Critical Discourse Analysis of Free Nutritious Meal Policy: A Study Social Media X

Bayu Aulia Priyantomo[1]*,

Universitas Wijaya Putra

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*Correspondence Address:
bayuaulia@uwp.ac.id

Abstract: The Free Nutritious Meal (Makan Bergizi Gratis/MBG) policy is one of the Indonesian government's flagship programs to improve students' nutrition and reduce food inequality. However, since its early implementation, the program has generated diverse responses on social media platform X (Twitter), ranging from support and optimism to criticism and politicized debate. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining big data analytics using NoLimit Indonesia with qualitative inquiry through Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Data were collected from public conversations between February 1–28, 2025, using the keywords "Makan Bergizi Gratis," "MBG," and "free lunch." The findings reveal three orientations in public discourse: positive sentiment highlighting community participation, social solidarity, and long-term development goals; negative sentiment criticizing weak governance, lack of transparency, and political populism; and neutral sentiment expressed through factual reporting and reflection. CDA shows that MBG is not merely a technical nutrition policy but a contested arena of ideology and political legitimacy. Based on these findings, the study recommends strengthening transparency and accountability, ensuring participation, and implementing evidence-based communication strategies to reduce polarization and enhance MBG's legitimacy as an accountable and socially relevant policy.

INTRODUCTION

The Free Nutritious Meal (*Makan Bergizi Gratis*/MBG) program is one of the flagship initiatives of the central government under the supervision of the National Nutrition Agency (BGN), aimed at improving students' nutritional quality and reducing disparities in food access. However, in practice, during its initial stages of socialization, the policy has drawn diverse public responses: ranging from support and criticism to intense debates in the digital sphere, particularly on social media platform X. Various issues such as delayed distribution, questionable food quality, concerns over cost transparency, and even mass food poisoning incidents have become the subject of public discourse, further reinforcing the polarization of opinion.

Social media, especially X (formerly Twitter), has become the most dynamic arena for discussing MBG. The platform provides a space for government, media, academics, activists, influencers, and the public to produce and disseminate discourse. Within this space, MBG is not only treated as a nutrition program but also as a political, economic, and even moral issue. At this point, critical discourse analysis becomes crucial, as the language used in digital conversations is not neutral but loaded with meaning, ideology, and power relations.

According to Norman Fairclough (1992; 1995), discourse can be analyzed through three dimensions: (1) the text, which examines linguistic structure, word choice, and rhetoric; (2) discursive practice, which refers to how texts are produced, distributed, and interpreted; and (3) social practice, which considers the socio-political context that underpins and gives meaning to the discourse. This approach allows us to see MBG not merely as a technical policy but as a contested arena of meaning: the government frames MBG as proof of state care, while parts of society frame it as an electoral political project or populist policy.

Recent studies have illustrated this clearly. Suhaeni et al. (2025) found through topic modeling that public discourse on MBG in YouTube encompasses three major themes: concerns over distribution, social benefits, and political reactions. Ati & Prasetyaningrum (2025), using sentiment analysis on Twitter (X) with Naïve Bayes, SVM, and K-NN algorithms, identified a dominance of negative sentiment, indicating public dissatisfaction with the policy.

Similarly, Vebrian & Kustiyono (2025), who analyzed 501 comments on X using Naïve Bayes, found that public sentiment is more complex, particularly regarding food distribution. Fauziah (2025) highlighted that the government is relatively absent in digital conversations, leaving the public sphere dominated by citizen criticism and media framing. This aligns with the findings of Fajar Maulana & Arroyan (2025)on the existence of narrative fractures: the government's official narrative emphasizing the program's benefits is not aligned with public experiences and perceptions on social media.

This phenomenon cannot be separated from Indonesia's socio-political context. As noted by Bayu Ade et al. (2025), neutral discourse on social media often

shifts into identity-based and electoral political debates. This shows the potential for MBG to become a political commodity, particularly in the run-up to elections. The studies Khairul Syafuddin (2025) and Akromi & Santika (2024) reinforce the importance of critical discourse analysis, as linguistic strategies, framing, and metaphors used by political actors play a significant role in shaping public perception of the policy.

