
Blaming, Resisting, and Reframing Authority: A Pragmatic Critical Discourse Analysis of Instagram Narratives during Flood Disasters in Sumatra

Herlin Triana^{a1}, Vivi Indriyani^b, Amelia Yuli Astuti^c, Ratih Purwasih^d

^{ab}Universitas Negeri Padang, Padang, Indonesia

^cUniversitas Ekasakti, Padang, Indonesia

^dUniversitas Metamedia, Padang, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Public discourse on social media has given rise to various narratives that often spark debate and influence public perceptions of information. This study aims to examine pragmatic patterns and discursive constructions in social media narratives related to disaster events, with a focus on how users construct, challenge, and reframe authority. This study employs an interpretive qualitative approach using Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which encompasses text analysis, discursive practices, and social practices. Data in the form of Instagram posts were analyzed step-by-step through the identification of linguistic elements, patterns of discourse production and distribution, and their connection to the broader social context. A pragmatic approach was used to identify speech acts, implicatures, and attitude constructions in digital discourse. The research findings indicate that disaster discourse is constructed through evaluative lexical strategies, irony, metaphors, and visual reinforcement that represent ecological crises and social inequalities. Audience responses exhibit dominant patterns of blaming, resisting, and reframing, which consistently appear in comments, likes, and content shares. These findings confirm that social media functions as a discursive arena that not only represents the reality of disasters but also shapes collective criticism of policies, power, and environmental management.

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1. Introduction

A natural disaster is defined as a natural hazard that results in damage, such as earthquakes, floods, fires, and other disasters (Agrawal, 2018). Disasters can occur repeatedly and without warning. Today, disasters not only cause physical and economic damage but also impact the social and psychological well-being of communities. Over the past few decades, the increased frequency and intensity of disasters primarily due to climate change and environmental vulnerabilities have

¹ herlin_triana@fbs.unp.ac.id (Triana)

weakened the ability of affected communities to recover and adapt sustainably (Twigg, 2004; Ardalan & Affun-Adegbulu, 2024). One adaptation effort is carried out through communication. In Indonesia, particularly in the Sumatra region one of the areas experiencing recurring flood disasters are no longer understood merely as natural events but as social phenomena continuously interpreted through public communication. Communities respond to natural disasters through culturally shaped speech and writing (Bromhead, 2021). In this way, communities can express the situations and conditions they experience when a disaster occurs. One of the media platforms utilized is social media.

Social media, particularly Instagram, has become a vital space for the public to share their experiences, assessments, and reactions to the floods, including expressing emotions, evaluating the performance of authorities, and assigning responsibility. Through linguistic practices in this digital space, the flood disaster is discursively produced and debated; thus, an analysis of language use and discourse construction is essential to understanding how disasters are not only experienced materially but also shaped as social realities within public communication (Costa, R. O., 2025; Guidry et al., 2017). Research indicates that Instagram and other social media platforms play a strategic role in crisis situations, particularly in disseminating information widely while fostering public engagement. These platforms function not only as channels for message delivery but also as spaces for interaction that enable institutions and the public to connect in responding to health issues and disasters. Using social media, information can be conveyed quickly, in an educational manner, and can influence audience perceptions and participation in dealing with emergency situations (Houston et al., 2015; Veil et al., 2011). Thus, the flow of information on Instagram is not neutral but is laden with interests, emotions, and ideological positions that shape how the public understands an event.

In the context of disasters in West Sumatra, conditions over the past few years have shown a trend toward increasingly widespread impacts, both in terms of human casualties and environmental and social damage. The flash floods and landslides that occurred in 2024 resulted in fatalities and damaged settlements and public facilities in various affected areas (BAZNAS West Sumatra, 2024). In the subsequent period, the scale of these disasters continued to escalate, marked by a rise in the number of victims to hundreds of people and the expansion of impacts felt by tens of thousands of residents across several regencies and cities (Katadata, 2025; Antara News, 2025). The resulting losses were also significant, particularly due to the damage to public infrastructure and community economic lands (Kabar Bursa, 2025). Additionally, the post-disaster situation gave rise to health issues, such as an increase in cases of diseases linked to poor sanitation and limited access to clean water (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025). Several scientific studies even emphasize that the disaster was not entirely caused by natural factors but was also linked to environmental degradation in the upstream areas and weak management of natural resources (Gadjah Mada University, 2025). Therefore, the disaster in West Sumatra cannot be understood merely as a natural event but must be viewed as a multidimensional issue closely tied to development policies and the surrounding social dynamics.

