

MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC SPACE ISSUES: AN ANALYSIS OF THE METRO JAYA PROVINCIAL POLICE'S COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN HANDLING PROTESTS HEADING TOWARDS HI ROUNDABOUT

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ABSTRACT

The development of the digital public sphere causes demonstration-related issues to escalate rapidly through interactions between social media, online media, and institutional communication. This study analyzes the development of the June 2026 demonstration blockade issue at the Hotel Indonesia (HI) Roundabout, evaluates the appropriateness of PMJ's communication strategy at each escalation stage, and identifies factors that accelerated and slowed the issue's development. The study uses a qualitative, descriptive case study approach. Data were obtained through documentation of PMJ's official communications, social media monitoring, online media coverage, and Drone Emprit data during 11–15 June 2026. The analysis uses Issue Life Cycle Theory, operationalized into four stages: Scanning, Monitoring, Early Warning, and Crisis Response, with indicators of reach, account volume, Key Opinion Leader (KOL) involvement, and media coverage. Results show the issue developed rapidly from student networks into a national issue, with more than 170,000 mentions, approximately 391 million public interactions, and 6,661 news articles during the observation period. PMJ's communication strategy followed the escalation, but digital dynamics significantly accelerated the issue's spread. The symbolic value of the HI Roundabout, viral visual content, digital actor involvement, and expanding actions across regions strengthened the escalation, while official clarification, location diversion, and fact checking helped reduce it. These findings indicate that managing public space issue escalation requires a fast, adaptive communication response. This implies PMJ and related institutions must strengthen digital monitoring, deliver verified information, and coordinate across institutions so security and public communication responses remain balanced without increasing the issue's escalation.

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INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the digital media landscape in Indonesia has fundamentally changed the process of public opinion formation. The 'Digital 2025 Global Overview' report shows that, in January 2025, there were approximately 212 million internet users (74.6 per cent of the population) and 143 million active social media users in Indonesia (Kemp, 2025). Meanwhile, APJII reports that national internet penetration reached 229.4 million people, or 80.66 per

cent of the population, in the first half of 2025, with TikTok, YouTube and Facebook being the platforms most widely used by the public (Sari, 2025). This development marks a shift in the public sphere from the dominance of the mass media towards a digital ecosystem that is more open, fast-paced and dynamic. In the digital sphere, public opinion is no longer formed in a linear manner, flowing from the elite to the public, but through the interaction of various actors, such as netizens, influencers, online media and official institutions, meaning that an issue can develop into a matter of national concern within a short space of time (Rhee et al., 2024; Sevignani, 2022; Sidabutar et al., 2024).

In this context, demonstrations are a form of political participation that is constitutionally guaranteed, whilst also serving as a test of the police force's communication capabilities (Rachmadi et al., 2024). Researchers (Colbran, 2020; Fielding, 2023) shows that strategies for managing demonstrations range from a dialogue-based approach to a more repressive, control-based approach, and that each communication choice has direct implications for institutional legitimacy. However, this trust may diminish if the on-the-ground management of protests is not accompanied by swift, consistent and credible public communication, particularly in the digital sphere where public opinion evolves rapidly.

This phenomenon was evident during the student and civil society demonstrations on 12 June 2026, which sought to reach the Hotel Indonesia (HI) Roundabout. The demonstrators voiced various demands, such as a depreciation of the rupiah, the rise in the price of Pertamina petrol, a wave of redundancies, opposition to the revision of the National Police Act, and an increase in allowances for members of the House of Representatives. The Metro Jaya Provincial Police, together with the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), set up roadblocks at a number of points, citing Jakarta Governor's Regulation No. 232 of 2015, which designates the HI Roundabout as a no-protest zone, and directed the crowd towards the Monas Horse Statue area (Nugraheny & Hidayat, 2026; H. Salsabila & Movanita, 2026). This incident evolved from discussions on social media, through media coverage, to an official statement by the police, thus serving as a concrete example of how issues in the public sphere can escalate and require an appropriate communication strategy (Olsson, 2014; Ozanne et al., 2020).

The evolution of this issue demonstrates that technical decisions regarding traffic management can develop into a public debate concerning freedom of expression, opportunities for public participation, and the credibility of the authorities (Asimakopoulou et al., 2025; Cholyshkina et al., 2024). Issues of this nature progress through stages of emergence, dissemination and crisis, thus requiring an adaptive communication strategy commensurate with the level of escalation (Manurung et al., 2024). Consequently, public communication must not merely be reactive once a crisis has occurred, but must be capable of anticipating the development of an issue from its earliest stages.

