

# Analyzing Media Bias in Support of Government Policies: A Critical Discourse Analysis in a Newspaper

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## ABSTRACT

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This study aims to examine how The Jakarta Post constructs and legitimizes government discourse in its coverage of the 2022 subsidized fuel price increase in Indonesia. Using Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, this study analyzes a news article titled "Government hikes fuel prices to rein in ballooning subsidies" to uncover ideological tendencies embedded in three dimensions of discourse structure: macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure. Data were collected using purposive sampling and analyzed qualitatively to identify patterns of representation, framing, and linguistic strategies that shape the overall meaning of the text. The analysis reveals a bias toward the government at all levels of the discourse structure. At the macro level, the article legitimizes the fuel price increase policy as a rational and inevitable economic measure. At the superstructure level, the information is structured in an expository-argumentative manner, emphasizing the government's fiscal responsibility while minimizing public opposition. At the micro level, lexical choices, syntactic structures, and rhetorical sequences demonstrate the dominance of official voices and technocratic explanations over critical or oppositional perspectives. This study concludes that English-language media in Indonesia tend to reproduce government-centric ideologies, necessitating the need to improve critical media literacy and discourse awareness in understanding economic news.

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## 1. Introduction

Newspapers currently rarely cover topics that challenge the current government. Most publications in Indonesia seem to play it safe by focusing only on issues favorable to the government. As a result, public opinion is often muted, and most reported news tends to favor the government, particularly regarding fuel price increases.

One prominent example is the government's official announcement of fuel price increases, including diesel and gasoline. This decision stems from rising global energy commodity prices since 2021, fueled by increased energy demand and limited supply following the post-COVID-19 economic recovery and the lead-up to the presidential election. The Indonesian government, which continues to subsidize fuel prices, faces significant financial pressure due to the rising oil prices. The government recognizes that these fuel price increases could trigger unrest and damage the government's credibility, especially in the lead-up to elections, when the opposition could exploit the issue to undermine support for the government. The government must also consider the psychological and economic impacts of these price increases.

Extensive research has been conducted on government policies, particularly in the economic sphere, with a variety of themes explored in a number of studies. Media bias in news reporting has been a frequent topic in critical discourse analysis, with findings indicating a strong correlation between media bias and news reporting in Indonesia (Alfi Arifin & Basuki, 2018; Afifah, 2016; Abdullah, 2021); Anshori, 2021; Ar-Rasyid

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& Yuniati, 2021; Benmetan & Setyowibowo, 2021; Mukhlis et al., 2020; Musrichah, 2020). These studies highlight the significant influence of official representation on political decisions in Indonesia.

However, previous Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) research on media bias in Indonesia has generally focused on local-language media, online news portals, or television broadcasts, often using the Fairclough or Wodak frameworks to analyze ideological representation and political bias. Few studies have specifically examined how English-language national newspapers construct and legitimize government narratives for both domestic and international audiences. This research differs in that it focuses on The Jakarta Post, an English-language daily newspaper, to uncover how bias operates in English-language political reporting. The analysis employs Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis model, examining macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure to uncover the subtle linguistic and structural mechanisms that shape bias.

This research highlights a crucial issue: media bias toward the government, particularly in reporting on fuel price increases. The primary social problem lies in media bias that legitimizes and reinforces government policies rather than critically examining their social impacts. By emphasizing and validating official claims, the media functions as an extension of the government. Critical discourse analysis reveals how social actors and journalistic practices subtly reproduce and promote government interests, thereby limiting public scrutiny and democratic debate.

The purpose of this research is to identify and interpret linguistic and structural features that indicate bias in The Jakarta Post's reporting on the government's fuel price increase policy, and to explain the social and political implications of this bias in the contemporary Indonesian media landscape. Specifically, this study aims to: Analyze the textual, discursive, and ideological elements of bias in The Jakarta Post's reporting using Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. Examine how media discourse contributes to the legitimacy of government policies and the formation of public perceptions. Explore the broader social and political implications of media bias in English-language political reporting in Indonesia.

The research question underlying this study is How does The Jakarta Post's coverage of the government's decision to raise fuel prices, when analyzed through Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), reflect media bias in terms of macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure, and what are the social and political implications of this bias?

