

Research Article

Sentiment Discourse: An Intersection of News Text and Comments on Social Media

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Abstract: This study examines the intersection of sentiment discourse in news texts and user comments on Facebook Detikcom, focusing on government policies during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research explores institutional discourse in news articles that align with government narratives, while user comments reflect a spectrum of responses, from support to opposition. Using qualitative content analysis, this study applies critical discourse analysis (CDA) and sentiment analysis to examine linguistic strategies, ideological framing, and sentiment polarity. The data were taken from news texts and the comment section on Facebook Detikcom, collected through documentation and following several stages of observation, careful reading, selection, and classification. The findings show that social media transforms news consumption into a participatory discourse. This indicates that traditional narratives are challenged and reinterpreted by users. Sentiment clustering and engagement metrics further shape the visibility and influence of competing ideologies. This study contributes to digital discourse research by demonstrating that sentiment functions as an ideological tool in crisis communication. The analysis also highlights the evolving role of social media in public discourse and emphasizes the need for critical engagement with online news narratives and user-generated content.

Keywords: Discourse, Engagement, Ideology, Media, Sentiment

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1. Introduction

The interaction between discourse and sentiment on social media constructs a different framework compared to other forms of discourse. This interaction fuses text analysis with the accompanying sentiments, forming a nexus between critical discourse analysis and sentiment analysis. Therefore, social media has made this junction even more apparent. It affords users not only access to information, but also avenues through which they can air their views, opinions, and critiques concerning certain issues. The development from one-way to dynamic two-way interactions is an indication of the evolution of new ways in which discourse is created and interpreted [1], [2], [3].

Within the last couple of years, rapid growth in the use of social media coupled with rapid technological advancement has altered the dynamics of discourse. This brings both together in the research of interconnectedness between textual content and user sentiments in Facebook posts typically linked to government policies during the Covid-19 pandemic [4], [5], [6]. By focusing on such discourses, this research offers insight into the way sentiment amplifies or reshapes the contextual meaning of digital texts.

The growing prominence of social media as a platform of discourse underlines its potential transformative role in shaping public opinion and sentiment. Digital discourse studies bring to the fore sociolinguistic and multimodal dynamics of language use on Facebook. Among other platforms, it goes beyond mere text analysis to include social, cultural, and ideological dimensions. These go further with the playing ground of discourse and sentiment over social media analyzed through research [7], [8], [9], [10].

Further, the studies on news interaction patterns show that public and private engagement with news articles takes a different nature on platforms like Facebook. For example, Mohammadinodooshan and Carlsson [11] found in their paper that private interactions are often characterized by deeper user engagement. As a result, this work turns such dichotomies from simply technical into critical for our understanding on news that is disseminated and may come to play a role in public discourses. Omar and Casero-Ripollés [12] develop this further by linking the consumption of news on Facebook to changes in threat perceptions of safety and civil liberties among youth during the Covid-19 pandemic. They emphasized the cultivation effect of heavy news exposure.

Despite the voluminous literature on discourse and sentiment in digital media, there are still significant blind spots in understanding their intersection as a unified analytical framework. Digital discourse studies focus on the sociolinguistic and ideological dimensions of online language use. However, it often fails to consider the sentiment dynamics that underpin user interactions and meaning-making [1], [2], [13]. It has focused little on the sentiment-laden discourse that arises in user comments and interactions. Moreover, the studies like Omar and Casero-Ripollés [12] show the cultivation effects of news consumption on the perceptions of safety and civil liberties, but do not investigate exactly the sentiments interrelation with discourse structures to influence broader social ideologies. This study tries to respond to these gaps by integrating sentiment and discourse analyses in order to review on their interaction to shape ideologies within the sphere of social media.

2. Literature Review

Cain et al. [14] apply a thematic analysis to develop an understanding about discourse in relation to obesity and fatness. The discourse is framed by digital news media. Three important themes are identified namely concern, blame, and advice. These themes represent a spectrum ranging from stigmatizing narratives to embracing critical and size-acceptance movements. The social media provides different kind of issue regarding to obesity and fatness rather than mainstream media. The mainstream media only continues the framing of issue in terms of personal responsibility and health risks. It also gives critical perspective on resistance of systemic factor and appealing for the acceptance of diverse body types. This study shows the nature of participatory on digital platforms. The reader comments increase discourse and diversify of the conversation.

