

Engaging Youth: The Role of Social Media in Promoting Public Accountability in Local Government

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of youth engagement through social media on public accountability within local government settings. Focusing on the Province of West Nusa Tenggara, the research employs a convenience sampling approach to explore the dynamics of digital civic participation. Data were obtained via questionnaires distributed to a sample of 210 youth respondents, with subsequent analysis conducted using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) technique. The empirical findings reveal that latent engagement, follower engagement, and expressive engagement each exert a positive influence on perceptions of public accountability. These results underscore the critical role of youth as digital stakeholders in enhancing government responsiveness and transparency. More specifically, the study suggests that fostering awareness of accountability mechanisms and promoting inclusive participation among young citizens can contribute meaningfully to the democratic functioning of local governance.

Keywords: Latent Engagement; Follower Engagement; Expressive Engagement; Public Accountability

Partisipasi Kaum Muda: Peran Media Sosial dalam Meningkatkan Akuntabilitas Publik pada Pemerintahan Daerah

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh keterlibatan generasi muda di media terhadap akuntabilitas publik di pemerintah daerah. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan di Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Barat dengan menggunakan metode convenience sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui penyebaran kuesioner kepada generasi muda, yang melibatkan 210 responden. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan teknik Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan laten, keterlibatan pengikut, dan keterlibatan ekspresif memiliki pengaruh positif terhadap akuntabilitas publik. Implikasi dari temuan ini menyerukan pentingnya meningkatkan kesadaran dan pemahaman generasi muda mengenai akuntabilitas serta mendorong partisipasi kolektif yang lebih besar dalam mendukung transparansi pemerintah.

Kata Kunci: Keterlibatan laten; Keterlibatan Pengikut; Keterlibatan Ekspresif; Akuntabilitas Publik

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INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, social media has emerged as a dominant form of communication, particularly among younger generations. Its appeal lies in its inherently interactive and participatory nature, offering users novel and innovative means of engagement. As Kwon et al., (2021) highlight, interactivity remains one of social media's most distinguishing and valuable attributes, setting it apart from traditional, often unidirectional, communication channels. Unlike conventional platforms, social media enables users to freely share and exchange information, opinions, and knowledge, while also serving as a medium for self-expression across social, political, and cultural spheres (Tania et al., 2019). Mayfield, as cited in Rahman (2022), conceptualises social media as a transformative development in the online media landscape, underpinned by key indicators such as participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness. Recognising these features, governments have increasingly adopted social media to enhance public interaction, viewing it as a tool to promote transparency, facilitate citizen participation, and support collaborative governance (Bonsón et al., 2019; Criado & Villodre, 2021).

In this digitally interconnected environment, access to social media has become commonplace, reshaping the relationship between governments and citizens. Social media fosters two-way communication and encourages public engagement through the dissemination of information, facilitation of discourse, and cultivation of virtual communities (Jha & Kodila-Tedika, 2020). Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube have redefined civic participation by creating direct communication channels between citizens and public institutions. These platforms allow users to access information regarding political positions, public accountability mechanisms, regulatory developments, and local government activities (Karuhanga, 2017). Aligning with Jimada's (2019) findings, social media provides a digital public sphere that enables individuals—particularly youth—to participate in civic discussions and demand greater transparency (Rachmayani, 2015). These spaces also empower marginalized groups, including women, to voice concerns and contribute to accountability discourses. In this context, social media functions as both a communication tool and a structural platform for civic oversight, positioning young people as active monitors of government performance (Vanhommerig & Karré, 2014). Interactive digital applications, therefore, offer considerable potential for enhancing participatory governance and strengthening public accountability processes (Pereira & Roder Figueira, 2021).