### 1.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a critical and interdisciplinary approach to discourse that views language as a form of social practice. CDA explores the structural relationships between transparent and opaque language use (Wodak et al., 2006). This approach examines how powerful social groups or institutions use language to dominate and control other groups by shaping public discourse and influencing public perceptions. In this context, language and text are used strategically to support the goals of those in power. This manipulation of language often exploits public sentiment to strengthen the interests of those producing and disseminating the discourse.

The goal of CDA is to uncover the deeper meanings hidden within texts by analyzing linguistic features, intertextuality, power relations, and the social context that shapes their production and interpretation (Chilton, 2007). Discourse is viewed as a socio-cultural practice that reflects social events, actions, ideologies, and cognitive processes within society. However, discourse can also obscure or distort the reality of social phenomena. Therefore, CDA seeks to uncover ideologies, ambiguities, and hidden meanings that may be disguised within texts.

Fairclough (2013) suggests that discourse analysis operates on three main dimensions: (1) discourse as text, (2) discourse as discourse practice, and (3) discourse as socio-cultural practice. The analysis begins with textual structure, encompassing ideational, interpersonal, and textual aspects. The ideational function relates to lexical choice, transitivity, and nominalization; the interpersonal function examines mood and modality; while the textual function focuses on cohesion, thematic structure, and information flow. This linguistic analysis serves as a foundation for exploring how discourse practices relate to broader social and institutional contexts.

Several scholars have developed influential models within CDA, including Fairclough, (2013) Fowler et al., (2018), Hodge & Kress, (1993), Mills & Mullany (2011), van Dijk (2012), van Leeuwen (2005) and (Wodak et al., 2006). Van Leeuwen's model emphasizes how discourse can marginalize or exclude certain social groups (Wodak et al., 2006), while Fairclough's approach integrates linguistic and sociocultural dimensions. Van Dijk (2012) focuses on the interrelationships between discourse, cognition, and society, highlighting how language is used to gain and maintain power and reproduce social inequality. Thus, CDA examines how ideology is constructed, transmitted, and legitimized linguistically through discourse.

### 1.2 Media Discourse

In a narrower sense, media discourse refers to the interactional aspect of communication within media contexts, such as political interviews, television debates, talk shows, or radio phone-ins, in which participants engage in publicly observed interactions (O'keeffe, 2006). These media-mediated interactions demonstrate how power relations are negotiated, maintained, or even challenged through language.

Media discourse can be studied not only as a means of representation, but also as a social practice that reflects and reproduces values, ideologies, and power dynamics in society (Neary, & Ringrow, 2018). In this view, media texts, whether news reports, editorials, or interviews are not neutral but rather become arenas of ideological struggle (Fowler et al., 2018). Linguistic elements in media discourse, such as lexical choice, modality, and framing, function as tools to legitimize certain views while marginalizing others. This perspective aligns with the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which seeks to uncover hidden power relations within discourse practices.

Furthermore, media discourse analysis contributes to an understanding of how public perception and political legitimacy are constructed through language (KhosraviNik, 2017). By examining patterns of representation and interaction, researchers can identify how media institutions act as mediators between authorities and audiences, influencing social cognition and shaping collective attitudes. Thus, media discourse is not merely a means of conveying information but also a dynamic arena where meaning is produced, debated, and transformed in accordance with institutional agendas and power relations within society.

### 1.3 Van Dijk's CDA Framework

Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis model involves four main stages: identification, description, interpretation, and explanation. This model emphasizes the interaction between the social, political, and ideological context of a text and its linguistic organization. This approach identifies how discourse structures, such as lexical choices, syntax, and thematic emphasis— influence reader understanding and shape public perception. According to Van Dijk, CDA operates at three levels of analysis: macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure.

Macrostructure concerns the global meaning of a text its themes, arguments, and narrative organization. This analysis explores how ideas are interconnected through conjunction, coherence, and repetition to construct a particular worldview. Superstructure refers to the schematic organization of discourse, including ideological framing and mental representations that reflect social cognition. At this level, text structure is connected to broader ideological and institutional processes. Microstructure focuses on local linguistic elements such as word choice, grammar, and style that reveal implicit meanings or specific attitudes. These three levels, when analyzed in an integrated manner, can reveal how discourse reproduces or challenges power relations in society.