Within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), linguistic events are not understood as a neutral medium, but rather as social practices that are always intertwined with ideologies, interests, and power relations at work within society (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework examines language as a social practice that is not merely structural but is always related to power relations, ideologies, and social structures. From this perspective, the CDA approaches particularly through the three-dimensional model integrates linguistic analysis, discursive practices, and social context into a single analytical unit. At the first level, the textual dimension focuses on linguistic structures such as lexical choices, grammar, and rhetorical strategies used to represent social reality and direct specific interpretations. At the second level, the discursive practice dimension examines how texts are produced, disseminated, and consumed within the context of social interaction, including how language is used to shape identities, social positions, and power relations. Meanwhile, the social dimension examines the interconnection between discourse and broader social structures, such as institutions, ideologies, and history, thereby explaining how discourse functions in both maintaining and transforming social inequalities. Within this framework, texts are understood as arenas of ideological struggle that are never value-neutral, as every discourse production is always influenced by specific interests and contributes to the reproduction of power relations (Afrianto et al., 2025). Thus, the production of discourse including that found on social media platforms like Instagram can be viewed as an arena for both the representation and negotiation of power,

where social actors not only reproduce reality but also have the potential to challenge established dominance. In the digital context, this practice becomes increasingly evident because social media enables the public to become active producers of meaning, rather than merely passive recipients of information.

These dynamics become increasingly relevant when considered in the context of disasters, particularly the floods that frequently strike the Sumatra region. From a contemporary perspective, disasters are no longer viewed solely as natural phenomena, but as the result of complex interactions between ecological factors, development policies, and economic and political interests that influence the level of community vulnerability (Wisner et al., 2004). Consequently, disaster narratives emerging in the public sphere often contain not only information about the impacts but also criticism of government policies perceived as contributing to environmental degradation or inadequate disaster response. In this context, social media serves as a platform for articulation, creating opportunities for alternative voices to emerge beyond the state's official narrative. Existing literature research confirms that social media plays a significant role in disaster communication, particularly in accelerating information dissemination, coordinating aid, and fostering social solidarity amid crises (Simon et al., 2015). In the Indonesian context, similar findings indicate that digital platforms serve as the primary medium for the public to share firsthand experiences, shape risk perceptions, and openly evaluate government policies (Nugroho et al., 2020). However, most of these studies remain focused on instrumental aspects of communication such as information flow and sentiment analysis and thus have not yet fully explored how language is used as a tool for critique, resistance, and the negotiation of meaning within broader power dynamics.

Recent research indicates that social media, particularly Instagram, has become a strategic medium for disaster communication, both during the preparedness phase and the crisis response phase. A study conducted by Maretyana and Hidayat (2025) confirms that the management of institutional accounts, such as those of the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), can raise public awareness through structured communication strategies, despite facing resource constraints. Similar findings are also highlighted by Gelgel et al. (2024), who underscore the effectiveness of Instagram in conveying disaster preparedness information through informative and persuasive visual content. Meanwhile, Ismail and Suldani (2024) demonstrate that social media plays a crucial role in accelerating information distribution and flood response coordination, though this is accompanied by challenges such as the potential for misinformation. In a global context, Mızrak (2024) reveals that the use of social media during disasters not only aids in information dissemination and aid mobilization but also generates psychological impacts and issues regarding trust in information. Furthermore, Erokhin and Komendantova (2024) position social media as a vital data source in disaster risk analysis through a big data-driven approach. Nevertheless, the existing research tends to focus primarily on the functional, managerial, and analytical aspects of social media use in disaster communication. Few studies have specifically examined how narratives produced by the public on social media function as discursive practices that represent power relations, critiques of authority, and efforts to reframe the reality of disasters. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by positioning Instagram as a site of meaning production analyzed through a pragmatic approach and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), thereby revealing in greater depth the strategies of blaming, resisting, and reframing within public narratives as forms of negotiation and resistance against power in the context of the flood disaster in Sumatra.

Nuswantara's (2019) study on the visualization of hashtags on Instagram using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model. The study explains that hashtags on social media can shape social movements, solidarity, and discursive practices through the interplay between text, visuals, and social practices. However, the research focus remains on the use of hashtags as a representation of broader social and digital cultural phenomena, thus failing to examine linguistic strategies, implicatures, and community resistance practices against power within the context of disaster communication. Furthermore, most previous studies have tended to use digital communication and CDCA approaches separately without integrating a pragmatic approach to decipher hidden meanings, ideological positions, and community speech strategies in digital spaces.