The role of youth in promoting accountable governance is particularly salient. Mones (2016) notes that youth engagement exerts significant pressure on public officials to act responsibly. Through social media, individuals—regardless of socio-economic or demographic characteristics—can mobilise collective action (Kietzmann et al., 2011), influencing political outcomes and accountability dynamics globally. Social media thus enables the public not only to scrutinise the conduct of public officials but also to evaluate their personal values and ethical orientations (Ahmad et al., 2014). Such assessments often reflect moral judgments and are shaped by individual and collective conscience. Young users, empowered by digital tools, engage with public information by disseminating content and

participating in dialogic exchanges, thereby creating feedback loops that reinforce transparency (Iamergel, 2013).

Dialogue, as a mechanism of accountability, frequently takes the form of public debate, critique, and inquiry into governmental actions and policies. The proliferation of digital technologies has enhanced the effectiveness of such dialogues by facilitating broader and more inclusive public discourse (Saboor, 2022). Social media offers a platform for users to question authority, demand explanations, and challenge official narratives (Rachmayani, 2015). In response, many public officials maintain an online presence – particularly on platforms like Twitter and Facebook – through which they engage directly with constituents, respond to queries, and justify policy decisions. As Mones (2016) asserts, this immediacy in communication heightens governmental responsiveness and, by extension, accountability. However, the capacity of social media to enforce accountability is mediated by users' perceptions of digital safety. As Gilardi et al., (2022) argue, citizens are only likely to hold politicians to account when they feel secure in expressing dissent without fear of reprisal. Hence, while social media offers a promising avenue for democratic engagement, its potential is contingent upon the integrity of the digital environment in which such engagement occurs.

Previous research has largely overlooked the specific impact of youth engagement on public accountability within the context of social media. Existing literature predominantly centres on public perceptions of accountability as mediated through digital platforms (Stamati et al., 2015). For instance, Al-Aufi et al., (2017), in their study on public opinion in Oman, report a neutral stance toward government use of social media, reflecting a degree of ambivalence or uncertainty regarding participatory communication between governments and citizens. This gap underscores the need for a more focused inquiry into the role of youth in shaping accountability outcomes through digital engagement. Understanding the dynamics of youth engagement on social media is critical, as it offers potential pathways for enhancing participation in policy discourse and decision-making processes. This study seeks to examine how distinct forms of youth engagement – namely latent, follower, and expressive engagement – contribute to perceptions of public accountability at the local government level. The research also aligns with broader efforts to promote transparency and reduce corruption through participatory mechanisms (Oktavianus & Rahman, 2019).

Accountability, in the public sector context, entails an organisation's obligation to respond to stakeholders by justifying decisions and actions taken in the course of its operations (Ebrahim, 2016). Bastian (2010) defines public accountability as the duty of individuals or institutions to explain and report on their performance to parties entitled to hold them to account. This view is reinforced by Vanhommerig & Karré, (2014), who argue that accountability must be grounded in formal standards or regulations and operationalised through routine, rule-based mechanisms. Traditionally conceived as a vertical process – where oversight is exercised by superior authorities – accountability has evolved to encompass horizontal and diagonal dimensions (Priyambodo, 2024). Diagonal accountability involves oversight by independent institutions that report to executive or legislative branches without being embedded in a hierarchical chain of command. In such frameworks, citizens play a limited, often indirect, role. By

contrast, horizontal accountability allows for more direct interaction between governments and citizens; however, this interaction often remains asymmetrical, with public input limited to consultative functions rather than genuine mechanisms for demanding accountability (Priyambodo, 2024).