## 2. Methods

This research employs a descriptive, qualitative approach, applying van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework to examine how linguistic elements and text structure influence meaning in media discourse (Chilton, 2007). The researcher chose a qualitative approach to provide an in-depth and contextual description of the text, rather than to generate quantitative generalizations. CDA was used at three levels of analysis: macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure to uncover the relationship between language, ideology, and power in the analyzed news texts.

The researcher collected data through a public documents approach and purposively selected a news article titled "*Government hikes fuel prices to rein in ballooning subsidies*," published by *The Jakarta Post* on 3 September 2022. The article met the inclusion criteria: it discussed significant government policy, had a complete news structure, and was publicly accessible. Analysis of a single article allowed this research to examine the text in depth, although the results have limitations in terms of generalization.

The analysis used four systematic stages. First, they identified the macrostructure to determine the main themes and topics by reading the title and opening paragraph. Second, description (superstructure) to map the schematic organization of the text and examine how the sequence of information and quotations shapes meaning. Third, interpretation (microstructure) to analyze lexical choices, syntactic structures, and semantic aspects such as agency, modality, and evaluative language. Fourth, the explanation integrates all findings to explain how language choices reflect and reproduce power relations in the socio-political context of fuel pricing policy.

Although based on a single text, this step-by-step CDA procedure provides a deep understanding of how news discourse shapes social reality through language.

### 3. Results and Discussion

This study section identifies bias in *The Jakarta Post's* coverage of the government's fuel price increase. The analysis is conducted in three stages: macrostructure, microstructure, and superstructure, each providing a detailed explanation of the coverage.

Table 1. Analysis of Macrostructure, Superstructure, and Microstructure  
Based on Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis Model

Macrostructure (Global Theme)	Superstructure (Discourse Scheme/Structure)	Microstructure (Clauses and Semantic Meaning)	Critical Interpretation (CDA Analysis)
<b>Government increased the cost of subsidized fuel.</b>	<b>Introduction</b> 1. The government plans to raise the price of subsidized fuel by around 30%. 2. Potential for mass protests	<i>"The government raised subsidized fuel prices by about 30 percent on Saturday, top officials said, as it moves to rein in ballooning subsidies despite a risk of mass protests."</i>	The government is portrayed as a rational and decisive actor making decisions for fiscal stability, while potential protests are merely cited as risks. Ideologically, the text frames government actions in a positive and legitimate light.
<b>Details of price adjustment (Pertalite and diesel).</b>	<b>Content</b> A detailed explanation of the price increases for Pertalite and diesel, as well as quotes from the Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources.	<i>"From 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, the price of subsidized Pertalite gasoline rose to Rp 10,000... while that of subsidized diesel increased to Rp 6,800..."</i>	affirming economic facts without criticism. The use of numerical data enhances the impression of objectivity and legitimacy of the discourse, strengthening the government's position as a legitimate source of information.
<b>President Joko Widodo's statement on the difficult decision.</b>	<b>Content</b> Affirmation of the difficult decision to raise fuel prices.	<i>"President Joko Widodo said the decision to adjust fuel prices was a difficult one and was his 'last option.'"</i>	The choice of the term "last option" reflects Jokowi's empathy and moral responsibility. This strategy reduces potential public resistance by demonstrating that the policy was not an arbitrary action, but rather a forced one.
<b>Subsidy budget tripled in 2022.</b>	<b>Content</b> Increase in subsidy budget due to global oil prices and rupiah depreciation.	<i>"The subsidy budget... had tripled in 2022 to Rp 502 trillion... pushed by rising global oil prices and a depreciating rupiah."</i>	This clause builds on the argument of economic rationality. By linking the increase in subsidies to global external factors, the text shifts responsibility from the government to the dynamics of the global market.
<b>Finance Minister Sri Mulyani's statement on fiscal impact.</b>	<b>Content</b> Impact on inflation and additional budget requirements.	<i>"Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati said more money would still be needed despite the</i>	Sri Mulyani's statement was used to strengthen the government's credibility in managing fiscal policy. This