A comprehensive analysis of public sentiment and discourse on domestic violence during the Covid-19 pandemic in Australia was conducted by Usher et al. [5]. They utilize social media and digital analytics to assess public attitudes, concerns, and policy responses. The study showed that social media served as a crucial platform for expressing distress, raising awareness, and mobilizing support regarding the increasing cases of domestic violence during lockdown periods. It points on the rise of domestic violence, lack of governmental intervention, and inefficiencies in support services. Meanwhile, neutral-to-positive sentiment emerged in the context of praising advocacy campaigns and policy measures addressing domestic violence concerns. A key contribution of this study lies in its integration of sentiment and discourse analysis to capture public responses beyond official reports. The researchers emphasized that digital discourse functions as a reflection of social anxieties. The social media enables real-time public engagement with crisis narratives.

3. Proposed Method

The data for this research were textual contents from the social media platform Facebook. It was known as the most used social media especially for interaction. More precisely, news articles and comments related to government policies about the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 were under review. Data collection was carried out via a documentation approach, which

involved the systematic collection of texts and user comments from selected news pages on Facebook. Observations were made to establish posts that content was specially related to government policies during the Covid-19 pandemic. Qualitative data analysis was conducted using an exploratory sequential approach in the present study. Detailed and integrative analysis of textual content was performed to determine the sentiment discourses. The study applies theories and frameworks on critical discourse analysis (CDA) and digital discourse practices (DDP).

4. Results and Discussion

The results describe the sentiments provided by the news text and user comments of Facebook *Detik.com*. After presenting the results of sentiment, description is continued with discussion about the sentiments with references to study of sentiments taken from articles of journals and books.

News Text Sentiments

The news text taken from Facebook *Detik.com* with the title *Minta Publik Dukung Kebijakan Atasi Corona, Pemerintah: Jokowi Lokomotifnya* employs a sentiment-laden discourse. It aligns with governmental authority and national unity in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic. It also represents the positive representation of the Indonesian government's response to the Covid-19 crisis. The language in the article constructs sentiment regarding to the lexical choices, metaphorical framing, and emphasis on collective responsibility. At the same, the language of the news also reflects a strategic alignment with government authority and reinforces a unified nationalistic narrative. The analysis examines the linguistic structures and discursive strategies in the text to shape public perception of government's role during the pandemic.



Figure 1. The news text on Facebook *Detik.com*.

The construction of power and authority in crisis communication relies on metaphorical framing. The framing is to reinforce government's authority and control. The news reveals of potrait on President Joko Widodo as the locomotive (*lokomotif*) which implies the leader of country or a centralized and hierarchical model of government. Leadership is the paramount for national stability. The rhetorical strategy associates to concept of *power behind discourse* [7]. It is said institutional actors utilize language to establish dominance and maintain hegemony. The text also enforces a top-down power dynamic that emphasize obedience and national unity in which it urges all societal figures including political parties and community leaders to align with government policies [2], [13].

The power dynamic can be deduced from the representation of *persatuan dan kesatuan menjadi modal utama* (unity and cohesion as main assets). The statement suggest that any form of dissent or criticism is framed as counterproductive to national resilience. Fairclough [3] further explains that it is a characteristic of mediatized political communication. The communication involves media as the intermediary that legitimizes dominan ideological stances while downplaying alternative perspectives. The lexical choices *persatuan dan kesatuan menjadi modal utama* (unity and cohesion as main assets) reinforce the meaning of nationalistic sentiment. It portrays the government as a unifying entity, emphasizing solidarity, and collective effort. This statement is supported by the argument of Omar and Casero-Ripolles [12] who state that social media news consumption often amplifies authoritative narratives especially in the condition of crisis. The power dynamic also includes positive sentiment toward government policies. Doni Monardo, the head of Covid-19 task force frames government as the *lokomotif* (locomotive) and the citizens as *gerbong-gerbong* (train cars). Structurally, it means that the movement is organized by President Joko Widodo. Metaphorical statement implies government as the driving force and guides people to

overcome the crisis. The rhetorical devices also evoke a sense of unity, trust, and structured governance [15].