The proliferation of social media has significantly altered the dynamics of engagement, introducing new modes of interaction centred around user-generated content (UGC) and participatory communication. Platforms such as online forums and real-time analytics tools enable users to engage efficiently, enhancing their ability to access, contribute to, and interpret digital discourse (Johnson & Hyysalo, 2012). Engagement, from the user's perspective, entails emotional and intellectual connection with content, including actions such as blogging, reposting, commenting, and rating (Goode, 2009). These interactions contribute to the continuous reconstruction of discourse, as news and commentary are reinterpreted across platforms. UGC, therefore, functions both as a metric of engagement and as an artefact of participatory culture. The emotional dimension of this interaction – manifested through content creation, sharing, and response – plays a crucial role in shaping public discourse, especially in the wake of social movements mobilised through platforms like Facebook and Twitter (Harrison & Barthel, 2009). Lewis & Usher (2013) categorise audiences into passive recipients, commodified users, and active participants, with engagement delivering both public value through information dissemination and commercial value through audience monetisation. In the context of public accountability, this dual role reinforces the civic and economic significance of audience interaction.

Engagement theory, originally developed in the context of technology-enhanced learning (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998; Shneiderman, 1994), provides a useful framework for conceptualising digital participation. The theory emphasises the importance of meaningful tasks and social interaction in fostering engagement. Applied to the context of social media, engagement can be understood across three interrelated dimensions. Latent engagement encompasses passive forms of interaction such as viewing or reading content – analogous to students who are present in the learning environment but not actively participating. Follower engagement involves more deliberate actions such as subscribing to content, signing petitions, or sharing information, mirroring students who follow discussions or engage in structured learning activities. Expressive engagement refers to users actively commenting, sharing, or producing content, akin to collaborative or creative learning tasks in educational settings. Together, these dimensions promote interaction, critical reflection, and co-production of meaning, offering a conceptual bridge between individual engagement and broader accountability processes (Bernacki et al., 2020; Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1998).

To examine accountability within local government, this study adopts the theoretical lens of stewardship theory. According to Donaldson & Davis (1991), stewardship theory posits that managers act as stewards of organizational objectives, prioritizing collective goals over personal interests and striving to deliver outcomes that serve the broader public good. Within the context of local governance, this perspective underscores the responsibility of public officials to provide services, meet community expectations, and maintain accountability in

managing public resources (Sartika et al., 2018). Accountability, therefore, becomes a performance measure assessed by the extent to which public officials advance the welfare of their constituents.

In conjunction with stewardship theory, engagement theory offers a complementary framework for understanding how youth, often characterized as digital natives, leverage technology to participate in political discourse and promote government accountability (Turner & Turner, 2018). Social media serves as a key platform through which young people engage in a range of activities related to public accountability. These include reading posts about fiscal transparency, following news related to local governance, engaging with opinion pieces, watching videos on public service performance, and visiting the profiles of public figures (Harsono, 2023). Such activities, collectively referred to as latent engagement (Waeterloos et al., 2021), primarily involve passive content consumption—viewing, reading, and browsing—yet play an important role in increasing awareness and understanding of governance issues. Though not directly action-oriented, latent engagement fosters informed perspectives on government transparency and accountability. This is consistent with findings by Schillemans (2014), who notes that passive engagement can contribute to a deeper understanding of accountability mechanisms. Boulianne (2015) similarly observes that the passive consumption of information significantly enhances public awareness of governmental performance. Based on this conceptualization, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₁: Latent engagement has a positive effect on public accountability.

Youth participation on social media extends beyond passive observation to include active involvement, such as disseminating information, sharing news, or encouraging others to engage with issues of public concern. These actions may involve expressing interest in accountability-related events, endorsing campaigns, or signing petitions that call for greater governmental transparency (Waeterloos et al., 2021; Harsono, 2023). Youth have historically been at the forefront of digitally organized protest movements, using social platforms as tools for mobilization (Kaplan, 2020). Through sharing petitions, joining online groups, and participating in awareness campaigns, young users help strengthen public discourse on accountability. This form of participation, referred to as follower engagement (Waeterloos et al., 2021), contributes to building collective consciousness, enhancing oversight, and reinforcing the public's demand for transparency. Kaplan (2020) finds that youth involvement in information-sharing activities is positively associated with increased awareness and accountability. This view is supported by Loader et al., (2014), who demonstrate that youth who actively share information or participate in online discussions are more likely to contribute to greater public scrutiny of government activities. Boulianne (2015) further confirms the significant relationship between follower engagement and improved accountability outcomes. Thus, the second hypothesis is proposed:

H₂: Follower engagement has a positive effect on public accountability.