<b>Monitoring economic implications.</b>	<b>Content</b> Impact on inflation and economic growth, as well as social assistance.	<i>“fuel price hike...”</i>	discourse portrayed the government as a prudent and responsive economic manager.
<b>High energy subsidies delayed inflationary pressure.</b>	<b>Content</b> Explanation of the role of subsidies in maintaining inflation.	<i>“We are monitoring the impact on inflation and economic growth... <b>the government would provide cash handouts for the poor.</b>”</i>	The text emphasizes the government's concern for vulnerable groups, building a humanistic and empathetic image. Positive self-representation strategies strengthen policy legitimacy through narratives of social protection
<b>Bank Indonesia's response to policy.</b>	<b>Content</b> Potential tightening of monetary policy.	<i>“High energy subsidies had previously kept Indonesia's inflation low...”</i>	This clause affirms the success of previous subsidy policies, but also implicitly justifies the need for new adjustments. There is a narrative strategy that connects past successes with current policies that are considered rational..
<b>Employers' response (Hariyadi Sukamdani).</b>	<b>Closing</b> The impact of price increases on inflation and the business world.	<i>“Bank Indonesia Governor Perry Warjiyo said... would re-assess the inflation outlook...”</i>	This discourse demonstrates coordination between state institutions. Bank Indonesia is portrayed as a government partner that is adaptive to fiscal policy. This reinforces the image of national unity in facing the crisis..
<b>Macroeconomic projections (Faisal Rachman).</b>	<b>Closing</b> Inflation and economic growth predictions.	<i>“Hariyadi Sukamdani said price pressure from the fuel price hike would not be too much...”</i>	This clause mitigates the potential negative impacts of the policy. By presenting the voices of entrepreneurs who consider the policy "not too burdensome," the text reinforces the positive framing of the government's move..
<b>Social consequences and protests.</b>	<b>Closing</b> The reaction of the community, workers and students.	<i>“Faisal Rachman estimated inflation could accelerate to 6–7 percent... BI could raise the policy rate...”</i>	The use of expert economic sources serves as expert validation. This gives the impression of objectivity, while ideologically supporting the government's policy narrative as a realistic step.
		<i>“The opposition Labour Party has arranged a protest... <b>Small protests had erupted...</b>”</i>	The text only mentions the protests descriptively without elaborating on the socio-political causes and effects. This minimization strategy diminishes the significance of opposition voices and maintains the

<b>Pertamina's commitment to fuel supply.</b>	<b>Closing</b> National fuel availability after the announcement of the price increase.	<i>"Pertamina said it was committed to ensuring adequate fuel supplies nationally..."</i>	dominance of pro-government discourse. The closing remarks convey a sense of stability and control. By positioning Pertamina as a symbol of public service, the text concludes the narrative positively, affirming that the government is capable of maintaining a balance between policy and the needs of the people..
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### 3.1 Macrostructure

Macrostructure is the first dimension in text categorization, emphasizing the overall meaning or global theme of a discourse. As shown in Table 1, this article's macrostructure centers on efforts to legitimize the government's policy of raising subsidized fuel prices as a rational measure to control excessive subsidies and maintain national economic stability. This main theme is developed through a number of interrelated supporting ideas that serve to strengthen the policy's legitimacy framework.

The first supporting idea highlights the economic rationality behind the policy, as reflected in factual data regarding rising global oil prices, the depreciation of the rupiah exchange rate, and the surge in the subsidy budget to IDR 502 trillion in 2022. This explanation is reinforced by detailed adjustments to the prices of Pertalite and diesel, demonstrating the government's concrete steps in response to fiscal pressures caused by external conditions. This idea serves to establish the framework that the government's decision was not a unilateral action, but rather a consequence of uncontrollable global economic dynamics.

The second supporting idea presents moral and political justifications, as evident in President Joko Widodo's statement describing the decision to raise fuel prices as "the last and most difficult option." Furthermore, Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati's statement regarding the fiscal impact of the policy adds a dimension of credibility and responsibility. These two statements reinforce the government's image as a prudent, rational, and nationally-interested actor.