Research on social media and disaster communication indicates that the digital space has largely been understood as a medium for disseminating information, fostering solidarity, and shaping public opinion regarding an event. Most previous studies have focused on practical communication

functions, such as message distribution, media visualization, and user interaction patterns; consequently, the use of language as a form of social critique, negotiation of meaning, and resistance to authority has not received adequate attention. In the context of recurring floods in Sumatra, public discourse on social media not only contains information about the impact of the disaster but also includes various expressions of dissatisfaction with environmental policies, development governance, and the government's response, which is perceived as failing to comprehensively resolve the issue. This situation demonstrates that social media has evolved into a discursive space where the public channels social experiences, builds critical assessments, and questions power relations in the digital public sphere. Furthermore, previous research generally still separates pragmatic and Critical Discourse Analysis approaches in interpreting digital communication phenomena, so that the implicit meanings, speech strategies, and ideological positions of the public within social media narratives have not yet been comprehensively explored. In fact, the language choices made by social media users often carry symbolic meanings that reflect rejection, criticism, and efforts to reframe reality based on their own social experiences. Therefore, this study offers a fresh perspective by positioning Instagram as a space for the production of critical discourse among post-disaster communities through practices of blaming, resisting, and reframing the government, integrating a pragmatic approach with Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis to uncover the relationship between language, ideology, power, and the social experiences of communities in the context of disasters.

Meanwhile, in the context of this research, CDA studies in Indonesia tend to focus more on mainstream media discourse or formal political communication, so attention to discourse production by the public on social media remains relatively limited. In fact, the digital space reveals more dynamic and complex discursive practices, such as "blaming," which directs responsibility toward specific actors; "resisting," which demonstrates rejection of authority; and "reframing," which reinterprets the reality of a disaster from the public's perspective. These practices not only reflect linguistic choices but also reveal ideological positions and the public's critical awareness in confronting power structures (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Furthermore, the pragmatic approach in disaster discourse studies has yet to be fully utilized, particularly in analyzing speech act strategies, implicatures, and stance constructions in digital interactions. In fact, a pragmatic perspective allows for the exploration of implicit meanings and communicative intentions that are often hidden behind the text (Levinson, 1983; Thomas, 1995). The integration of pragmatics and CDA is important because it reveals how language is used not only to convey information but also to critique, challenge, and deconstruct the legitimacy of authority in the digital public sphere.

Furthermore, there is a gap in the global literature, as studies on social media-based disaster communication are still dominated by contexts in developed countries, while developing countries like Indonesia which have high levels of disaster vulnerability have not yet been critically examined to a significant extent. In fact, the social, cultural, and political complexities in Indonesia lend a unique dimension to the formation of disaster discourse, particularly in the relationship between society, the state, and the environment. Against this backdrop, this study aims to examine how narratives emerging on Instagram during the floods in Sumatra shape discursive practices that reflect power relations between the public and the government. The primary focus of this study is on the strategies of blaming, resisting, and reframing as forms of social criticism, analyzed through a pragmatic approach and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Thus, this study is expected to fill a gap in research within the fields of critical linguistics and disaster communication, while also providing a conceptual contribution to the development of social media-based discourse analysis that is more contextual and reflective.

2. Methods

This study employs an interpretive qualitative approach aimed at examining the meanings that emerge in social practices, particularly within digital communication spaces. This approach aligns with Creswell's (2014) perspective, which emphasizes that qualitative research focuses on the interpretation of phenomena from the participants' perspective, and is further supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2018), who view qualitative research as a process of interpreting reality within its natural context. In its implementation, this study utilizes the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

approach developed by Fairclough (2010), which views language as part of social practice closely linked to ideology and power relations. The analysis was conducted using a three-dimensional framework encompassing text, discursive practices, and social practices, thereby enabling a comprehensive examination ranging from linguistic aspects to the surrounding social context. This approach is also supported by Wodak and Meyer (2016), who emphasize the importance of linking linguistic structure with social context to critically uncover meaning.

The research data was sourced from Instagram posts and user responses related to disaster issues, government policies, and social dynamics in the post-disaster period. Data collection took place from November 2025 to January 2026, a period during which public discussions regarding disaster management and the government's response were intensifying on social media. Data selection was performed using purposive sampling, which involves intentionally selecting data based on its relevance to the research focus. Data criteria included posts containing criticism, opinions, or public responses to the post-disaster situation; posts with high levels of interaction through comments and likes; and posts demonstrating public engagement in shaping digital discourse.

The determination of the data volume for this study was conducted by considering the principle of data sufficiency in qualitative research and was validated through analysis using the GPower tool. Faul et al. (2007) explains that power analysis serves to assess the adequacy of the sample size so that the analysis conducted has sufficient capacity to support the accuracy of research results and optimally detect trends in effects. Based on these considerations, this study collected 80 data points in the form of Instagram posts and comments related to the narrative of the Sumatra floods. Data collection was conducted purposefully, considering the level of public response, such as the number of comments, likes, the intensity of post sharing, and the relevance of the narrative content to the research focus. From the overall data collected, the researchers then selected the most representative data for in-depth analysis based on the intensity of public responses, linguistic patterns, and recurring discourse themes emerging in digital spaces. This step was taken to ensure that the analyzed data could illustrate the dynamics of criticism, resistance, and how the public constructs meaning regarding government policies in disaster situations. Additionally, the volume of data used met the minimum parameters for GPower analysis—with a significance level of 0.05, a moderate effect size, and a statistical power of 0.80—thereby deemed sufficient to support the depth and consistency of the research analysis conducted.