A crisis is a dynamic process involving numerous actors and cannot therefore be understood merely as a single event (Jong, 2025). Threats to an organization's reputation also evolve in line with shifts in public perception and the build-up of public outrage (Marynissen & Ramos Salazar, 2023). On the other hand, research into police communication shows that social media has become a key tool in building the institution's legitimacy (Cheng, 2021; Dong & Wu, 2022; Gunderson & Macdonald, 2026). Another study confirms that the police are using social media to reduce their reliance on the mainstream media, although this entails an increased institutional responsibility for managing the public narrative (Colbran, 2020; Dewald, 2023; Fielding, 2023; Hand & Ching, 2020). Meanwhile, research into digital public opinion shows that social media influencers play a key role in accelerating the spread of issues and shaping public attitudes (Harff et al., 2026; Luong & Vu, 2025). In the Indonesian context, previous research has largely focused on mapping digital conversation networks relating to public issues, such as the controversy surrounding the KPK's National Awareness Test, the #SaveKPK movement, opposition to the Job Creation Act, and the crisis of confidence in the Indonesian National Police (Santoso, 2025; Sumartias et al., 2023; Sutan et al., 2021; Suwana, 2020).

Research on public issues and crisis communication remains predominantly focused on post-crisis analysis and social media conversation mapping. This leaves limited explanation of how issues evolve from their initial stages, how social and mass media dynamics interact with institutional responses during escalation, and how police

communication strategies adjust accordingly. A research gap therefore persists in understanding the temporal relationship between issue development and institutional communication response, specifically regarding public issue management by the police in Indonesia.

This study fills that gap by reconstructing the demonstration blockade heading towards the HI Roundabout as a gradual issue escalation process, rather than as a singular crisis event. Its novelty lies in mapping the escalation stages, the corresponding changes in PMJ's communication strategy, and the factors that accelerated or slowed the escalation. This approach enables an assessment of strategy appropriateness based on issue characteristics at each stage, so that institutional responses are understood in relation to shifting issue dynamics, not only when the issue peaks.

The urgency of this study arises from the rapid development of public issues in the digital space, which demands that the police respond proactively and adaptively. The findings are expected to strengthen studies on issue escalation and crisis communication within Indonesian security institutions, while also providing a practical basis for developing communication strategies that are proactive in early stages, adaptive during escalation, and oriented toward maintaining public trust. Accordingly, this study aims to reconstruct the development of the demonstration blockade issue heading towards the HI Roundabout, analyze the appropriateness of PMJ's communication strategy at each escalation stage, and identify factors that accelerated or slowed the issue's development.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design to analyze the process of public issue escalation and the communication strategy of the Metro Jaya Provincial Police (PMJ) in handling the demonstration heading towards the Hotel Indonesia (HI) Roundabout in June 2026. This approach is used to understand the development of the issue, the characteristics of public narratives, institutional responses, and changes in communication strategy during the escalation process. The unit of analysis is the dynamics of the issue related to the blockade of the demonstration heading towards HI Roundabout and PMJ's communication response during the period of 10–15 June 2026.

The research data consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data are in the form of documentation of PMJ's official communications, including statements from police officials and publications from official accounts related to the security of the demonstration, traffic arrangements, clarifications, and the delivery of information to the public. Secondary data were obtained from Drone Emprit monitoring on the platforms X, Threads, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, online media coverage, event documentation, and other public information sources. During the monitoring period, Drone Emprit data recorded more than 170,000 mentions, approximately 391 million public interactions, and 6,661 news articles.

The research instruments were documentation sheets and digital communication observation guidelines. The instruments were used to identify the time of publication, communication actors, message content, communication channels, conversation intensity, involvement of influential accounts or Key Opinion Leaders (KOL), hashtag use, news coverage intensity, and the forms of PMJ's communication response. Data were collected through documentation and observation techniques on relevant public communication sources.

Data analysis used Issue Life Cycle Theory from Crable and Vibbert (1985) combined with the proactive issue management approach. Issue escalation was mapped into four stages: scanning, monitoring, early warning, and crisis response, taking into account conversation reach, account volume and distribution, involvement of KOLs or influential accounts, and media coverage intensity. The analysis was conducted chronologically and comparatively by comparing the development of public narratives and PMJ's communication response at each stage of escalation. In addition, the Social Amplification of Risk Framework (SARF) was used to understand the role of social media, visual elements, and digital actors in strengthening public perception of the issue, while Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) was used to interpret PMJ's communication strategy at the crisis stage.

Data validity was maintained through source triangulation and data triangulation by comparing information from official police channels, online media, social media, and Drone Emprit monitoring data. Differences in information between sources were used as part of the analysis of communication dynamics and potential disinformation in the issue escalation process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
RESULTS

An Overview of Developments Regarding the Blockade of the HI Roundabout

The blocking of the protest march towards the Hotel Indonesia (HI) Roundabout on 12 June 2026 cannot be understood as a single incident that arose suddenly on the day in question. The available data indicates that this issue had been building up since the gathering of University of Indonesia students in Depok on 10 June 2026, followed by an official call from the University of Indonesia Student Executive Board (BEM UI) via its official Instagram channel on 11 June 2026, culminating in a street protest entitled “*Menuju Indonesia Bangkrut*” or “Towards a Bankrupt Indonesia” in the Jalan Jenderal Sudirman–M.H. Thamrin area on 12 June 2026 (Husna, 2026; Rahmawati, 2026). This phased approach is consistent with the proposition (Crabble & Vibbert, 1985) that public issues invariably go through phases of emergence, growth and maturation before attracting significant institutional attention; therefore, effective management should begin well before an issue reaches a crisis point.

