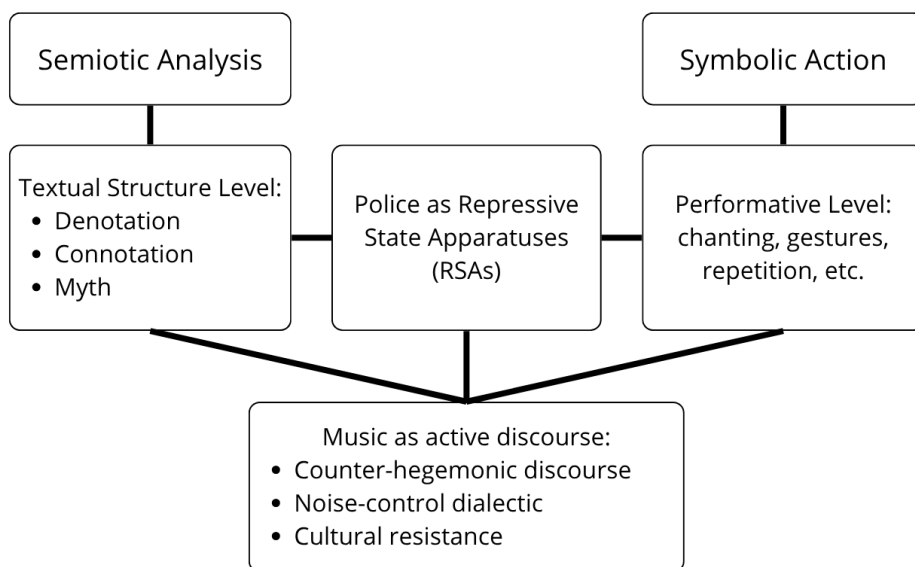


Figure 1. The theoretical implications formulated in this study.
 Source: formulated by the author (2025)

Cloud and Feyh (2015) previously demonstrated that songs from left-wing political groups often share similar narratives, focusing on ideological consciousness and class conflict. Such songs typically illustrate how ruling groups or dominant actors in socio-political dynamics engage in authoritarian practices against subordinate groups (Larue, 2022). Examples include unfair law enforcement, political discrimination against minorities, and control over resources. These works suggest that the state does not operate for collective justice but as an instrument of power serving elite interests through its repressive apparatuses (Özpolat, 2020).

Drawing on Burke's (1966) view of language as a form of symbolic action that shapes perceptions of social reality, this study reveals that the song 'Bayar Bayar Bayar' functions as a collective symbolic act. It not only forms a critique but also constructs a discourse on class struggle and citizen political awareness in confronting the state apparatus's abuse of power. Burke's (1978) theory of symbolic action elucidates how citizens engage in resistance through symbolic acts, including critical lyrics in musical performances. This aligns with Attali's (1985) perspective, which posits that with music comes power and its counterpart: subversion.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates how the song 'Bayar Bayar Bayar' by the punk band Sukatani articulates a critical discourse of resistance against the Indonesian state's repressive apparatuses, particularly the police. The lyrics are revealed to encode ideological critiques that expose the normalisation of systemic corruption and institutional violence through semiotic analysis. The repetition of the phrase 'bayar polisi' functions as a rhetorical device to undermine the police's myth as impartial guardians of justice. These critiques are not only textual but also performatively

enacted in public demonstrations, transforming the song into a symbolic act of political dissent. The public performances of the song during mass protests further reinforce its role as a medium for collective expression and resistance. The convergence of symbolic sound and embodied action indicates that music transcends representation and becomes a performative force that contests power structures and reclaims civic space.

From a critical theory perspective, this research has shown how cultural texts can function as powerful tools for constructing counter-hegemonic meanings and mobilising collective resistance. The song 'Bayar Bayar Bayar' challenges the normalised absurdities and injustices perpetrated by repressive apparatuses. This song's widespread use during demonstrations underscores the potential of music as a medium for political expression and public dissent. Ultimately, this reaffirms the role of musical performance as a form of symbolic action, through which communities resist structural power and articulate collective critique.

This study has some limitations. First, the research is limited to one song and one case study, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. Second, the analysis primarily focuses on textual and performative dimensions, without directly engaging with the perspectives of the artists or audiences. The absence of ethnographic data or interviews limits insight into how protest music producers and consumers perceive its impact and political efficacy.

Further research could explore how songs of resistance are performed by their creators. This would allow for an examination of discourse construction from both the text producer's perspective and the audience's reception. Such an approach could simultaneously illuminate how the expressive elements of musical performance contribute to the formation of new discourses regarding the construction of meaning within a song. Subsequent studies could leverage more complex discourse analysis theories, such as multimodal discourse analysis or musical discourse analysis.

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