This study utilizes data in the form of Instagram posts and comments that are publicly available in the digital public sphere; therefore, the data collection process was conducted without involving direct interaction or active participation from the social media users who were the subjects of the study. Consequently, the study did not require formal ethical approval because the analyzed data originated from public information and did not involve in-depth collection of personal data. Nevertheless, the study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles in digital research by limiting data use to content relevant to the research focus, maintaining the anonymity of social media users, and avoiding the dissemination of information that could potentially harm specific parties. These measures were taken to ensure that the research process respects user privacy, upholds academic responsibility, and maintains scientific integrity in the use of data within the public digital sphere.

The analysis process was conducted in a step-by-step and systematic manner. The first stage involved textual analysis focusing on linguistic elements, such as word choice, sentence structure, metaphors, and rhetorical strategies used in the posts. The second stage focused on the analysis of discursive practices specifically, how the text is produced, disseminated, and responded to by users through interactive features such as comments, likes, and content sharing. The third stage is a social practice analysis that links linguistic findings to a broader context, such as environmental policy, disaster management, and power relations between the public and the government (Fairclough, 2010). In this stage, a pragmatic approach is used to identify speech acts, implicatures, and attitude constructions that reflect the speaker's ideological stance within digital discourse (Yule, 2020). The analysis employs data reduction, categorization, and critical interpretation to identify discursive patterns such as blaming, resisting, and reframing as forms of social critique. The analysis results

are presented in a descriptive-interpretive manner, featuring anonymized Instagram posts that have been linguistically and contextually analyzed. This presentation connects microlinguistic aspects with macro-social structures, thereby demonstrating how discourse on social media not only represents reality but also plays a role in shaping, negotiating, and even challenging power in disaster situations.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on findings from disaster-related posts identified across various accounts—including media, personal, and community accounts that disseminated information regarding public criticism of the disasters in West Sumatra, Aceh, and North Sumatra during November–December 2025. Using the Critical Discourse Analysis framework (Fairclough, 2010; Wodak & Meyer, 2016), the analysis was conducted across three dimensions: text, discursive practices, and social practices, and was supplemented with a pragmatic approach to identify implicit meanings and communicative intentions. The data that received the most responses are as follows:

3.1 Data 1

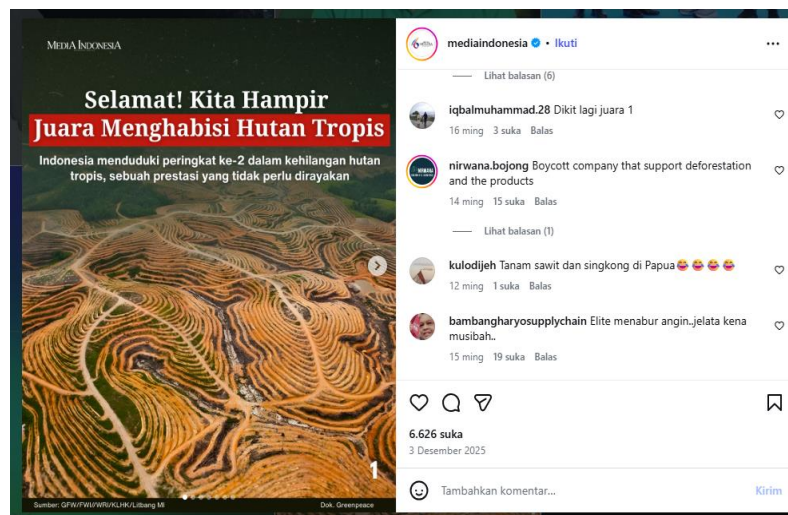


Figure 1. Post from @mediaindonesia

A post from @mediaindonesia titled “*Congratulations! We’re Almost Champions at Destroying the Rainforest*” represents a robust practice of critical discourse analysis in the context of environmental and disaster-related issues. In the text, the use of the word “*Congratulations!*” conveys a meaning that pragmatically functions as an expressive speech act with a sarcastic undertone. Furthermore, the phrase “*destroy the rainforest*” It features evaluative lexical choices that signify intentional destructive actions. The resulting implicature suggests that environmental damage is not merely a natural phenomenon, but rather the result of structured human actions. Visually, the earthy brown and gray tones which, semiotically, represent ruin, aridity, and the loss of life are employed. In visual grammar theory, these colors fall into the low modality category, which diminishes the impression of naturalness and instead emphasizes the state of degradation (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In terms of discursive practices, this post received 6,626 likes, which can be interpreted as a form of social response to the narrative presented. Supported by audience comments, this indicates the production of further discourse that can be classified into three main patterns. First, blaming, which is evident in comments such as “*Who is responsible?*” and “*This couldn’t have been done by an individual it must have been a large company*”, which, pragmatically speaking, is a representative speech act that assigns responsibility to a specific actor. Second, resisting, which manifests through direct criticism such as “*You get why we didn’t dare to declare a state of emergency, right?*”, which demonstrate a rejection of the dominant narrative and reflect expressive speech acts with ideological content. The declaration of a national disaster essentially