Results of the monitoring of public discourse regarding the demonstrations that took place in mid-June 2026, based on data compiled by Drone Emprit Publications during the period 11–15 June 2026. The monitoring covered six social media platforms (X, Threads, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok) as well as online news portals. During the monitoring period, more than 170,000 mentions were recorded, generating 391 million public interactions, as well as 6,661 online news articles discussing this issue. A summary of the key statistics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Key statistics from the monitoring of public discourse for the period 11-15 June 2026

Indicator	Value
Total mentions	>170,000
Total public interactions	391,000,000
Number of online news articles	6,661

Source: Fahmi (2026), data processed

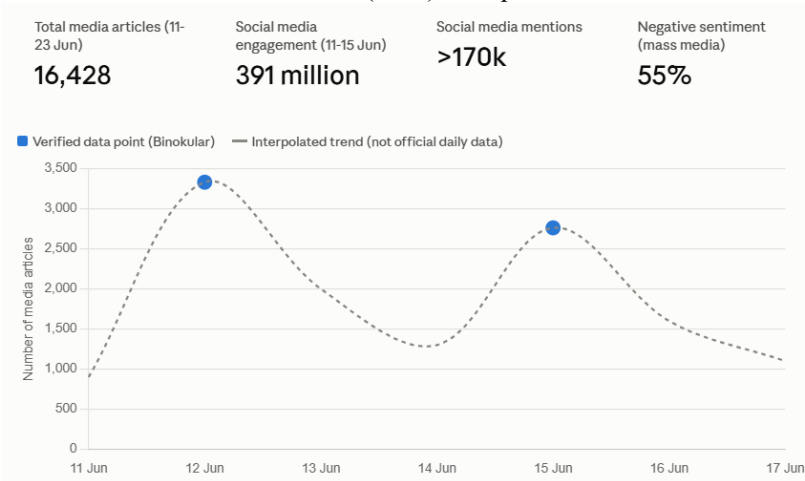


Figure 1. Trends in the Intensity of Public Discourse Relating to the National Student Demonstrations, 11–17 June 2026: Identification of Two Peaks in the Wave of Protests

Source: Data compiled by the author based on Fahmi (2026) and Binokular Media Utama (2026)

Based on data contained in the media intelligence report for the period 12–17 June 2026, it is possible to identify a process of public discourse construction that is developing gradually and is intertwined with one event after another, moving from criticism of economic policy to the consolidation of cross-sectoral solidarity in the run-up to the projected third wave.

Table 2. Estimates of Daily Public Conversation Intensity and Social Media Metrics During the Period of Multi-Wave Demonstrations, 11-17 June 2026

Date	Key events	Intensity index (0–100)	Estimated views	Estimated engagement	Estimated number of articles
11-Jun	Pre-seeding, initial mobilization in four cities	20	245.000	8.000	193
12-Jun	Wave 1: demonstration at HI Roundabout, blockade at Semanggi, physical clashes	95	1.164.000	38.000	919
13-Jun	Allegations that a GPS tracker was found in the vehicle of the former Chair of the UGM Student Executive Board (BEM)	55	674.000	22.000	532
14-Jun	KAMAK protest in Medan, inter-city coordination	42	514.500	16.800	406
15-Jun	Wave 2: Sudirman–Dukuh Atas, a 5×24-hour ultimatum to Vice-President Gibran	88	1.078.500	35.200	851
16-Jun	Following 2 nd wave, the narrative surrounding the ultimatum spreads	58	711.000	23.200	561
17-Jun	Intelligence briefing released; evaluation and early warning for 3 rd wave	50	612.500	20.000	483
Total		408	~5.000.000	~163.200	~3.945

Source: Data compiled by the author based on information gathered from several sources, including Fahmi (2026), Binokular Media Utama (2026), as well as coverage in national online media (Tempo, Detik, Kompas TV, Tribunnews, Merdeka, 2026).

At the initial stage, public discourse was dominated by criticism of the government’s fiscal and economic policies through the “*Indonesia Bangkrut*” (Indonesia Bankrupt) narrative. The Free Nutritious Meals Program (MBG) and the Red and White Village Cooperative were perceived as inefficient in budget use, while the increase in fuel prices and basic necessities as well as the weakening of the rupiah were used to strengthen criticism of government policy. The head of state’s absence in responding to the action further reinforced the perception of unresponsiveness,

while the dialogue conducted by Vice President Gibran Rakabuming was considered by part of the public to not have substantively answered the demands.

The deployment of 4,151 combined Polri and TNI personnel in the first wave then shifted the focus of the issue from economic matters towards institutional legitimacy. The scale of this security deployment was perceived as an intimidating and disproportionate action, giving rise to a dichotomy between a “militaristic” state and a “democratic” state. This shift grew stronger when the masses voiced the revocation of the revisions to the Polri Law and the TNI Law, indicating that criticism began to be directed at the authority and legitimacy of the security apparatus.