The state of the art, novelty, and mixed method wkapproaches in research on MBG in social media have developed significantly over the last three years, especially through sentiment analysis and machine learning approaches. Several studies have employed algorithms such as Naïve Bayes (Vebrian & Kustiyono, 2025), LSTM Amara et al. (2025), C4.5 Algorithm (Hanin & Maryam, 2025), BI-LSTM (Attaulah & Soyusiawaty, 2025), and Logistic Regression (Asro & Sudaryono, 2024). These studies show that public discourse on MBG is polarized into positive, negative, and neutral sentiments, with a tendency toward criticism of technical implementation and transparency issues. However, such studies have not addressed the deeper discursive aspects of how language, narratives, and ideology are deployed to shape public opinion.

This article offers novelty by integrating Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with big data analytics of social media. The collected data is not only analyzed statistically but also treated as representations of public narratives that can be interpreted through Fairclough's three levels of analysis: text, discursive practice, and social practice. Through this approach, the study aims to uncover power relations, legitimacy, and ideology embedded in digital conversations about MBG.

Another novel aspect lies in the use of NoLimit Indonesia as a research tool, employing the BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) algorithm. While the platform has been mostly used in marketing or trend mapping, this study innovatively employs it to support the CDA framework. This enables the integration of qualitative interpretive depth with quantitative data breadth.

The MBG policy has become one of the government's strategic programs that has sparked extensive discourse on social media X. On one hand, the program is viewed as a progressive step toward improving the nutritional quality and health

of the younger generation. On the other hand, it has attracted widespread criticism, ranging from technical distribution problems, potential inefficiency in budgeting, to issues of transparency. The dynamics of public opinion have shaped a digital discourse arena that not only reflects societal attitudes but also influences the legitimacy and sustainability of the policy.

Previous research on MBG in social media has largely focused on mapping public sentiment using quantitative approaches based on machine learning algorithms. While these findings highlight tendencies in positive, negative, and neutral opinions, they remain limited in exploring how meaning, ideology, and power relations are constructed within public discourse. Yet, digital discourse does not merely reflect perceptions; it also becomes a symbolic battleground that determines acceptance or rejection of policy.

Therefore, the research questions in this study are: (1) How are sentiment configurations, dominant topics, and patterns of public interaction regarding the MBG policy on social media X shaped through big data analysis using NoLimit Indonesia? and (2) How are meaning, ideology, and power relations constructed within MBG discourse on social media X based on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis? By posing these questions, the study aims not only to statistically map public opinion but also to delve deeper into how digital narratives construct, reinforce, or weaken the legitimacy of MBG policy within the discursive arena of social media.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a mixed-methods design by integrating quantitative big data analysis of social media X through NoLimit Indonesia with qualitative analysis using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Public conversations containing the keywords "Makan Bergizi Gratis," "MBG," and "free lunch" were collected from February 1–28, 2025. The quantitative stage involved sentiment analysis, topic modeling, and actor network analysis to map public opinion, while the qualitative stage applied CDA at the levels of text, discursive practice, and social practice to uncover meaning, ideology, and power relations.

This integration enables a comprehensive understanding of how digital narratives shape the legitimacy of the MBG policy.
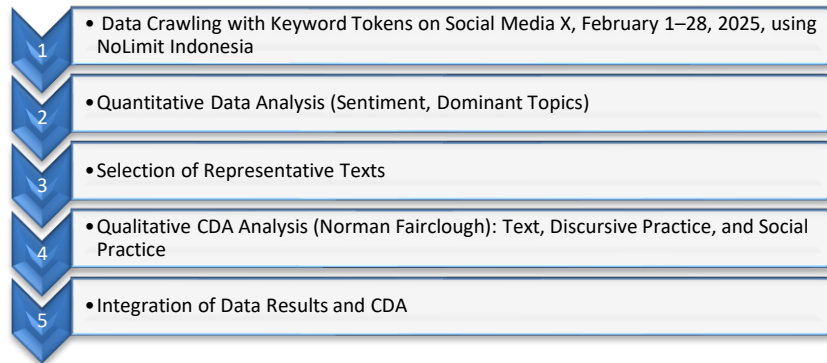

1. • Data Crawling with Keyword Tokens on Social Media X, February 1–28, 2025, using NoLimit Indonesia
2. • Quantitative Data Analysis (Sentiment, Dominant Topics)
3. • Selection of Representative Texts
4. • Qualitative CDA Analysis (Norman Fairclough): Text, Discursive Practice, and Social Practice
5. • Integration of Data Results and CDA