Beyond latent and follower engagement, expressive engagement reflects a more personalized and direct form of participation. This dimension involves expressing opinions or attitudes on public accountability through social media, either within private networks or public forums (Waeterloos et al., 2021).

Expressive engagement encompasses actions such as posting or sharing content (e.g., statuses, memes, links), commenting, liking, or reacting emotionally to content concerning public accountability. These actions may occur in private message threads or open social platforms (Waeterloos et al., 2021; Harsono, 2023). More overt forms of expressive engagement include posting content with public visibility, openly debating accountability issues, or engaging in commentary that challenges governmental narratives (Choi et al., 2017; Harlow, 2015). Research consistently supports the view that expressive engagement positively influences public accountability. Waeterloos et al., (2021) highlight that active expression enhances public discourse and democratic oversight. Further, Harlow (2015) and Choi et al. (2017) argue that systems supporting public accountability not only promote transparency but also contribute to reducing corruption and fostering public trust. In line with these findings, the third hypothesis is proposed:

H₃: Expressive engagement has a positive effect on public accountability

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative research design, utilising a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The data collected are analysed in numerical and statistical terms, rather than through qualitative narratives or descriptive accounts (Sunarsi & Priadana, 2021). The objective of this study is to examine the relationship between youth engagement on social media and public accountability within the context of local government. In this model, public accountability is treated as the dependent variable (Y), while youth engagement functions as the independent variable (X).

Youth engagement is operationalised through three dimensions identified by Waeterloos et al. (2021): latent engagement, follower engagement, and expressive engagement. Each of these dimensions captures different levels of interaction and participation on social media platforms. To assess the structural relationships among the variables, the study employs Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), a variance-based analytical approach suited for exploratory models and complex relationships (Hair et al., 2019). This method allows for simultaneous estimation of the measurement and structural models, thereby facilitating a comprehensive analysis of the proposed relationships.

The conceptual framework guiding this analysis is depicted in the following research model:

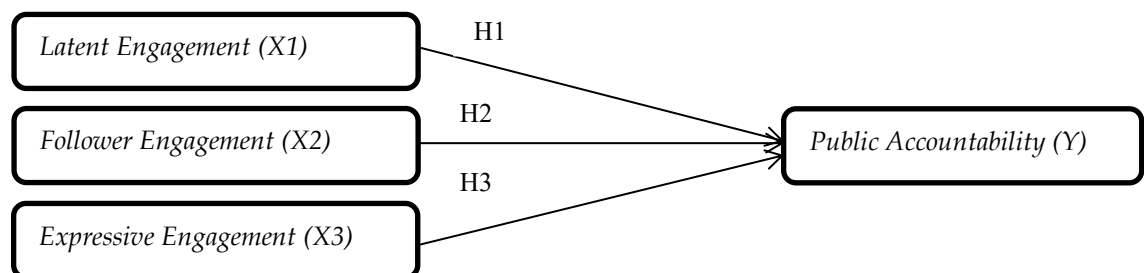


Figure 1. Research Model

Source: Research Data, 2024

The target population for this study comprises young individuals residing in West Nusa Tenggara, defined as those aged 16 to 30 years in accordance with Indonesian Law No. 40 of 2009. Youth were selected as the focus of this research due to their role as agents of change and their broad access to information through digital platforms. As digital natives, this demographic has grown up immersed in technological advancement, making them particularly relevant in the context of social media engagement. A total of 210 respondents participated in the study, selected through a convenience sampling method, which enables the selection of respondents based on accessibility and willingness to participate.