The following is mitigating public fear through strategic discourse. It also signifies sentiment strategy with statement *virus ini belum diketahui kapan akan berakhir* (this virus's end is still unknown). The statement figures uncertainty, however it is immediately counterbalanced with a call for resilience. The call implies citizens to strengthen their endurance in health, economy, and morality. Fairclough [7] mentions this condition as the crisis discourse that often shifts blame away from institutions and distributes it through social actors. The language is as the statement of President Jokowi *Saya minta kebijakan pembatasan sosial berskala besar, physical distancing dilakukan lebih tegas, disiplin, dan lebih efektif lagi* (I request that large-scale social restrictions and physical distancing be enforced more strictly, with more discipline and effectiveness) that reflects a commanding tone rather than a dialogic strategy. It is said that the form of imperative creates a controlled narrative. It implies the government actions that have decisive, necessary, and discouraging public scrutiny. The government actions at same time also neutralizes public anxiety regarding the covid-19 pandemic. The statement *virus ini belum diketahui kapan akan berakhir* (this virus's end is still unknown) reflects uncertainty. However, it encounters with immediate call for resilience *kita harus memiliki ketahanan di bidang kesehatan, ekonomi, dan moralitas* (we must build resilience in health, economy, and morality). The comparison statement mitigates fear by offering a framework of control and perseverance [4], [13]. This condition is similar to the findings proposed by Mohmmadinodooshan and Carlsson [11] who emphasize digital news discourse manages public sentiment through strategic messaging.

The news text also emphasis on collective unity and resilience. Though, it lacks of any mention of public dissent, alternative viewpoints, or challenges faced by the citizen in complying with government policies [8], [9], [10]. Fairclough [16] describes the omission of counter-discourse as ideological move in critical discourse analysis. It shows privileges dominant narrative while at once marginalizing the opposite opinions. Media discourse tends to minimize dissident voices to maintain the illusion of national consensus and reinforcing a monolithic stance rather than a diverse public opinion. It happens particularly in times of crisis. Fairclough [7], [16] also argues that news media often functions as a mediator. The media mediates state institutions and the public which is rarely neutral. The media text of Facebook *Detik.com* does not critically examine the effectiveness of the policies. It does not also provide space for critical engagement from affected communities or public. When the news text has lack of counter-discourse or opposing sentiments, Cain et al. [14] say that digital news platforms allow for alternative narratives through user comments. The condition contrasts with sentiment discourse on social media platform. It engages dynamics flow to public dissent or endorsement [11]. In digital platform like Facebook, the user-generated sentiment can shift the discourse to more contested and debated narratives.

The news text provides nationalistic rhetoric which it reinforces loyalty to the state as a civic duty. The portraying compliance with health policies as moral obligation reflects that the text has aligned with the argumentation of Fairclough [16]. Fairclough concern the ideological state apparatuses apply discourse to sustain power structures. The strategic use of nationalistic discourse places governmental directives as the sole legitimate path forward which encourages opposition or skepticism. The image of *daya taban moralitas dan moril bangsa* (the moral and psychological endurance of the nation) takes position when public suffers as results of an inevitable aspect of crisis management. It further normalizes the sacrifices demanded by the government. The reflection expresses classic discourse strategy in political communication in which national crises are framed as collective struggles that require unwavering support from all citizens [3], [4], [8]

Users Comment Sentiments

Meanwhile, the comments of users are part of social media interaction. The comments on the Facebook *Detik.com* reflect the response of social media users. It replicates a diverse spectrum of public sentiment. It is shaped online interactions through ideological positions, emotional expressions, and argumentation reason [11], [12], [17]. The language choice, rhetorical strategies, and engagement patterns in the comments reflects public reactions to the government policies during pandemic covid-19. The ideas of the comments are various ranging from negative sentiment and government distrust, satirical and humorous response,

supportive and nationalistic sentiments, and calling for transparency and economic justice [18].



Figure 2. One of excerpts of users comments on Facebook *Detikcom*.

The most dominant theme in the comments is criticism toward government. The comments are for the example *Lokomotifnya lelet masalahnya, kalah garcep sama kepala daerah* (the locomotive is slow, the regional leaders respond faster). It concerns the authority of government by mocking the metaphor used in the original news text. The metaphor such as *Sepur kluthuk asapnya doang yg tebal tenaga kurang jadi jalannya lelet* (it is just an old train with thick smoke but has no power) represents the policies of government are only rhetoric with only little substantial action. Besides sarcasm, direct accusations and frustration appears in the comments. The examples are *Kau minta publik bantu kebijakan atasi corona, WNA masih bebas masuk, bicara jangan kumur-kumur, kami rakyat muak dg permainan kalian* (you ask the public to support policies, but foreign people are still allowed to enter; stop mumbling, we are sick of your games). This direct accusation is not only expressing anger over perceived inconsistencies of policies. However, it also reflects the distrust toward governmental communication strategies. Fairclough and van Dijk [16], [19] determines in crisis discourse; credibility is central to public trust. Once it is questioned, the public discourse can shift into confrontational and oppositional stances.