Figure 1. Research Process Flowchart

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theoritical Framework

a. Public Policy and Legitimacy

Public policy is not merely viewed as an administrative instrument, but also as a political process laden with social meaning and discourse. Policy legitimacy, as stated by Suchman (1995), is obtained through public acceptance of policies that are perceived as aligned with societal values, norms, and expectations. In the context of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) program, social media platform X becomes a discursive arena where the public negotiates support or opposition toward the policy. Recent studies such as Kiwi et al. (2025) and Du et al. (2022) have extended the application of this theory in the context of organizational and public legitimacy in the digital era.

b. Social Media as a Discursive Arena

According to Castells (2009), digital media creates a networked public sphere that enables the rapid and massive production and reproduction of meaning. Social media X is not only a communication medium but also a contested space where narratives about MBG are produced, disseminated, and debated. Big data analysis of social media allows researchers to

understand patterns of sentiment, dominant topics, and actor networks that shape public opinion.

c. Critical Discourse Analysis

Norman Fairclough (1992; 1995) offers a comprehensive framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), where language is not only regarded as a tool of communication but also as a medium that constructs meaning, ideology, and power relations. CDA, according to Fairclough, consists of three interrelated dimensions of analysis: text, discursive practice, and social practice.

d. Big Data Analysis of Social Media

Big data analysis of social media has become an important approach to understanding the dynamics of public discourse surrounding the MBG policy. According to Bazzaz Abkenar et al. (2021), social media generates massive-scale data with five key characteristics: volume, velocity, variety, veracity, and value. Thus, it is highly suitable for mapping patterns of public communication. (Umbu Zogara, 2025) emphasizes that social media mining techniques such as sentiment analysis, topic modeling, and social network analysis can uncover dominant issues, key actors, and public perceptions. Saputra et al. (2022) argue that big data, with its diverse sources and rapid growth, requires effective computational methods to be transformed into meaningful information. Meanwhile, Andryani et al. (2019) highlight that user-generated content on social media can be analyzed to understand public perceptions and behaviors toward specific phenomena. In the context of MBG, big data analysis of social media X enables researchers not only to classify public sentiment (positive, negative, neutral) but also to map key issues such as nutrition, logistics, budgeting, and politics, as well as to trace how policy discourses are produced and contested. Therefore, this approach provides a comprehensive picture of how the MBG policy is perceived, interpreted, and positioned within the digital discursive arena.

Results of Negative, Positive, and Neutral Sentiments

The analysis of public conversation data on social media platform X regarding the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) policy shows a diverse distribution of sentiments. In general, public discussions can be mapped into three main categories: positive, negative, and neutral
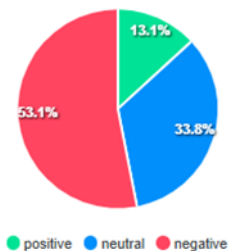

Figure 1. Diagram of Negative, Positive, and Neutral Sentiments
(Source: NoLimit Indonesia, 2025)

a. Negative Sentiment

Negative sentiment refers to comments containing complaints, criticism, or expressions of dissatisfaction (Waluyo & Juwono, 2023). The analysis shows that from the total public conversations on social media platform X regarding the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) policy, there were 111,459 negative comments, or 53.1% of the overall discussions. The dominance of negative sentiment indicates that the MBG issue is more often perceived within a frame of criticism rather than support. To deepen the analysis, the researchers further examined four negative comments with the highest engagement, which were considered representative in shaping public opinion, as follows

Table 1. Top 4 Negative Sentiment

Account X	Comment	Like	Share	View	Engagement
@Nanaxx_2x	1. Pendidikan dan Kesehatan jadi program dukungan. 2. Upah karyawan MBG telat dibayar. Ada kasus keracunan, malah buzzer botak turun tangan. 3. Subsidi LPG 3kg ditarik ulur sampai warga kesulitan cari, bahkan ada yg meninggal. 4. Stok bensin swasta habis berminggu2 EN:	58,7K	27,1K	1,7M	86,2 K