Primary data were collected through a structured, closed-ended questionnaire, adapted from Waeterloos et al., (2021). The instrument was designed to capture both demographic information and responses related to the theoretical model under investigation. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section gathered demographic details, including gender, age, occupation, place of residence, and frequency of social media use. The second section included 23 items designed to measure the study's core constructs. Specifically, 7 items assessed latent engagement, 5 items measured follower engagement, 6 items evaluated expressive engagement, and 5 items examined perceptions of public accountability. Responses in this section were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

The research procedure began with the development and refinement of the questionnaire, based on the operational definitions of the study variables. A pilot test was then conducted with a small sample to ensure the instrument's reliability and validity. Upon meeting the required statistical criteria, the final questionnaire was distributed to 210 respondents via online forms (Google Forms), which were disseminated through digital platforms and direct channels. Data collection was conducted over a two-month period, from October to November 2024. The responses were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), which involves several key stages: constructing the measurement model, developing the structural model, generating the path diagram, and conducting model evaluation (Puspita Devi & Dwi Ratnadi, 2024).

The operational definitions of the study variables are outlined as follows. Latent engagement refers to passive consumption of accountability-related information on social media. This includes activities such as reading posts or articles, reading comments, watching videos, and visiting websites without engaging in further discourse or dissemination (Waeterloos et al., 2021; Harsono, 2023).

Follower engagement is defined as behaviours that reflect support or interest in accountability issues through actions such as reposting content, expressing intent to attend events, signing or sharing petitions, and joining social media groups related to accountability topics (Waeterloos et al., 2021; Harsono, 2023). These actions indicate a heightened level of involvement beyond passive observation.

Expressive engagement represents more active forms of participation, whereby individuals interact socially in accountability-related discourse. This includes creating and sharing posts, commenting, reacting, and sending content to

others, thereby allowing individuals to publicly express their views and contribute to collective dialogue (Waeterloos et al., 2021).

Finally, the public accountability variable is defined as the responsibility of local governments to account for and report on their activities and performance, particularly in relation to financial management and program implementation. This is measured by the extent to which government social media accounts disseminate information, promote transparency, and facilitate access to data regarding regional financial practices and the delivery of public services.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis in this study is conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) and follows a two-stage process. The first stage focuses on assessing the measurement model (also referred to as the outer model), which evaluates the relationships between latent constructs and their observed indicators. This step is performed using the PLS algorithm to estimate factor loadings and assess construct reliability and validity.

The second stage involves evaluating the structural model (also known as the inner model), which examines the hypothesised relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables. This analysis is conducted using the bootstrapping procedure, which generates standard errors and significance values for the path coefficients. Structural model testing allows for the assessment of the proposed causal relationships and the overall explanatory power of the model.

Table 1 shows the sample size of young people in Nusa Tenggara Barat, totalling 210 respondents. Based on gender, females dominate the respondents, with a percentage reaching 60,5%. In terms of age, the 21–25 age group forms the majority, with a percentage of 53,3%. Regarding profession or occupation, most respondents are employed, with a percentage of 50%. In terms of education level, the majority of respondents have a high school (SMA/MA) education background, with a percentage of 61,4%. Additionally, more than half of the youth, namely 63,3%, are recorded as following government social media accounts.

Table 2 presents the results of the descriptive statistical analysis. The latent engagement variable recorded a mean value of 3.2, placing it within category 3 on the five-point Likert scale. This suggests that, on average, respondents frequently engage in passive activities such as reading posts and articles, reviewing comments, watching videos, and visiting websites related to public accountability. Although these actions do not involve active participation, they indicate a relatively high level of information consumption.

The follower engagement variable reported a mean value of 3.3, also falling within category 3. These results suggest that respondents actively demonstrate interest in public accountability issues by sharing posts, signing and sharing petitions, and participating in public accountability groups on social media. This reflects a consistent pattern of engagement that extends beyond mere observation.