has a clear normative basis as stipulated in Law No. 24 of 2007, which emphasizes key indicators such as loss of life, material losses, infrastructure damage, the extent of the affected area, and socio-economic impacts. In the context of the floods and landslides in Sumatra, various reports indicate hundreds of fatalities across regions, widespread damage to settlements and infrastructure, and disruption of the community's socio-economic activities, which substantially meet these criteria (Detik, 2025; BNPB, 2025). This situation is further exacerbated by hindered aid distribution, the isolation of certain areas, and the limited capacity of local governments to manage the disaster independently factors that, in theory, form the basis for elevating the status to a national disaster (South Pesisir Regency Government, 2024). Empirical facts on the ground, such as the disruption of national road access and delays in evacuating victims, reinforce the mismatch between actual conditions and policy decisions, thereby sparking public responses in the form of criticism and resistance in digital spaces. On the other hand, public accusations against large corporations as actors contributing to environmental damage also have academic and normative grounds, given that various studies demonstrate a close link between deforestation in Sumatra and the expansion of large-scale extractive industries involving networks of national and global corporations (Kaoem Telapak, 2024). Within the legal framework, the "polluter pays" principle and strict liability, as stipulated in Law No. 32 of 2009, affirm that businesses remain liable for the environmental impacts they cause, even without proof of fault (Dandapala, 2025). Third, reframing, evident in comments linking deforestation to systemic impacts such as floods, deaths, and ecosystem damage, thereby reframing the disaster because of economic-political relations. Overall, this data indicates that Instagram posts serve not only as a medium for conveying information but also as an active discursive space in shaping, expanding, and sharpening social critique. From a CDA perspective, the resulting discourse reflects a negotiation of meaning between the media, society, and power structures. Meanwhile, from a pragmatic perspective, the use of irony, implicature, and implicit evaluation indicates that the constructed meaning is indirect yet ideologically potent. Thus, these posts can be understood as a form of discursive practice containing strategies of blaming, resisting, and reframing, which collectively represent public criticism of authority in the context of environmental degradation and disasters.

3.2 Data 2



Figure 2. Post from @perspektiv.idn

In this text, the use of the word “allow” carries strong ideological implications because it implies state approval of deforestation practices. Pragmatically, this statement functions as a representative discursive act that conveys both factual and evaluative claims. The mention of the figure “1.64 million hectares” employs a quantification strategy that serves to reinforce the legitimacy of the information while creating a cognitive effect that conveys the immense scale of the damage. The phrase “cleared to make way for oil palm plantations” contains negative and evaluative terminology that implicitly portrays economic activities as environmentally destructive. The resulting implication suggests that ecological damage is the result of policy decisions, not merely a natural consequence.

Visually, the use of red for keywords such as “Permit” and “1.64 million hectares” serves as an indicator of urgency and danger. In visual grammar theory (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), red is often associated with warnings, conflict, and crisis, thereby reinforcing the negative framing of the actions described. Meanwhile, the image background depicting a barren landscape dominated by brown and gray tones symbolizes ecological degradation and the loss of natural vegetation. The inclusion of a political figure’s photo within the visual frame adds a dimension of personalization, which semiotically links a specific individual to environmental destruction practices. This combination produces multimodal coherence, where text and visuals work synergistically to construct a sharp critical narrative. Within the national legal framework, Law No. 32 of 2009 affirms the principles of strict liability and “the polluter pays,” stating that companies remain liable for the environmental damage they cause. From a discursive practice perspective, this post received 502,000 likes, indicating a very high level of public resonance. From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this figure reflects the social legitimacy of narratives critical of state policies. The practice of blame is evident through direct attribution to political actors and state institutions, which are viewed as the authorities responsible for issuing permits. Resistance manifests as criticism of the policy and distrust of the government, indicating the presence of a counter-discourse to the development narrative. Meanwhile, reframing occurs when the audience links the policy to systemic impacts such as flooding, ecosystem damage, and broader environmental crises.