	1. Education and health become support programs. 2. MBG employees' wages were paid late. There was a case of food poisoning, yet government "buzzers" stepped in instead. 3. The 3kg LPG subsidy was repeatedly delayed, causing residents to struggle to obtain it, and even leading to fatalities. 4. Private gasoline stock ran out.				
@dinxx_rxx	aku abis diserang gara2 aku blg enakan bekel suamiku daripada menu program makan siang gratis... hehehe padahal kan..... emg iya :)))))) (I just got attacked because I said my husband's homemade lunch tastes better than the free school lunch program… hehe but honestly, it's true)	59,8K	5,6K	2,1M	75,9K
@aromx_petrixx	jadi kepikiran kalau program makan siang gratis tuh sebenernya belum sempet didiskusikan sama Prabowo dan timsesnya pada saat itu, alias ini program hasil asbun Prabowo di podium debat karena beliaunya emosian (It occurred to me that the free lunch program actually hadn't been discussed by Prabowo and his campaign team at that time; in fact, it was just a spur-of-the-moment idea he threw out during the debate because he was being emotional.)	66,4K	8,3K	2,6M	75,4K
@jefxx_wxx	Wamena, Papua 17 Feb 2025. Ribuan siswa/i melakukan demo di dpn kantor Bupati Wamena menolak program Makan Bergizi Gratis. "Alam telah menyediakan segalanya, kami mampu bertahan hidup tanpa ada campur tangan pemerintah, yg kami	55K	30,3K		

	butuhkan pendidikan gratis". Kata seorang pelajar. (Wamena, Papua, February 17, 2025. Thousands of students staged a demonstration in front of the Wamena Regent's office to reject the Free Nutritious Meal program. "Nature has provided everything; we are able to survive without government intervention. What we need is free education," said one student.)			

Source: NoLimit Indonesia,2025

Cases of food poisoning and alleged "buzzer" interventions to suppress public criticism further intensified debates. In addition, issues related to the delayed implementation of the 3kg LPG subsidy, and the scarcity of private fuel supplies reinforced public perceptions that government policies were poorly coordinated. The high number of likes (58.7 thousand) and shares (27.1 thousand) indicates widespread public concern. Second, the comment from account dinxx_rxx used satire by comparing the quality of home-cooked meals with the MBG menu, implying the latter was inferior. Although delivered humorously, the comment attracted significant engagement (59.8 thousand likes), reflecting public dissatisfaction with the quality of food provided by the program. Third, account @aromx_petrixx linked the MBG program to political dynamics, particularly Prabowo's emotional statements during the debate. This comment highlighted perceptions that MBG was an underdeveloped policy, driven more by political motives than by substantive planning. The large number of responses (66.4 thousand likes) show that the public also questions the legitimacy and policy foundations of the program. Fourth, account jefixx_wxx reported on a mass protest by thousands of students in Wamena rejecting MBG. The narrative emphasized local self-sufficiency, arguing that communities already have natural resources and do not need government intervention in the form of free meals. The high number of shares (30.3 thousand) indicates that this critique spread widely, reinforcing

localized opposition. Overall, negative sentiment toward MBG was dominated by three major issues:

1) Program quality and safety (food poisoning, menu quality, delayed distribution/wages).

2) Political interests undermining the seriousness of the program.

3) Context-based rejection, where communities felt the intervention was unnecessary and even problematic.

The high engagement of these negative comments reflects that MBG faces serious challenges in terms of legitimacy, public acceptance, and effective implementation on the ground.

b. Positive Sentiment

Positive sentiment in this context refers to opinions or feelings that imply praise, optimism, satisfaction, or favorable attitudes toward the object being discussed ((Nip & Berthelier, 2024) The analysis shows that from the total public conversations on social media platform X regarding the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) policy, there were 27,599 positive comments, or 13.1% of the overall discussions. This finding indicates that although negative sentiment remains dominant, there is still a segment of society that expresses appreciation for the program. To deepen the analysis, the researchers further examined four positive comments with the highest engagement, which were considered representative in shaping public opinion, as follows.