The subsequent narrative developed through the discovery of a GPS tracker on the vehicle of the former Chairperson of the UGM Student Executive Board on 13 June, which gave rise to a framing of the state “spying on activists”. The reinforcement of the issue by Amnesty International Indonesia and the arrest of a number of students in Bandung expanded the narrative into alleged criminalization and a repressive approach towards public criticism. At the same time, the involvement of online transportation drivers in breaking through the police barricade on Jalan Sudirman on 12 June and the formation of the Aliansi Rakyat Merdeka (ARM/Free People’s Alliance) with ten demands expanded the base of the movement from a student issue into a movement representing the interests of the public and workers.

Indications of pre-seeding activity in Bandung, Surabaya, Makassar, and Kendari since 11 June, followed by a written ultimatum to the Vice President on 15 June with a deadline of 5×24 hours, indicated increasingly organized and time-bound mobilization. The convergence of economic criticism, rejection of militarization, narratives of apparatus intimidation, and cross-group solidarity formed an issue structure with the potential to escalate the third wave to a high risk level, particularly if the government did not provide a substantive response before the set deadline.

Four main narrative themes were identified in public discourse during the monitoring period, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Four main narrative themes in public discourse

Theme	Description
Repression by the authorities	Criticism of the authorities’ actions and scrutiny of militarization.
Economic conditions	The rise in the price of Pertamina petrol, economic pressures, and the cost of basic necessities.
MBG evaluation	Calls for a review of the Free Nutritious Meals program and scrutiny of its budget.
The demise of CCTV and citizen journalism	The widely discussed issue of CCTV malfunctions has drawn attention to the documentation of citizens’ lives.

Source: Fahmi (2026), data processed

The students’ choice of the HI Roundabout was not spatially neutral. Surrounded by luxury hotels and multinational offices, this iconic hub let protesters visually juxtapose the people’s economic struggles against the city’s center of prosperity. Such symbolic value boosts newsworthiness and accelerates circulation beyond the student community, as physical locations charged with economic and political meaning tend to amplify protest narratives (Sevignani, 2022). The Jakarta Metropolitan Police (PMJ), however, cordoned off the area under Jakarta Governor’s Regulation No. 232 of 2015, which designates the HI Roundabout among several locations restricted for public demonstrations (G. Salsabila, 2026).

What started as a technical matter of protest routing evolved into a broader debate on freedom of expression and the proportionality of police action. This progression mirrors the Issue Life Cycle framework, operationalized here through four stages: scanning, monitoring, early warning, and crisis response, with reach, account volume, KOL involvement, and media coverage as key indicators. The Indonesian Wikipedia entry notes the protests spread to over

fifteen cities outside Jakarta within a short span, marking this as a national-scale event rather than a local Jakarta issue (Fahmi, 2026). This confirms that digital-era issue escalation is non-linear, jumping across platforms and regions almost simultaneously. It challenges classical Issue Management Theory's assumption of a predictable, step-by-step cycle: in practice, the shift from Scanning to Early Warning can occur within hours given the pace of digital circulation. A detailed mapping of this escalation follows in the next sub-section.

Stages in the Development of an Issue Based on the Issue Life Cycle

The Issue Life Cycle maps an issue's development through stages of escalation, from emergence to decline in intensity, each reflecting a distinct level of public attention and requiring a different communication response. Table 4 presents the indicators and corresponding PMJ communication responses at each stage.

Table 4. Summary of PMJ Communication Indicators and Responses at Each Stage of Escalation

Stage	Period & Key Indicators	Reach / KOL / Media Characteristics	PMJ Communications Response
Scanning	10 June 2026 – initial signs; reach still limited to the campus network	The BEM UI organization's account and internal campus networks; no national media coverage yet; daily mention/account figures are not yet available in the public sources used	Passive monitoring; technical traffic advisories via the TMC account
Monitoring	11 June 2026 – the spread of the conversation begins to become apparent	Other university alliances have joined; national online media have begun reporting; preliminary actions have been recorded in four cities as comparative data for Executive Intelligence	Active monitoring; issuing technical statements (traffic schemes, warnings about intruders)
Early Warning	12 June 2026 (midday–evening) – reach has gone national	Key data: the rooftop video received >57,000 likes and 14,000 reposts in <24 hours; the hashtag #MenujuIndonesiaBangkrut gained momentum; protests/solidarity spread to >15 cities. Comparative data: 4,151 personnel were deployed, comprising 3,651 National Police and 500 Indonesian Armed Forces personnel Key data: >170,000 mentions, ±391 million interactions, 6,661 news articles. Executive Intelligence comparative data: 2,242 articles from 707 media outlets up to 5,651 articles from 1,349 media outlets; negative sentiment 77–78 per cent; engagement 89,243–237,434; ±5 million views; X/Twitter 100 per cent negative; negative tone in news reports 45 per cent; 15 student representatives met with the Vice-President; 5×24-hour ultimatum; video of the meeting 2.24 million views	Active public clarification by the Head of Public Relations at the Jakarta Metropolitan Police; suggesting alternative locations
Crisis Response	12–13 June 2026 – peak of the escalation		Inter-agency crisis response; policy reframing by the Head of Communications; fact-checking of disinformation

Source: Processed data, 2026

A. Scanning Stage

The “Scanning” phase is marked by small-volume initial signals that nevertheless have escalation potential. The UI student action in Depok (10 June 2026) with five demands regarding the weakening of the rupiah and the fuel price increase still spread in a limited manner through official accounts such as BEM UI, not through large individual accounts (Yasir, 2026). This is in line with the “potential issue” stage in Issue Life Cycle Theory, in which the issue

is still latent (Craib & Vibbert, 1985), and is consistent with the innovator/early adopters pattern in Diffusion of Innovations, in which campus activists become the initial drivers before spreading more widely (Rogers, 1993).