The comments also show sentiment strategy by applying satire and humor. The strategy is applied to express dissatisfaction to the policies of government in handling the pandemic. The comments are *Loko nya masih pake mesin uap lamaa* (the locomotive still uses an old steam, so it is slow) and *Bahaya ini kalau lokomotifnya masuk jurang semua masuk jurang* (if the locomotive derails, we all derail too). Both adopt an exaggerated tone to ridicule the decision-making process of government in covid-19 crisis. The expressions reflect the function of satire as the form of resistance. The concept is relevant to intertextuality in media discourse in which public responses reinterpret dominant narratives through playful or critical engagement (Fairclough, 1995). The humor is also used to highlight economic inequalities in pandemic. The comment is *Giliran turis mampu di subsidi, tapi buat rakyat mikir dua kali* (the government subsidizes wealthy tourists, but when it comes to the people, they hesitate). It reveals class-based frustration and informs the economic disparity as the central issue in the sentiment discourse. says language is deeply tied to social structures. In the social structure, discourse reveals underlying ideological tensions [9], [16], [19].

Polarization of comments can be identified from the news text of Facebook *Detikcom*. The polarization comes as some comments support the government and others deny it. The supportive comments urge national unity for supporting policies of government. The comments are *Lebih cepat lebih bagus pak, sudah terlalu banyak korban ... kita akan patuhi kebijakan pemerintah* (the faster, the better, sir. There have been too many victims ... we will obey government policies) and *Saya lebih percaya omongan pemerintah dan para ahli yg dilibatkan daripada omongan liar di luar* (I trust the government and the experts involved more than the wild opinions out there). The first statement confirms trust and compliance with direction of government. Meanwhile, the second comment reinforces the belief in institutional authority over public speculation. Both expressions are similar to idea of media discourse that can reinforce dominant ideological structures by fostering compliance and trust in institutional narratives (Fairclough, [7]). Some comments also promote discipline and obedience to government policies. It considers as nationalistic sentiment and one of the comments is *Seharusnya pemerintah bersikap tegas kepada pihak-pihak yang mencoba mengganggu kerja pemerintah dalam menanggulangi covid-19* (the government should take strict action against those who disrupt efforts to combat covid-19). The model of comment reflects authoritarian discourse

which public dissent is framed as counterproductive or harmful. It adds the condition as construction of binary when the responsible and irresponsible citizens legitimize state authority in crisis management [18], [20].

Economic support and transparency become main issue for the comments of the news text in Facebook *Detik.com*. The comments mostly concern with demand for economic support and transparency. The public needs financial stability during pandemic of covid-19 and it can be identified in *Yang penting transparan, kalau memang bokek terus terang aja* (the most important thing is transparency; if the government is broke, just be honest about it). The comment emphasizes the expectation for clear communication among the authorities. Fairclough [16] asserts that transparency as the key factor in public perception of legitimacy. When the institutions fail to communicate openly and honestly, public discourse is shifted into skepticism and suspicious. Another comment on economic situation is *Saya mau ikuti arahan pemerintah, tetapi pemerintah mau ngerti nggak kalau saya ada cicilan panci?* (I want to follow the direction of government, but do they understand that I still must pay off my debt for my cookware?). The comment is sarcasm and it highlights the economic obstacles that hit the low-income citizens. The comments also illustrate sentiment discourse that intersects with material realities.

The intersection between news sentiment and comment sentiment reflects the broader dynamics of social media as a contested public sphere. In the framework of sentiment analysis, the news text predominantly features positive sentiment markers, meanwhile the comments introduce both positive and negative sentiment clusters [18]. The phenomena demonstrates that social media platforms allow for multiple ideological perspectives to coexist. It also facilitates both reinforcement and resistance to dominant discourses. The social media enables real-time engagement and allows users to challenge, reinterpret, and subvert the intended sentiment of a news article. It is different to traditional media that audiences consume news passively. The comments on the Facebook *Detik.com* illustrate the dynamic. Users reframe the government's locomotive metaphor from a symbol of leadership into an object of satire. Their ability to reframe discourse is reflection of media texts that are inherently dialogic and open to recontextualization [7], [17], [19]. Therefore, social media disrupts traditional one-way communication. It transforms news into an arena for public debate and ideological contestation. The reflection is relevant to the concept of Mohammadinooshan and Carlsson [11] that argue the social media as both public and private engagements with news contents. The private engagements often reflect deeper sentiment-based reactions.