Table 2. Top 4 Positive Sentiment

Akun X	Comment	Like	Share	View	Engagement
@dinx_rxx	Pak Anies menyerahkan pengelolaan makan gratis ke komite. Yg belanja n masak adl para ortu/wali murid. Ga mungkin dikorupsi krn yg makan anak² mereka sendiri. Dan yg penting dr program ini, anak² selalu diajarkan berterima kasih kpd orang tua bukan kepada gubernur (Mr. Anies handed over the management of the free meal program to the school committee. The ones who shop and cook are the	11,7K	2,1K	184,8K	13,9K

	parents/guardians themselves. It cannot possibly be corrupted because the children themselves are the ones eating. Most importantly, through this program, children are always taught to thank their parents, not the governor.)				
@PartxSocxx	Pak @prabowo, buat apa makan bergizi gratis di sekolah jika anak2 itu tidak bisa makan malam krn orangtuanya tidak bisa masak akibat tdk dapat gas? Jangan semua hal dikorbankan demi anggaran program makan bergizi gratis. Lebih baik dilaksanakan secara bertahap sesuai kemampuan (Mr. @prabowo, what is the point of free nutritious meals at school if the children cannot have dinner because their parents are unable to cook due to lack of gas? Not everything should be sacrificed for the budget of the free nutritious meal program. It would be better to implement it gradually according to capacity)	9,5K	2,8K	646,3K	12, K
@prabowo	Hari ini, saya berkesempatan mengunjungi SD Negeri 05 Jati dan TK Negeri 02 untuk meninjau pelaksanaan program Makan Bergizi Gratis. Melihat senyum dan semangat anak-anak Indonesia adalah pengingat betapa pentingnya komitmen kita bersama dalam memastikan masa depan mereka yang lebih baik. Program yang telah berjalan sejak 6 Januari 2025 ini, tidak hanya bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kecukupan gizi anak-anak, tetapi juga menjadi wadah pemberdayaan masyarakat. Di dapur Satuan Pelayanan Pemenuhan Gizi (SPPG) Rawamangun, saya menyaksikan langsung dedikasi para pekerja yang dengan penuh semangat menyiapkan menu bergizi. Pemerintah bertekad untuk terus memperluas jangkauan program Makan Bergizi Gratis, dengan target menjangkau 82,9 juta	8K	3,3K	1,4M	12K

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	penerima manfaat. Ini adalah langkah nyata dalam mewujudkan visi Indonesia Emas yang kita cita-citakan bersama. (Today, I had the opportunity to visit SD Negeri 05 Jati and TK Negeri 02 to observe the implementation of the Free Nutritious Meal program. Seeing the smiles and enthusiasm of Indonesian children is a reminder of how important our shared commitment is in ensuring a better future for them. This program, which has been running since January 6, 2025, not only aims to improve children's nutritional intake but also serves as a platform for community empowerment. At the Nutrition Service Unit (SPPG) kitchen in Rawamangun, I witnessed firsthand the dedication of workers who enthusiastically prepare nutritious meals. The government is determined to continue expanding the reach of the Free Nutritious Meal program, with a target of reaching 82.9 million beneficiaries. This is a concrete step toward realizing the vision of a Golden Indonesia that we aspire to achieve together)				
@nxxflzx	Hal positif yang bisa diambil dari program makan siang gratis adalah anak-anak akan lebih menghargai masakan orang tua-nya di rumah (A positive aspect of the free lunch program is that it helps children appreciate their parents' home-cooked meals more)	3,4K	679	142,6	7,1K

Source : NoLimit Indonesia,2025

Based on the data above, the analysis of public conversations on social media platform X regarding the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) policy also shows a proportion of comments with positive sentiment. Although the number is smaller than negative sentiment, these positive comments remain significant as they reflect support and hope from parts of society for the implementation of the policy.

Positive comments appear in several forms. First, account @dinnx_rxx expressed appreciation for the idea of managing free meals by involving parents, highlighting the importance of social collaboration in the program's implementation, as well as emphasizing character education values such as gratitude and appreciation instilled in children through the policy. Second, a comment from @PartisSocxx underscored the urgency of addressing nutritional issues as a collective responsibility rather than merely a household matter. This comment carries a positive tone because it supports the program's implementation in a sustainable and systematic manner, while still embedding constructive criticism. Third, the official post from @prabowo presented a narrative of MBG's success in enhancing children's enthusiasm and nutritional adequacy at school. This post reinforced positive public sentiment by emphasizing the long-term vision, equitable access to nutrition, and the program's contribution to improving the quality of Indonesia's human resources. The high number of likes and views demonstrated public acceptance of the message conveyed. Fourth, account @nsyxflex expressed support for MBG's benefits, particularly in easing the economic burden of households. This narrative illustrates the program's positive impact at the micro level, namely on families as direct beneficiaries.