The expressive engagement variable recorded a mean value of 2.9, which similarly corresponds to category 3 on the scale. This indicates that respondents frequently engage in more active behaviours such as creating or sharing content, commenting, liking, reacting to posts, and sending accountability-related

information to others. While slightly lower than follower engagement, the mean still reflects a notable level of active participation.

Tabel 1. Research Demographics

Demographics	Information	Amount	Presentation (%)
Gender	Male	83	39.5
	Female	127	60.5
Total		210	100
Age	16-20 Age	62	29.6
	21-25 Age	112	53.3
	26-30 Age	36	17.1
Total		210	100
Work	Students	107	50
	Looking for Work	31	15.8
	Working	72	34.2
Total		210	100
Last education	SMA/MA	129	61.4
	D3	7	3.3
	S1	71	33.8
	S2	3	1.5
	S3	-	
Total		210	100
Following Social Media	Yes	133	63.3
	No	77	36.7
Government			
Total		210	100

Source: Research Data, 2024

Tabel 2. Descriptive Statistics Analysis

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Latent Engagement	210	1	5	3.2	1.190
Follower engagement	210	1	5	3.3	1.196
Expressive engagement	210	1	5	2.9	1.217
Public Accountability	210	1	5	3.3	1.220

Finally, the public accountability variable showed a mean value of 3.3, also within category 3. This suggests that respondents generally agree that public accountability should be supported through transparent communication and accessible information regarding regional financial management and government programmes, particularly via official government social media platforms.

According to theory, convergent validity is the degree to which test results align with other variables. A set of indicators that both represent and underlying a latent variable is said to have convergent validity. The convergent validity test aims to measure the extent to which the indicators used represent the latent construct within a variable. Convergent validity can be assessed based on outer loading. For an indicator to be considered as having convergent validity, the factor loading value must exceed 0.7. As shown in Table 3, the factor loading values for

all indicators in this study exceed 0.7. This indicates that the convergent validity test has been satisfied, meaning each indicator effectively represents the intended variable.

Table 3. Convergent Validity (Outer Loading)

	Latent Engagement	Follower Engagement	Expressive Engagement	Public Accountability
X1.1	0.766			
X1.2	0.788			
X1.3	0.728			
X1.4	0.811			
X1.5	0.838			
X1.6	0.825			
X1.7	0.801			
X2.1		0.865		
X2.2		0.884		
X2.3		0.902		
X2.4		0.875		
X2.5		0.873		
X3.1			0.819	
X3.2			0.851	
X3.3			0.861	
X3.4			0.865	
X3.5			0.885	
X3.6			0.861	
Y1.1				0.928
Y1.2				0.921
Y1.3				0.934
Y1.4				0.908
Y1.5				0.909

Source: Research Data, 2024

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

	Public Accountability	Expressive Engagement	Latent Engagement	Follower Engagement
Public Accountability				
Expressive Engagement	0.772			
Latent Engagement	0.722	0.816		
Follower Engagement	0.731	0.822	0.726	

Source: Research Data, 2024

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a construct can be distinguished from other constructs in a structural model. Several metrics are used to evaluate its validity, such as the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) correlation ratio and the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Puspitarini & Retnowardhani, 2022). Each construct's Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion by comparing it to the squared correlation values of other constructs that are reflectively quantified in the structural model. The HTMT ratio

measures the average correlation between constructs, compared to the geometric mean of the correlations between items measuring the same construct. A high HTMT value may indicate a potential issue with discriminant validity. The recommended threshold value is 0.90 for structural models where constructs share very similar concepts, and a lower threshold of 0.85 for constructs that are more conceptually distinct (Hair et al., 2019). As shown in Table 4, all variables have HTMT values below 0.90, indicating no discriminant validity issues.

Table 5. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable	AVE
Public Accountability	0.847
Expressive Engagement	0.735
Latent Engagement	0.632
Follower Engagement	0.774

Source: Research Data, 2024

The calculation of AVE (Average Variance Extracted) involves squaring the indicators of a construct and calculating the average of these values. An AVE value greater than 0.5 is considered valid, indicating that the construct explains more than 50% of the variance of its items. As shown in Table 5, all variables show values above 0.5, which means they are valid.