3.3 Data 3



Figure 3: Post From @Hanafisputra25

In terms of the text, sentence structure “Disasters are not a matter of fate” is a form of ideological negation that pragmatically functions as both a declarative and an argumentative speech act. This statement directly rejects cultural constructs that view disasters as acts of nature or divine

will. Implicitly, the statement directs the reader toward an alternative interpretation: that disasters are the result of social and political processes. The following phrase “*a series of poor political decisions*” demonstrates an evaluative lexical strategy that directly targets structural actors, namely policymakers. From a pragmatic perspective, this constitutes a representative speech act containing critical judgment, while in CDA, this structure indicates an effort to challenge the prevailing view that disasters are unrelated to human actions.

Visually, the use of bright orange for the word “DISASTERS ARE NOT DESTINY” serves as an indicator of urgency and a warning. In visual grammar theory (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), high-intensity colors such as orange have a strong ability to attract attention and are often used to signal emergency situations or crises. The background image, depicting a widespread flood situation with a predominance of dark colors (black and gray), reinforces the representation of suffering, destruction, and helplessness. The contrast between the light-colored text and the somber visuals creates a semiotic tension, prompting the audience to engage in a critical interpretation of the message being conveyed.

In the discursive practice section, the absence of comments indicates the limited nature of public verbal expression in this posting space. However, the presence of interaction indicators such as the number of likes and the share feature still reflects audience response. From a CDA perspective, this indicates that the legitimacy of discourse is not only constructed through explicit discussion (comments), but also through passive dissemination of an ideological or consensual nature in the form of a silent agreement. In other words, shares serve as an indicator that critical messages regarding political policies have gained sufficient social resonance to be disseminated.

3.4 Data 4

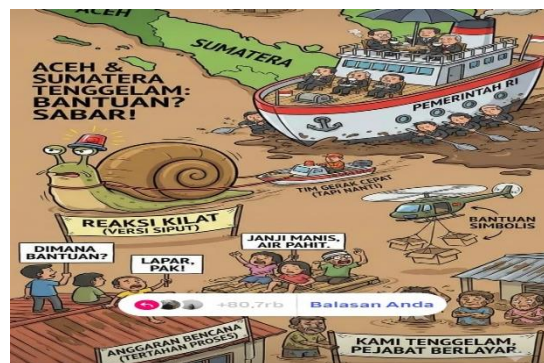


Figure 4: Post From @sudutbukittingi

In the text, sentences such as “*Aceh & Sumatra are flooded: help? Be patient!*” indicates the use of sarcastic language. Pragmatically speaking, this is not merely a question, but a form of criticism directed at the government’s slow response. Other sentences such as “*sweet promises, bitter reality*” reinforces the point that the promised policies do not align with the actual conditions on the ground. The expression “*We’re drowning, while officials sail on*” also highlights the disparity between the public and the elite, which indirectly points to inequality in disaster response. Visually, the illustration features a large ship bearing the inscription “*Government of Indonesia*” which continues to move forward amid the flood has become a symbol of power that remains unaffected by the disaster. Meanwhile, the public is depicted as drowning, calling for help, and facing dire circumstances. There is also an image of a snail with the caption “*Lightning-fast reaction, snail style*” which reinforces the impression that the government’s response was extremely slow. The brown and dark hues of the floodwater evoke a sense of filth, destruction, and discomfort, visually depicting the crisis. In contrast, elements such as helicopters and airdropped aid are labeled “*symbolic assistance*”, which suggests that the aid was considered insufficient or merely a formality. In terms of discursive practices, although there were no direct comments, the number of reactions and shares was quite high. This indicates that the message in this image was received and shared by many people. In this context, sharing can be understood as a form of indirect agreement. This means

that even though not everyone wrote a comment, they still helped spread the criticism. This indicates that the message conveyed in the image is easily understood and aligns with the public's experiences or perspectives. When viewed as a whole, the image emphasizes a reframing strategy, that is, changing the perspective on the disaster. Disasters are no longer seen as ordinary natural events, but as the result of inappropriate policies. Additionally, there is an element of blaming, as responsibility is directed at the government. Meanwhile, the element of resistance appears in the form of sarcasm and criticism that is repeatedly emphasized in both the text and visuals.

3.5 Data 5



Figure 5: Post from @nalarlogika.id

In the text, sentences such as “*Try to stay sane amidst all these crazy officials*” demonstrates highly evaluative and confrontational language. Pragmatically, this is an expressive speech act that conveys a negative judgment of the political elite. The word “*sane*” and “*crazy*” is used in contrast to create a semantic opposition between the public and officials. Additionally, the phrase “*This nation has weathered many trials and disasters*” used to create a semantic contrast between the public and officials. In addition, the phrase.

Visually, the dominance of red, black, and white reinforces the sense of crisis and anger. The red color used for keywords such as “disaster,” “resolution,” and “crazy official” serves as an emotional emphasis and a marker of urgency. In visual grammar theory (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), red is often used to indicate danger, conflict, and tension. The dark, textured background adds a sense of gloom and instability, visually reflecting the social conditions being criticized. This color combination makes the message feel harsher and more direct.