Overall, these findings show that positive sentiment toward MBG centers on three main aspects:

1. Appreciation of the policy's goals in improving children's nutrition and reducing household burdens.

2. Recognition of the social and educational values embedded in the program, such as gratitude, solidarity, and cooperation.

3. Optimism regarding the program's long-term impact on human resource development and the achievement of the *Indonesia Maju* vision.

c. Neutral Sentiment

Neutral sentiment is an expression in text that does not explicitly convey either a positive or negative opinion, and is often informative, factual, or descriptive. The analysis shows that from the total public conversations on social media platform X regarding the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) policy, there were 70,926

neutral comments, or 33.8% of the overall discussions. These neutral comments generally consist of information sharing, clarification questions, or opinions that do not directly indicate support or opposition. This reflects a segment of society that tends to adopt a cautious stance, still awaiting concrete evidence from the policy's implementation, or merely discussing MBG as a public phenomenon without strong emotional involvement. The top four neutral comments are as follows

Table 3. Top 4 Neutral Sentiment

Akun X	Comment	Like	Share	View	Engagement
@aromapetrikxxx	jadi kepikiran kalau program makan siang gratis tuh sebenernya belum sempet didiskusikan sama Prabowo dan timsesnya pada saat itu, alias ini program hasil asbun Prabowo di podium debat karena beliaunya emosian (It occurred to me that the free lunch program had actually not yet been discussed by Prabowo and his campaign team at that time; in other words, this program was the result of Prabowo's spur-of-the-moment statement during the debate because he was being emotional)	66,4K	8,3K	2,6M	75,4K
@peachysxxxx	PROGRAM MAKAN GRATIS YANG AKU MAU (The free meal program that I want)	58,3K	13,1	628,3	72K
@tanyarlxxx	Bukannya lebih bahaya ya kalau nanti terjadi gempa atau tsunami gak terdeteksi gimana? Prabowo yang potong anggaran BMKG. kalian pasti tahu anggaran dipotong buat apa? yap benar buat progam makan bergizi gratis (Isn't it more dangerous if later an earthquake or tsunami goes undetected? Prabowo cut the BMKG	42K	6,1K	2,1M	49,9K

	budget. You all surely know what the budget was cut for? Yes, that's right— for the Free Nutritious Meal program)				
@VeronicaKoxxx	Ribuan pelajar Papua SMP, SD, SMA di Paniai pagi ini turun ke jalan menolak MBG dan minta pendidikan gratis. (Thousands of junior high, elementary, and high school students in Paniai, Papua, took to the streets this morning to protest against MBG and demand free education)	32,3K	13,4	1,8M	45,8K

Source : NoLimit Indonesia, 2025

Based on the data above, critical discourse analysis of public comments on social media platform X reveals diverse constructions of meaning regarding the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) policy. The comment from @jefxx_wxx underscores local resistance in Papua, where education is considered more relevant than government nutritional interventions, thus framing MBG as a form of central government hegemony over the region. The comment from @aromx_petrixx frames the program as a policy born spontaneously out of political elites' emotions, thereby delegitimizing the government's rationality. Meanwhile, the comment from @dinxx_rxx employs personal experience as a discursive strategy to negate the benefits of MBG, while simultaneously highlighting household cultural preferences over state policies. Finally, the comment from @Nanaxx_2x links MBG to broader structural problems such as delayed wages, food poisoning, and the energy crisis, thereby reinforcing the narrative of public distrust toward government capacity. Overall, these four comments demonstrate that discourse on MBG in social media is not limited to nutritional issues, but rather becomes an arena of contested meaning, ideology, and political legitimacy between the state and society

Critical Discourse Analysis

In the context of discussions on the free lunch program emerging in the digital sphere, Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis can be employed to

uncover meanings that lie not only within the textual layer of netizens' comments but also within the discursive practices and the broader socio-political context surrounding them. The critical discourse analysis is presented as follows