PMJ's response was only in the form of passive monitoring through the TMC account, which uploaded information on traffic congestion at the HI Roundabout without touching on the substance of the demands (Detik.com, 2026), reflecting the neutral-technical approach typical of the "Scanning" principle in proactive issue management (Fielding, 2023). This strategy was proportional because a low-reach issue does not need to be responded to excessively (Colbran, 2020), but the lack of assessment of the substance of the demands left a readiness gap whose impact was only felt at the next stage. Thus, handling issues from the initial stage requires the ability to read qualitative-symbolic indicators, such as the significance of the action's location and the sensitivity of economic issues, not merely quantitative indicators in the form of upload volume. This is an important point that could enrich Issue Life Cycle Theory in its further development.

B. Monitoring Stage

Approaching 11 June 2026, this issue developed as the number of accounts increased and community involvement expanded beyond a single campus network, marked by support from a number of cross-university student alliances as well as local-national online media coverage that projected the action's mass reaching thousands of participants (Rahmawati, 2026). National online media acted as an amplifier that turned internal information within the student community into broader public knowledge (Santoso, 2025).

At this phase, initial disinformation also emerged in the form of news of the action's cancellation circulating on Threads on the night of 11 June 2026, which was then denied by Student Executive Board of the Faculty of Law, Universitas Indonesia (Rahmawati, 2026). This is a phenomenon relevantly explained through the Social Amplification of Risk Framework, in which social nodes can strengthen or distort risk signals so that public perception changes even though the facts on the ground do not change (Kasperson et al., 2012).

Institutionally, PMJ began to monitor the situation more actively, marked by a statement from the Head of PMJ Public Relations, Kombes Budi Hermanto, regarding the traffic management scheme in the Monas area as well as an appeal for vigilance against infiltrators (iNews TV, 2026), which can be interpreted as an initial holding statement that served a dual function, namely providing technical assurance to the public while also building a security narrative as a basis for institutional argumentation before a crisis occurs (Jong, 2025). Analysis of the Monitoring phase confirms that effective issue management requires a balance between technical and substantive monitoring, and the imbalance between the two also helps explain why the transition from Monitoring to Early Warning proceeded relatively quickly.

C. Early Warning Stages

The Early Warning phase is marked by a significant surge in all escalation parameters, namely reach expanding to the national level, a rapid increase in the number of accounts, the beginning involvement of individual KOLs, and intensive coverage by online media. The crucial point was the virality of a video of a man at the edge of a high-rise building near the HI Roundabout, which within 24 hours gained more than 57,000 likes and 14,000 repost (Yasir, 2026), in line with the SARF proposition that dramatic and visual elements can strengthen risk perception beyond its objective significance (Kasperson et al., 2012).

The hashtag #MenujuIndonesiaBangkrut consolidated this discourse across platforms (Aryodamar, 2026) with positive sentiment dominating almost 90% on YouTube and TikTok (Fahmi, 2026), a pattern that reflects the concept of the proximal opinion leader in the digital sphere (Harff et al., 2026). The spread of the issue to more than fifteen cities showed horizontal diffusion through regional student networks, in line with the concept of interpersonal channels in the diffusion of social innovation (Rogers, 1993).

PMJ's response shifted from passive monitoring to active clarification, marked by Kombes Budi Hermanto's explanation regarding the reason for the closure of the HI Roundabout area as an effort to balance freedom of expression with citizens' rights to freedom of movement (Newswire, 2026). This clarification was sufficient to reduce the repressive narrative, although it had not fully stopped information noise, such as an unverified claim regarding

CCTV damage which was then denied by the DKI Jakarta Provincial Government (Tempo, 2026). The synthesis of this phase confirms that mitigation depends on the speed of official clarification against non-substantive viral content, with implications for the importance of the police public relations' capacity to monitor micro viral content in real time.