At the level of discursive practice, this post received 2,824 likes and several active comments. Comments from the audience indicate a predominantly critical response toward the government. A pattern of blame is clear in comments such as “The government should step down” and “Corruption in this country is getting out of hand,” which directly blame state institutions. Pragmatically, this constitutes a representative discursive act containing claims and evaluations. A pattern of resistance also emerges through comments such as “Criticizing officials doesn’t work,”

which indicates a lack of trust in the system. This reflects a form of resistance against the government's official narrative. Additionally, there is an element of reframing, where the audience links disasters and crises to corruption, policies, and leadership failures, thereby shifting the perspective on the causes of the problems.

Discussion

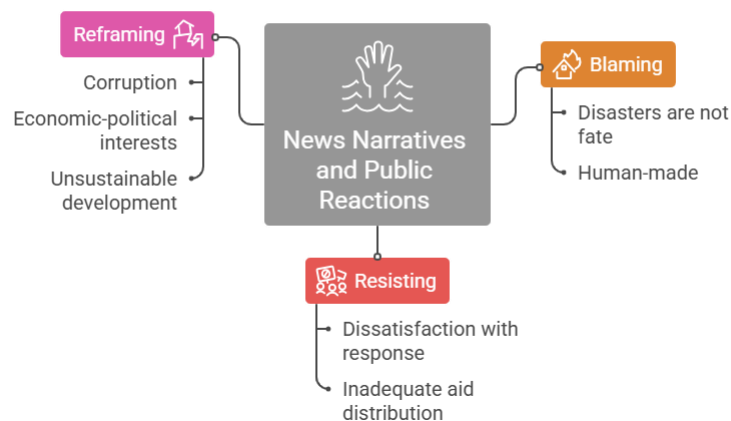
An analysis of all Instagram posts reveals that the discourse on disasters in Sumatra is not merely presented as information, but as a space of intense contestation of meaning among the media, the public, and those in power. From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), all posts exhibit a consistent pattern: the construction of disasters as the result of social, political, and economic relations, rather than merely natural phenomena.

Table 1. CDA Analysis of Various Posts Related to Disaster Discourse

Data Sources	Textual Aspects (Pragmatics)	Visual Aspects	Audience Response	Ideological Interpretation
@bijakbaikcom	Statements regarding budget cuts demonstrate a representative function that leads to criticism of public policy	The dominance of formal blue tones combined with a relaxed visual aesthetic creates a contrast in meaning	Public reactions have largely focused on abuses of power and allegations of cronyism	Highlighting issues with government policy and a lack of transparency
@ceritamedia	The phrase "without cameras" carries an implicit meaning as a form of self-defense on the part of the government	A visual comparison between helicopters and insects implies the manipulation of information	The comments were dominated by rejection and skepticism	Reflecting the public's crisis of confidence in the official narrative
@postinc.id	Communicating the impacts of energy serves both an informative purpose and provides an assessment of the situation	The combination of dark and yellow colors conveys a sense of warning about environmental threats	The audience responded critically and thoughtfully	Highlighting the tension between development needs and environmental sustainability
@databoks.id	The survey data is presented in an informative manner without any direct emotional bias	Visual diagram lingkaran menampilkan kesan objektivitas dan ilmiah	Responses tend to be neutral and data-driven	Criticism of the government is bolstered by data-backed legitimacy
@liputan6.sctv	A persuasive statement serves both a directive	A news-style visual layout enhances the	Comments directly assess the performance	Demonstrating public pressure for the government to

	function and as a critique of the state	impression of credibility	of government agencies	be more responsive
@jurnoliberta	The use of critical terminology reflects a sharp assessment of officials' communications	A symbolic illustration of a rat reinforces the meaning of corruption and elitism	The audience displayed a cynical attitude and blamed the authorities	Leading to the delegitimization of figures and power structures
@tirtoid	A cause-and-effect statement asserts that the disaster is linked to human actions	Images of rain and buildings depict the actual conditions of the disaster	The comment reattributes the cause to environmental factors	Framing disasters as the result of policy, not merely natural phenomena
@nalarlogika.id	Harsh and sarcastic remarks reflect strong emotions and direct criticism	The colors red and black emphasize a tense and crisis-ridden atmosphere	Public response in the form of criticism and rejection of the elite	Expressing collective anger toward those in power
@perspektiv.id	Information regarding land permits was presented as facts that led to criticism	Images of deforestation serve as concrete evidence of environmental damage	The high level of engagement indicates that the issue has garnered widespread attention	Reinforcing the narrative that the damage is structural
@egaputri2014	Rhetorical questions are used to express criticism of social conditions	The use of public figures and global symbols broadens the context of meaning	Comments tend to be emotional and political	Expressing criticism of the government's leadership and priorities