a. Critical Discourse in Negative Sentiment

Table 4. Critical Discourse in Negative Sentiment

Akun	Dimensi Teks	Dimensi Praktik Wacana	Dimensions of Social Practice
@jefxx_wxx	Report of student demonstrations in Wamena rejecting the MBG program; student quote: : *"Alam telah menyediakan segalanya… yg kami butuhkan pendidikan gratis."* ("Nature has provided everything… what we need is free education.")	Presenting an alternative discourse based on locality; nature is positioned as the primary resource, while education is regarded as the priority need.	Demonstrates peripheral regions' resistance to uniform national policies; articulates the right to determine local policy priorities
@aromx_petrixx	Statement that the free lunch program was *"hasil asbun Prabowo di podium debat karena emosian"*; diksi *"asbun"* (a spur-of-the-moment remark by Prabowo during the debate because he was emotional) carries a derogatory and dismissive tone.	This discourse constructs the program as unplanned, born out of emotion rather than the result of rational study	Shows delegitimization of the government/leader; reinforces the opposition narrative that the MBG policy is populist and not based on real needs.
@dinxx_rxx	Casual statement: *"enakan bekel suamiku daripada menu program makan siang gratis"* (My husband's homemade lunch tastes better than the free lunch program menu) accompanied by laughter and emoticons.	Bringing personal experience to compare household food with the government program; the language style is light but carries a critical nuance	Reflects cultural resistance: society reframes MBG as something inferior compared to domestic practices, while also affirming individual agency in determining nutritional preferences.
@Nanaxx_2x	Mentioning several issues: *keterlambatan gaji MBG, keracunan, subsidi LPG, dan stok bensin habis*; (delayed MBG wages, food poisoning, the 3kg LPG subsidy, and depleted gasoline	The text expands the MBG issue into a chain of other structural problems, so the program is seen not as a solution but as part of a governance crisis.	This discourse underscores public distrust toward the government, showing how MBG is treated as a symbol of structural failure in socio-economic policy

	stockscritical tone toward the government and political buzzers		

Source : Data processed by the researcher, 2025

Based on the data above, critical discourse analysis of public comments on social media platform X demonstrates diverse constructions of meaning regarding the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) policy. The comment from @jefxx_wxx emphasizes local resistance in Papua, where education is considered more relevant than government nutritional interventions, thereby framing MBG as a form of central hegemony over peripheral regions. The comment from @aromx_petrixx frames the program as a policy that emerged spontaneously from the emotions of political elites, thus delegitimizing the government's rationality. Meanwhile, the comment from @dinxx_rxx employs personal experience as a discursive strategy to negate the benefits of MBG while simultaneously highlighting household cultural preferences over state-driven initiatives. Finally, the comment from @Nanaxx_2x connects MBG to broader structural issues such as delayed wages, cases of food poisoning, and energy crises, thereby reinforcing the narrative of public distrust in government capacity. Overall, these four comments indicate that discourse on MBG in social media is not confined to nutritional concerns but has evolved into an arena of contested meanings, ideologies, and political legitimacy between the state and society.

b. Critical Discourse in Positive Sentiment

Table 5. Critical Discourse in Positive Sentiment

Akun	Text Deminsion	Discourse Practice Dimension	Social Practice Dimension
@dinx_rxx	It states that Anies handed over the management of the free meal program to the school committee, with the involvement of parents/guardians in shopping and cooking. The diction *"tidak mungkin dikorupsi"* (*impossible to be corrupted"*) emphasizes transparency.	Constructs a discourse of participation and social control; the program is seen as teaching children to be grateful to their parents, not to the governor.	This discourse reinforces family values, community participation, and anti-corruption as the foundation of policy legitimacy.

@PartxSocxx	Comments remind that the program should be implemented gradually so as not to sacrifice other basic needs (for example, household gas).	Although critical, this discourse carries a constructive tone: supporting the Free Meal Program (MBG) but with realistic notes regarding budget capacity.	It reflects public aspirations for balanced and sustainable policies without sacrificing household needs.
@prabowo	A long narrative describes a school visit, seeing the children's smiles, and observing the SPPG kitchen. Positive diction: *"senyum," "semangat," "dedikasi," "visi Indonesia Emas."* ("smile," "enthusiasm," "dedication," "Golden Indonesia vision.")	The program is framed as a symbol of state care and community empowerment, not merely a nutritional intervention.	It presents the discourse of government political legitimacy by emphasizing national commitment, human resource development, and the grand vision of *Golden Indonesia*.
@nxxflzx	It highlights the positive aspect that the program makes children appreciate their parents' home-cooked meals more	Menghubungkan dampak program dengan nilai kultural: menghormati keluarga dan tradisi domestik.	This discourse illustrates the integration of family values into public policy, reinforcing the moral dimension behind the nutrition program.