D. Crisis Response Phase

The Crisis Response phase is marked by the involvement of national figures and mainstream media coverage, making the issue a cross-sector topic. On 12 June 2026, National Police Chief General Listyo Sigit Prabowo, Head of BIN Herindra, and Chief of Presidential Staff Lieutenant General (Ret.) Dudung Abdurachman separately issued official statements regarding the action, emphasizing the importance of order, unity, and constructive space for criticism (Firman, 2026). The involvement of officials at the level of Chief of Presidential Staff and the head of the intelligence agency confirms that this issue had gone beyond the technical domain of the police and entered the domain of national political communication, a key indicator of the crisis phase in SCCT (Coombs, 2007). Live national television coverage such as that by CNN Indonesia (CNN Indonesia, 2026) strengthened the issue's transition to mainstream media, in line with agenda-setting theory that massive mass media coverage helps shape public priorities regarding broader economic and governance issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Interestingly, the government's response at the highest level did not come directly from the President, but rather through the spokesperson of the Government Communication Agency, who framed the student action as part of the government's structural reform process (Syaiku, 2026), a positive reframing strategy in SCCT that risks being considered unresponsive to the students' specific demands (Marynissen & Ramos Salazar, 2023). This phase was also marked by disinformation in the form of a manipulated video that appeared to show a Presidential speech, which was then denied by fact-checking institutions (Aryodamar, 2026), in line with the SARF proposition that the crisis phase tends to be followed by a proliferation of unverified information due to high public demand for information that official channels are unable to meet in real time (Kasperson et al., 2012).

The synthesis of this phase confirms that the success of Crisis Response is not measured by the speed of officials' statements alone, but by the alignment between the level of the officials responding and the scale of the issue, as well as the suitability of the framing strategy with the substantive demands that developed. The involvement of many institutions shows that PMJ is no longer a single actor, but one node in a broader crisis communication network. The scale of this escalation was confirmed by Drone Emprit monitoring (11-15 June 2026), which recorded more than 170,000 mentions and approximately 391 million public interactions across six digital channels (Fahmi, 2026), with a one-day gap between the peak of media coverage on 12 June and the peak of social media conversation on 13 June. Fahmi (2026) confirms that the transition from Early Warning to Crisis Response proceeded sequentially, with media coverage as the initial trigger before being amplified by netizens.

Table 5. Infographic showing actual data on the escalation of the HI Roundabout issue by stage, based on data from Drone Emprit for 11–15 June 2026

Indicator	Scanning	Monitoring	Early Warning	Crisis Response
Social Media Reach	Internal to campus; no daily mention figures reported in public sources	Official call on Instagram @bemui_official on 11 June; no daily mention figures reported	Rooftop video >57,000 likes and 14,000 reposts in <24 hours; #MenujuIndonesiaBangkrut strengthened across platforms	>170,000 mentions and ±391 million interactions during 11–15 June 2026
Volume/Mass	Consolidation of BEM UI in Depok	Other campus alliances joined: IPB, PNJ, Universitas Pancasila, FMN	700–1,000+ field mass; actions/solidarity spread to >15 cities	Peak of social media conversation on 13 June; issue

Indicator	Scanning	Monitoring	Early Warning	Crisis Response
Figures/KOL	Internal campus network; no national KOL yet	Individual accounts on Threads; including misinformation about cancellation	Individual accounts across X, Threads, TikTok, Instagram	became national headline National Police Chief, Head of BIN, and Presidential Chief of Staff
Media	No national coverage yet; BEM UI Instagram channel	Tribunnews and Bisnis.com began reporting	Online reporting increased; peak online news on 12 June	CNN Indonesia conducted live coverage; disinformation video of the President circulated
PMJ Response	Passive scanning through the TMC account	Holding statement by the Head of Public Relations regarding the Monas scheme	Active clarification; offering the Patung Kuda location	Cross-institutional crisis response and disinformation fact-checking

Source: Rooftop video (Suara Merdeka Jakarta, Koran Gala, Victory News); aggregate mentions/interactions (Drone Emprit, 11–15 June 2026), data processed

DISCUSSION

Analysis of the Suitability of the PMJ's Communication Strategy at Each Stage of Escalation

The PMJ's communication strategy across stages generally follows proactive issue management logic, though alignment varies by phase. During Scanning and Monitoring, its technically neutral approach was appropriate, consistent with the principle that institutional responses at low 'reach' levels should remain proportionate rather than amplify unwarranted attention (Colbran, 2020). This alignment eroded at the Early Warning stage, however, when a non-substantive viral element, the rooftop video, drew a more intense public response than the official clarification on the students' economic demands.

This discrepancy points to a gap between technical and substantive monitoring speeds within the PMJ's public relations structure. The police appear better prepared to respond to physical security threats, such as the discovered Molotov cocktail allegedly carried by an intruder (Mili.id, 2026), than to the economic and political narratives driving mass mobilization. Comparable studies show security institutions are generally better trained for physical risks than for the narrative and symbolic risks of the digital sphere (Dewald, 2023), suggesting this capacity gap is not unique to Indonesia but a recurring cross-jurisdictional pattern. At the Crisis Response stage, the PMJ's strategy must be assessed alongside other government actors, as the issue shifted from police operations to national political communication. Kabakom's structural reform framing (Syaiku, 2026), while consistent with SCCT's rebuilding strategy (Coombs, 2007), risks not directly addressing the students' five specific demands, potentially prolonging rather than resolving the crisis.