The third supporting idea highlights the social and economic impacts of the policy, such as the provision of cash assistance to the poor, the potential for increased inflation, and the reactions of economic actors and the public. The article features statements from the Governor of Bank Indonesia, a businessman (Hariyadi Sukamdani), and an economist (Faisal Rachman), each describing projections for inflation, economic growth, and the impact on monetary policy. Furthermore, the social dimension is evident in news coverage of labor and student protests and Pertamina's guarantee of fuel supplies. Thus, this section demonstrates the government's awareness of the policy's consequences and its commitment to minimizing negative impacts on vulnerable groups.

The relationship between the main theme and these three supporting ideas forms a cohesive structure of meaning: the government is constructed as a rational actor acting for national economic stability, while the fuel price increase policy is positioned as a difficult but inevitable step. The implication of this construction of meaning is the creation of an image of a government that is strong, rational, and economically legitimate, as well as a shift in public focus from the suffering caused by policies to the narrative of the urgency of maintaining the country's economic balance.

### 3.2 Superstructure

The superstructure dimension refers to the organization and structure of a text, which determines how information is organized and how discourse functions within its social and communicative context. According to Van Dijk, superstructure analysis examines how the introduction, body, and conclusion are systematically structured to build coherence and guide readers in interpreting the text's main message. In this context, the article being analyzed falls into the expository-argumentative discourse type within the journalistic discourse framework. As a news text, its purpose is not only to provide information about government policy but also to

guide readers in understanding and evaluating that policy through the arrangement and emphasis of certain information.

The introduction presents the government's plan to raise subsidized fuel prices by approximately 30 percent and the potential for large-scale demonstrations. This initial structure establishes the context of the tension between the government's fiscal needs and public opposition, while positioning the policy as a difficult but inevitable decision. In this way, the text encourages readers to view the fuel price increase not as a political conflict, but as a national economic challenge that must be faced together.

The main body reinforces this frame by presenting a detailed explanation of the price increases for Pertalite and diesel, accompanied by quotes from key officials such as President Joko Widodo, the Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, and the Minister of Finance. These elements serve as discursive evidence supporting the legitimacy of the government's decision. The sequence of data presentation, rationale, and authoritative statements forms a causal and logical flow of reasoning that normalizes the fuel price increase policy as a rational step in the face of rising global oil prices and the increasing subsidy burden.

Meanwhile, the closing section focuses on the reactions and socio-economic consequences of the decision, including Pertamina's response to guaranteeing fuel supply, concerns about inflation, and the responses of the public, workers, and students. Although the text mentions long lines at gas stations and public anxiety, the final section concludes on an optimistic and reassuring note, affirming the government's readiness and the ultimate goal of maintaining national economic stability. Thus, the structure of this news presentation demonstrates the use of an expository-argumentative discourse style to frame the fuel price increase policy as a rational, measured, and socially acceptable decision..

### 3.4 Micro Structure

Microstructural analysis focuses on how semantic, syntactic, stylistic, and rhetorical elements are used to shape meaning in news texts. Semantically, this news item emphasizes the presentation of data and figures, such as the 30 percent increase in fuel prices, detailed prices for Pertalite and diesel, and the increase in subsidies to IDR 502 trillion in 2022. This data is reinforced by quotes from high-ranking state officials President Joko Widodo, Minister of Finance Sri Mulyani, and the Governor of Bank Indonesia which enhance the impression that the news is presented objectively and credibly. This presentation makes the text appear scientific and fact-based, thus guiding readers to accept government policies as logical and legitimate.

Syntactically, the sentences in the news item are structured concisely, clearly, and logically. For example, clauses such as "The government raised subsidized fuel prices by about 30 percent" and "The subsidy budget had tripled in 2022 to IDR 502 trillion" demonstrate an active voice pattern that directly emphasizes government action. This systematic sentence structure helps create an impression of bureaucratic openness and efficiency, and reinforces the view that the fuel price increase decision was made rationally.