The shaping of public discourse is also part of intersection between the news text and comment sentiments. The social media fosters ongoing and dynamic exchange of ideas. The sentiment is not only expressed, but also negotiated, amplified, or diminished through user interactions. It differentiates the social media with traditional news platforms. Liu [18] mentions sentiment in digital discourse is highly interactive. It is influenced by opinions that are received and responded to the given platform. It explains certain sentiments in the comment section of Facebook *Detik.com* gaining traction. Meanwhile, others remain marginal such as likes, replies, and further engagement reinforce certain narrative and makes them more visible and influential. In addition, the ideological function of social media sentiment becomes evident in determining different user groups that engage with the news [20]. Omar and Casero-Ripolles [12] identify the heavy engagement with news on digital platforms like Facebook can reinforce ideological biases. Individuals tend to interact with content that aligns with their beliefs. It can be identified in the Facebook *Detik.com* comment section that clusters of positive sentiment reinforce pro-government narrative [7], [16].

The intersection of sentiment in the news text and the comments also demonstrates ideology is shaped by the digital medium. The news of *Detik.com* reflects a mainstream media ideology. It shows government policies that are framed as necessary, authoritative, and beneficial to national unity (Dordevic, 2022; Fairclough, 1995; Price & Harbisher, 2022). It is said that institutional discourse in which news functions as an extension of state ideology. However, the comments introduce counter-ideologies, challenging the narrative of government by highlighting perceived contradictions, policy failures, and economic disparities. The dialectical exchange between institutional discourse and public resistance exemplifies concept of Fairclough [7] in terms of intertextuality in media discourse. Intertextuality happens when texts do not exist in isolation, but rather in a network of responses, reinterpretations, and ideological struggles.

This condition informs that the sentiment discourse in social media has changed. It transforms from the news consumption into a participatory and in contested space. As an indication, the original news of *Detik.com* employs positive sentiment framework to align with government ideology. Meanwhile, the comment section expresses a complex and fragmented public response. It ranges from supporting comments to outright rejection of the news narrative. The divergence aligns with approach of Liu [18] in clustering of sentiment that the digital platform enables to facilitate both sentiment reinforcement and ideological resistance.

These two sentiments come as intersection to reflect larger ideological function of social media. The traditional news narratives are commonly reshaped, contested, and reinterpreted by the audience. Fairclough [7], [16] describes that the intersection of two sentiments in social media as media discourse is never static. The media discourse is always subject to reinterpretation and rearticulation of public engagement. This study highlights the evolvement of news discourse in digital spaces. It demonstrates the way that social media raises ideological hegemony and resistance. It is ultimately redefining on the construction, circulation, and contestation of sentiment in the public sphere [6], [13].

Conclusions

This study investigates the intersection of sentiment discourse in news texts and user comments on Facebook *Detik.com*. It focuses on government policies during the Covid-19 pandemic. The analysis describes a distinct contrast between the sentiment embedded within the news text and the diverse public responses in the comment section. The news article employs a positive sentiment framework. It reinforces government authority, national unity, and compliance through metaphorical framing and nationalistic rhetoric. However, the user comments demonstrate a more polarized sentiment discourse which is encompassing both supportive and critical responses.

The results also indicate that sentiment in news texts serves as an ideological tool to shape public perception, legitimizing government actions, and fostering compliance. The article strategically employs imperative language, metaphor, and exclusion of counter-discourse to reinforce its authoritative stance. In contrast, user comments introduce counter-ideologies. The counter-ideologies come with critiques ranging from dissatisfaction with government efficiency to economic concerns and demands for transparency. The sarcasm, humor, and direct criticism in the comments illustrate public discourse resistance and negotiates dominant narratives. Moreover, this study highlights the role of social media as a contested space for public engagement. Discourse is shaped through sentiment clustering, intertextual reinterpretation, and ideological negotiation. It mentions that social media sentiment is highly interactive, dynamic, and influenced by digital engagement patterns.

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