Factors that Accelerate and Slow Down the Escalation of an Issue

Several factors accelerated the issue's spread across escalation stages. First, the HI Roundabout's symbolic significance as an economic hub reinforced the narrative of a struggle between the people's interests and the center of prosperity, helping the issue penetrate public consciousness more easily than a conventional protest site would (Poetry,

2026). Second, dramatic but substantively unrelated visual elements, like the rooftop video, had a strong amplification effect by triggering curiosity and collective concern among netizens, consistent with the ‘amplification station’ mechanism in SARF (Kasperson et al., 2012). Third, the horizontal spread to a dozen other cities within a short time accelerated recognition of the issue as a national rather than local Jakarta concern (Wikipedia, 2026).

Conversely, several factors slowed the pace of escalation. Senior Superintendent Budi Hermanto’s consistent, timely technical clarifications helped counteract repressive narratives that might otherwise have gained traction (Firman, 2026). Authorities’ readiness to offer alternative venues, such as the Horse Statue area and the DPR/MPR complex, signaled accommodation of protesters and reduced perceptions of total suppression (iNews TV, 2026). An independent fact-checking mechanism also relatively quickly clarified disinformation surrounding a circulating video of the President’s speech (Aryodamar, 2026), preventing a separate, ongoing trust crisis from emerging.

The interplay of accelerating and dampening factors explains why the HI Roundabout blockade escalated rapidly, from Scanning to Crisis Response within three days, yet avoided a prolonged institutional trust crisis. The institution’s ability to slow escalation was driven more by the speed of technical clarification than by substantive resolution of the demands, confirming that short-term mitigation success is not always proportional to long-term problem resolution.

A Conceptual Model for the Management of Escalating Public Space Issues by the Jakarta Metropolitan Police

Building on the four-stage escalation mapping and communication strategy analysis, this study proposes a conceptual model of communication preparedness that symmetrically integrates two dimensions: technical-security and substantive-policy. At the Scanning stage, the model emphasizes mapping contextual-symbolic indicators alongside numerical reach and account volume, since this case shows that location and symbolic content can signal potential escalation well before digital volume does (Crabbe & Vibbert, 1985).

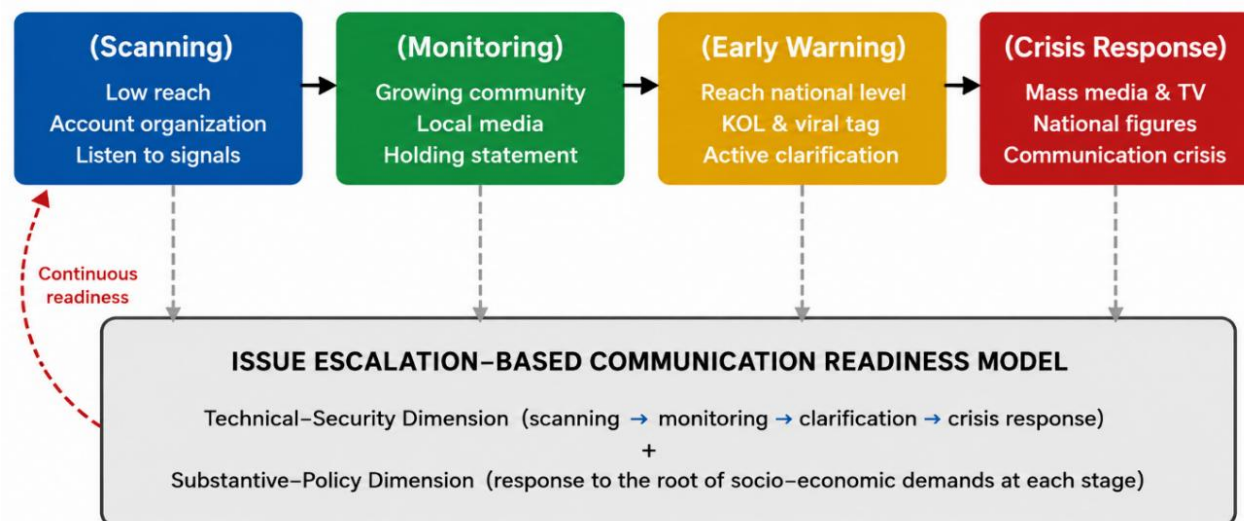


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of the Management of Escalating Public Space Issues by the Jakarta Metropolitan Police

Source: Processed data, 2026

At the Monitoring stage, the model stresses holding statements that address both security and the substance of demands, preventing narrative gaps that unofficial sources could fill. At the Early Warning stage, it emphasizes real-time monitoring capacity for viral micro-elements that could act as emotional catalysts, even unrelated to the issue’s

substance, per SARF's risk amplification mechanism (Kasperson et al., 2012). At the Crisis Response stage, it highlights cross-institutional narrative coordination to avoid message dissonance across officials, alongside responsive fact-checking mechanisms for crisis-peak disinformation (Coombs, 2007).

This model frames mitigation success not as fully halting an issue, but as an institution's ability to slow its progression through proportionate, symmetrical responses at each stage. For the Jakarta Metropolitan Police and police institutions generally, this implies strengthening social media analysis units integrated with substantive public relations units, rather than mere information-flow monitoring, so security and policy responsiveness proceed simultaneously rather than lagging one another, as seen in the HI Roundabout case. This model addresses the third research question by showing that speed and symmetry of response, not speed alone, determine a police organization's success in managing public sphere issue escalation in a fast-moving, cross-platform digital ecosystem.