Table 6. Composite Reliability dan Cronbach Alpha

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
Public Accountability	0.955	0.956
Expressive Engagement	0.928	0.931
Latent Engagement	0.902	0.903
Follower Engagement	0.927	0.930

Source: Research Data, 2024

Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values are used to assess the reliability of the SEM model. These reliability measures evaluate the internal consistency of the indicators of a variable. A Cronbach's Alpha value above 0,6 is considered reliable for a variable, while the standard value for Composite Reliability is above 0.7. As shown in Table 6, all variables have a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.6 and a Composite Reliability value above 0.7, indicating that the SEM model analyzed is reliable.

Table 7. Coefficient Determination (R²)

Variable	R-square	R-square adjusted
Public Accountability	0.598	0.593

Source: Research Data, 2024

The purpose of the determinant analysis (R²) is to measure the extent to which independent variables collectively influence the dependent variable. As seen in Table 7, all variables in the endogenous model have an R² value above 0.5, indicating that the R² in this study is considered moderate for explaining the proposed model. The percentage that independent factors influence the dependent variable is also shown by this R² value. With an R² value of 0.598, the suggested model shows that Latent Engagement, Follower Engagement, and Expressive Engagement all have a direct impact on the variable Public Accountability. This means these three variables collectively contribute 59.8% to Public Accountability,

while the remaining 40.2% is influenced by other variables not identified in the model.

Table 8. Hasil Path Coefficient

Variable Relationships	Original Sample	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Information
Latent Engagement -> Public Accountability	0.228	2.817	0.005	Accepted
Follower Engagement -> Public Accountability	0.269	2.722	0.007	Accepted
Expressive Engagement -> Public Accountability	0.355	3.337	0.001	Accepted

Source: Research Data, 2024

In the PLS-SEM model, the path coefficient represents the standardised regression weight, indicating both the strength and direction of the relationship between constructs. These coefficients function similarly to weights in formative measurement models, where values closer to 1 suggest stronger influence. A relationship is considered statistically significant when the p-value is less than 0.05 and the t-statistic exceeds 1.96.

The results of hypothesis testing using the bootstrapping procedure indicate that the effect of latent engagement on public accountability is positive and statistically significant, with an original sample value of 0.228, a t-statistic of 2.265, and a p-value of 0.005. Therefore, hypothesis H1 is supported. These findings suggest that latent engagement, while passive in nature, contributes meaningfully to public accountability. Respondents who read articles, watch videos, and visit political figures' pages related to accountability issues demonstrate higher levels of awareness. Although this form of engagement does not manifest in direct participation, it enhances the younger generation's understanding of government transparency and accountability (Gil de Zúñiga, 2012). Exposure to relevant information allows individuals to evaluate government performance more critically and fosters a more informed public. Moreover, when youth engage with comments and public opinions, they encounter diverse viewpoints, promoting broader discourse. The visibility of user engagement—such as visiting official pages, even without commenting—can create a perception of public scrutiny, reinforcing accountability expectations among public officials. These findings are consistent with those of Warner et al.(2019), Schradie (2018), and Loader et al. (2014), who emphasise the role of passive media engagement in shaping civic awareness.

For follower engagement, hypothesis testing yielded an original sample value of 0.269, a t-statistic of 2.722, and a p-value of 0.007, indicating a positive and statistically significant effect on public accountability. Accordingly, hypothesis H2 is accepted. Follower engagement reflects more deliberate forms of participation, such as sharing information, supporting or initiating petitions, and joining public discussions on social media. The findings suggest that such behaviours amplify

visibility of accountability issues and create networks of civic participation. Youth in particular have used social media to mobilise around governance concerns, forming online communities that place pressure on institutions to act transparently (Kaplan, 2020). This form of engagement has the potential to catalyse policy change, particularly when collective actions – such as petitions – gain traction with media or policymakers (Chadwick, 2019). Furthermore, follower engagement facilitates a dialogic relationship between the public and government actors (Boulianne, 2015). Social media platforms offer users the means to express expectations directly to decision-makers, thus reinforcing the reciprocal nature of democratic accountability (Tufekci, 2017). These findings align with recent work by Hajri & Daife (2024), which affirms the younger generation's growing role in shaping political discourse through online participation.