News Narratives and Public Reactions to Disaster in Sumatra



The findings reveal that the interpretation of disasters in Sumatra is no longer viewed as isolated natural events, but is shaped through the interplay of language, communication practices, and social conditions, as explained in the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach (Fairclough, 1995). The pattern of blaming indicates that the public actively assigns responsibility to specific actors, particularly the government and economic powers, which, within the CDA framework, can be understood as an effort to uncover the hidden power relations underlying the discourse (Van Dijk, 1998). The pattern of resisting reflects a form of rejection of the official narrative, signaling a gap between the public's actual experiences and the representations constructed by institutions. Meanwhile, reframing demonstrates that the public does not merely receive information but also reconstructs understanding by linking the disaster to broader issues such as political interests, corrupt practices, and unsustainable development trajectories, as discourse is understood as a means of shaping social reality (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In this context, media particularly social media function as open spaces that allow diverse voices to emerge and interact, so that the process of meaning production is no longer monopolized by specific institutions (Fairclough, 2010). This condition strengthens the practice of freedom of expression, as the public can directly voice criticism of policies and disaster management. Nevertheless, this freedom is also marked using harsh language, irony, and sharp judgments, which pragmatically serve to negotiate positions and power within the digital public sphere. Thus, through the CDA perspective, the disaster discourse that emerges not only reflects social reality but also serves as a means for the public to question, critique, and reinterpret the government's role in addressing disasters.

Several previous studies have shown that social media plays a significant role in shaping disaster discourse, both as a means of disseminating information and as a space to produce social meaning. A study by Pratama and Mustofa (2025) confirms that disaster narratives on Instagram are not neutral but are framed through ideological perspectives related to power relations and environmental policies. These findings align with those of Maretyana and Hidayat (2025) as well as Ismail and Suldani (2024), who demonstrate that social media is effective in disaster communication but has not yet fully bridged the gap between official information and community experiences on the ground. In a broader context, Widyastuti (2021) and Zein et al. (2024) assert that social media also functions as a space for public education regarding environmental issues and climate change, although it is often characterized by diverse interpretive dynamics. From a global perspective, Mızrak (2024) and Erokhin and Komendantova (2024) demonstrate that the use of social media during disasters is not only related to information needs but also reflects public emotional responses and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of disaster management. Meanwhile, Gokcimen and Das (2024) demonstrate that environmental discourse in digital media has evolved into a complex and multi-layered arena for the formation of public opinion. At the micro level, studies by Martutik et al. (2024) and Rabbani and Mahmood (2024) reveal that netizens' comments often take the form of negative evaluations, criticism, and even verbal attacks that pragmatically represent communication strategies such as blaming, rejecting, and reconstructing meaning.

When compared with the findings of this study, there appears to be both continuity and reinforcement of the perspective that disaster discourse on social media is not merely informative, but also ideological and critical. Nevertheless, this study makes a further contribution by simultaneously integrating critical, pragmatic, and multimodal discourse analysis within the context of the disaster in Sumatra. The results indicate that the dominant discourse patterns blaming, resisting, and reframing do not merely emerge as spontaneous reactions but as forms of collective meaning-making that reflect public awareness of the interconnections between disasters, government policies, and environmental exploitation. Thus, this study expands upon previous findings by demonstrating that social media, particularly Instagram, functions as a discursive arena that not only conveys the reality of the disaster but also shapes social criticism of power structures and environmental governance in a sharper and more systematic manner.

4. Conclusion

Based on the overall findings, an analysis of several Instagram posts reveals that disaster discourse does not appear as a neutral representation, but rather as a social construct laden with interests, ideological positions, and power relations. At the textual level, lexical choices, the use of metaphors, and rhetorical strategies such as irony and rhetorical questions serve to reinforce criticism of state actors and public policy. Visually, elements of color, symbols, and image composition serve to reinforce meanings that underscore a sense of crisis, instability, and ecological damage. Meanwhile, in discursive practice, audience interactions through responses such as comments, likes, and content sharing reveal the formation of a consistent discourse pattern: blaming, resisting, and reframing the dominant narrative. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this phenomenon underscores that social media functions as a space to produce meaning, enabling the public to negotiate and even challenge the state's symbolic authority, while simultaneously revealing the tension between official narratives and the public's empirical experiences. The reality shaped by the media is no longer one-sided. The implications of these findings highlight the importance of critical literacy in interpreting digital information, as well as the need for transparency and consistency in public communication to prevent the deepening of a crisis of trust. For future research, it is recommended to expand the scope of data analysis using technology-based multimodal approaches such as natural language processing, and to examine the relationship between digital discourse issues and their impact on the formation of public opinion and disaster management policies in a more comprehensive manner.

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