Stylistically, the choice of words such as "last option," "monitoring," and "commitment" portrays the government as cautious, responsible, and concerned about the people. Meanwhile, technical terms like "inflation," "policy rate," and "budgetary strain" emphasize that the discourse is technocratic, rather than emotional. This style makes the text appear professional, but also suggests that the government's perspective is more dominant than the public's.

Rhetorically, the text structure demonstrates an imbalance in the presentation. The voices of government and economic officials dominate the beginning and middle of the news, while the voices of the opposition, workers, and students appear only at the end, with a small portion. Sentences such as "The opposition Labor Party has arranged a protest..." serve only as a supplement, not a counterbalance to the discourse. This placement serves to emphasize the government's policy as reasonable and reduce the impression of conflict.

Overall, the microstructure of this text demonstrates a discourse strategy that seeks to normalize government decisions through the presentation of factual data, a formal style, and a structure that prioritizes state authority over the public voice.

### 3.5 CDA Implication on The Jakarta Post News on Hiking Oil Price

The CDA findings on The Jakarta Post articles revealed discourse patterns consistent with media bias in reporting on government economic policies in Indonesia. These results reinforce the findings of several previous studies (Alfi Arifin & Basuki, 2018; Afifah, 2016; Abdullah, 2021; Anshori, 2021; Ar-Rasyid & Yuniaty, 2021; Benmetan & Setyowibowo, 2021; Mukhlis et al., 2020; Musrichah, 2020), which assert that official government representations often dominate media discourse structures. In this context, the media not

only serves as a conveyor of information but also as an agent of public policy legitimacy through linguistic constructions that emphasize rationality, responsibility, and economic stability.

The implication is that news texts such as those analyzed demonstrate that media discourse contributes to the formation of public opinion that tends to support the government's narrative. The organization of information in an expository-argumentative structure, technocratic diction, and the selection of sources from among officials and economists demonstrate the practice of discursive legitimization as described by Fairclough (2013) and van Dijk (2012) that serves to strengthen state authority in the public sphere. Thus, The Jakarta Post not only reports but also reproduces the government's political-economic ideology through deliberate linguistic and rhetorical strategies.

However, the main difference between this research and previous studies lies in its more in-depth analysis of the text's internal discourse structure (macro, super, and micro), rather than simply general biased tendencies. While previous research focused more on the quantitative aspects of news bias or the media's political orientation, this analysis explores how policy legitimacy is constructed through the form, structure, and lexical choices within news texts. This approach demonstrates that media bias emerges not only at the content level (content bias), but also through discursive framing and semiotic strategies that construct the meaning of government policy legitimacy.

Thus, the results of this study broaden our understanding of how the media plays a role in framing economic issues as issues of state rationality, rather than socio-political conflict. These findings provide a theoretical contribution to critical discourse studies in Indonesia by emphasizing the importance of multi-level analysis of news texts including macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure to identify forms of symbolic power in the practice of reporting on economic policy.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study concludes that The Jakarta Post's article on the increase in subsidized fuel prices constructs a narrative that rationalizes and legitimizes government authority through economic discourse. Although the text acknowledges social impacts such as potential demonstrations and reduced purchasing power, the reporting style emphasizes the government's decision as a reasonable and responsible step to maintain the country's fiscal stability. This indicates an ideological tendency where journalistic neutrality shifts to normalizing the official government perspective.

Theoretically, this study strengthens the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in uncovering how linguistic choices such as selective citation, the use of technocratic terms, and hierarchical organization patterns function to maintain power relations and reinforce dominant narratives. These findings suggest that English-language media in Indonesia are not entirely free from national ideology but play a role in shaping public acceptance through the rationalization of economic policies. Practically, the results of this study emphasize the importance of critical media literacy, particularly in reading economic news, which often presents government decisions as inevitable truths. Readers need to be able to question how the media frames government actions as rational and wise, so that public discourse can develop into a more reflective and democratic one.

For future research, a comparative critical discourse analysis of various media outlets in Indonesia, both English-language and Indonesian-language, is recommended to examine how ideological orientations and linguistic strategies influence the representation of government policies. Such cross-media studies will enrich our understanding of symbolic power, ideological reproduction, and public persuasion strategies in Indonesia's multilingual media landscape.

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