Issue Life Cycle and Issue Escalation Dynamics

The findings show the HI Roundabout blockade issue can be understood through the Issue Life Cycle stages: Scanning, Monitoring, Early Warning, and Crisis Response (Crabbe & Vibbert, 1985). Initially confined to student networks, the issue gained intensity as it entered media and digital spaces, reaching crisis level once news coverage, public interaction, cross-regional mobilization, and government response converged simultaneously. This pattern shows that the issue's changing character at each stage can guide institutions toward proportional communication.

However, the digital-environment issue cycle differs from the relatively gradual pattern of conventional issue development. The transition from Scanning to Crisis Response occurred rapidly, particularly after viral content emerged and mobilization spread across regions, showing that digital-space issue stages tend to accelerate and overlap. This extends the Issue Life Cycle's application by showing that identifying an escalation stage requires more than news coverage or interaction volume; it also requires accounting for spread speed, network expansion, and the symbolic significance of location and narrative (Karduni & Sauda, 2020; Sommerfeldt & Yang, 2017).

This implies PMJ needs to integrate contextual and digital indicators in early detection. An issue with quantitatively limited reach may still carry high escalation risk if it holds strong political symbolism, a broad mobilization network, or viral-potential content. In the HI Roundabout case, location and narrative development in digital space signaled escalation before the issue reached peak intensity. Issue management thus needs to shift from a volume-based approach toward one based on speed, network, and issue character.

Diffusion and Amplification of Issues in the Digital Space

The issue's spread pattern aligns with by Rogers (1993) concept of information diffusion, moving from student networks to university networks, online media, social media users, and community groups across regions. This expansion occurred not through a single channel but through inter-group relationships enabling information to be received, reproduced, and disseminated across networks, accelerating the issue's transformation from local to broader public attention.

The digital character made diffusion faster and more horizontal, as networks accessed and distributed information almost simultaneously rather than spreading gradually. The issue's spread to multiple cities within a short time shows that geographic expansion can occur alongside increased media attention, meaning issue monitoring must track network structure changes, not just account numbers or audience size.

This diffusion process interacted with the Social Amplification of Risk Framework (SARF) (Kasperson et al., 2012). The rooftop video finding shows that content unrelated to the core demands can gain outsized public attention through strong visual and emotional character, meaning attention intensity is not always proportional to substantive importance. Social media thus functions not only as a spread channel but as an amplification space that can magnify certain aspects of an event, making institutional capacity to identify amplification triggers a critical part of Early Warning-stage communication.

Crisis Communication and Institutional Response

At the Crisis Response stage, PMJ's strategy aligns with Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), particularly through information clarification, disinformation correction, and perception management (Coombs, 2007). The issue's shift from a demonstration security matter to a public communication matter shows institutional response can no longer rely on field security measures alone; rapid communication is needed so non-institutional narratives do not dominate the information space.

However, crisis communication principles have limits here, since the problem involves not only reputational threat but also protesters' substantive demands. Correcting misinformation reduces misperception but does not resolve the underlying economic and policy demands. Crisis communication effectiveness, therefore, cannot be measured solely by reduced negative coverage, but also by its connection to the crisis's underlying substance.

This underscores the importance of cross-institutional coordination. Once the issue became a national matter, PMJ was no longer the sole actor shaping public narrative; police response needed to align with other government actors to avoid message discrepancies on security, demands, and policy. The findings thus reinforce SCCT while showing that political, multidimensional public issues require crisis communication combined with substantive issue management and cross-institutional coordination.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the issue of blocking demonstrations heading towards the HI Roundabout in June 2026 developed gradually from an issue initially confined to student networks into a national issue within a relatively short period of time. Based on the Issue Life Cycle approach, the escalation can be mapped into four stages: Scanning, Monitoring, Early Warning and Crisis Response. The acceleration of the escalation was marked by an increase in reach, conversation volume, KOL engagement, the expansion of media coverage, and the spread of the issue to various regions. The intensity of the digital conversation was also reflected in over 170,000 mentions and approximately 391 million public interactions between 11 and 15 June 2026.

The escalation was primarily accelerated by the symbolic significance of the HI Roundabout, highly viral visual elements, the spread of the protests to more than fifteen cities, and cross-platform amplification. Conversely, official clarifications, the provision of alternative venues, and fact-checking mechanisms acted as mitigating factors. These findings indicate that the success of issue management is determined not only by the speed of response, but also by the appropriateness and balance between technical-security responses and substantive-policy responses.

Consequently, the management of public space issues by the police in the digital age requires a communication system based on escalation levels, capable of integrating real-time monitoring, contextual and symbolic analysis of issues, substantive communication, rapid clarification, and cross-agency narrative coordination. Such a model is essential to ensure that institutions are not only able to mitigate short-term impacts, but also prevent issues from escalating to a higher level and maintain public trust on a sustainable basis.

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