The analysis of expressive engagement further supports these conclusions. The hypothesis test yielded an original sample value of 0.355, a t-statistic of 3.337, and a p-value of 0.001, indicating a strong and statistically significant positive effect on public accountability. Therefore, H3 is accepted. Expressive engagement captures active and often public expressions of opinion through social media platforms, such as commenting, posting, or reacting to accountability-related content. These forms of engagement contribute to a vibrant and participatory discourse, where individuals shape public narratives around government performance. Such activity can elevate accountability concerns within both public and private forums, whether through viral content, critical commentary, or informal oversight practices like trolling or satire (Choi et al., 2017; Harlow, 2015). Moreover, expressive engagement supports the formation of digital solidarity networks, in which youth exchange content and foster mutual awareness within their communities. This not only strengthens collective action but also cultivates an informed and engaged citizenry, reinforcing transparency and democratic responsiveness (Wirtz & Birkmeyer, 2015). The findings align with those of Lane et al. (2017), who highlight expressive engagement as a key mechanism through which youth influence political accountability and public discourse.

Taken together, the findings of this study provide empirical support for both engagement theory and stewardship theory. The significant influence of youth engagement – across its latent, follower, and expressive dimensions – on public accountability aligns with the central tenets of engagement theory, which emphasise the importance of active and meaningful participation in democratic processes. Concurrently, stewardship theory is supported by the notion that public officials must remain attuned to citizen expectations, particularly as these are increasingly voiced through digital platforms. Youth participation in online accountability discourse signals a shift in how oversight is exercised and legitimised in the digital age.

Ultimately, the results of this study highlight the role of social media not only in facilitating engagement, but also in shaping accountability norms and expectations. They demonstrate that even passive forms of engagement contribute to greater civic awareness, while active and expressive behaviours strengthen the participatory foundations of local governance. These insights carry practical implications for policymakers, suggesting the need to maintain transparent

communication and responsiveness on social media platforms as part of a broader strategy to build trust and accountability in public institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the influence of youth engagement on public accountability within the context of regional government, with a particular focus on social media platforms. The findings reveal that latent engagement—characterised by passive consumption of content such as reading, watching, or browsing—has a positive and significant effect on public accountability. This suggests that higher levels of latent engagement among the younger generation are associated with greater awareness and understanding of accountability-related issues.

Similarly, follower engagement, which involves active participation such as sharing content, supporting petitions, and joining discussions, also shows a positive effect on public accountability. This indicates that as follower engagement increases, so does the intensity of youth involvement in promoting transparency and oversight. Lastly, expressive engagement, which encompasses the articulation of opinions and reactions through social media interactions, likewise has a positive and significant relationship with public accountability. These findings suggest that expressive forms of engagement contribute to a more dynamic public discourse, encouraging greater scrutiny of government actions and policies.

Despite these insights, the study is subject to certain limitations. The sample is restricted to young individuals in West Nusa Tenggara and comprises a relatively modest number of respondents, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. Additionally, the use of self-administered questionnaires introduces potential biases, including the risk that respondents' answers may not fully reflect their actual views or behaviours. This may stem from varied interpretations of the questions or social desirability bias during response.

Future research should aim to address these limitations by expanding the sample size and geographic scope to capture more representative data. Moreover, incorporating additional variables—such as trust in government, political efficacy, or civic education—could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms linking youth engagement to public accountability.

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