Source : Data processed by the researcher, 2025

Based on the aforementioned data, a critical discourse analysis of public comments with positive sentiment reveals that the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) policy is constructed discursively not merely as a nutritional intervention, but as a broader vehicle for cultivating social, cultural, and political values. The comment posted by @dinx_rxx foregrounds transparency and parental participation in the management of the program, thereby framing MBG as both an instrument of community empowerment and a medium for moral education among children. Similarly, the comment by @PartxSocxx, while adopting a critical stance, demonstrates constructive engagement by supporting the program on the condition

of gradual implementation in accordance with state capacity. This reflects a public aspiration for policies that are not only ambitious but also realistic and sustainable.

The official narrative articulated by @prabowo positions MBG as evidence of governmental commitment toward realizing the Golden Indonesia vision, where the imagery of children's smiles and the dedication of workers serves to legitimize the policy politically. Meanwhile, @nxxflzx underscores the cultural dimension of MBG by highlighting its role in reinforcing children's appreciation of their parents' home-cooked meals. Collectively, these positive discourses illustrate that MBG is represented not solely as a technical or administrative policy, but as a discursive arena through which moral values, political legitimacy, and social solidarity are articulated and reproduced.

c. Critical Discourse in Neutral Sentiment

Table 6. Critical Discourse in Neutral Sentiment

Akun	Text Dimension	Discourse Practice Dimension	Social Practice Dimension
@aromapetrikxxx	States that MBG has not been thoroughly discussed, emerging spontaneously from Prabowo during the debate out of emotion.	Presents speculative discourse regarding the origins of the policy; not outright praise or criticism, but rather a framing of the process behind the program's inception	Illustrates public perceptions that policies often emerge reactively rather than being grounded in thorough research, which may undermine the legitimacy of the program
@peachysxxxx	Writes briefly: *"FREE MEAL PROGRAM THAT I WANT" in capital letters.*	Ambiguous statements: they can be interpreted as aspirations, expectations, or simply neutral remarks without elaboration	Reveals a public position that is still in search of a suitable form of program implementation aligned with personal expectations, without an explicit stance of support or rejection
@tanyarlxxx	Links MBG to budget cuts for BMKG, expressing concern that disasters might go undetected..	Constructs inter-policy relations: MBG is perceived as being linked to the reallocation of budgets from other vital sectors	Demonstrates a neutral-critical discourse: not rejecting MBG in substance but highlighting the

			risks of misguided budget priorities.
@VeronicaKoxxx	Reports the fact of thousands of Papuan students protesting against MBG and demanding free education.	Provides descriptive information without personal commentary; factual quotations concerning students' demands	Shows the articulation of alternative perspectives from local contexts: educational needs are considered more urgent than nutritional interventions.

Source: Data processed by the researcher, 2025

Based on the data above, a critical discourse analysis of comments with neutral sentiment shows that discussions regarding the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) program do not always appear in the form of explicit support or rejection, but also as questions, speculations, or factual reports. For instance, the comment by @aromapetrikxxx highlights the origins of MBG, which is perceived as having emerged spontaneously from a political debate, reinforcing the perception that policies often arise reactively. The comment by @peachysxxxx represents a simple aspirational expression, indicating that there remains public space for envisioning an ideal form of the program. The comment by @tanyarlxxx links MBG to budget cuts for BMKG, signaling concern about policy priorities without directly rejecting the program. Meanwhile, the comment by @VeronicaKoxxx reports on the protest of Papuan students demanding free education, presenting a descriptive discourse that emphasizes alternative needs beyond nutrition. Collectively, these comments illustrate that neutral discourse functions as a space of ambivalence, where the public does not merely evaluate the program in moral or emotional terms, but also attempts to weigh it within rational, technical, and contextual frameworks.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of critical discourse analysis on public conversations on social media platform X show that the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) policy is perceived by the public in diverse ways. Public discourse does not merely reflect the technical aspects of a nutrition program but also frames MBG as an arena of contested meanings, ideologies, and political legitimacy. Negative sentiment is dominated by

criticism of weak governance, distribution quality, transparency issues, and suspicions of political populism. Positive sentiment emphasizes appreciation of community participation, social solidarity, and the long-term vision of human development. Meanwhile, neutral sentiment appears in the form of factual reporting, clarification questions, and reflections, indicating the presence of a space for public deliberation beyond the polarization of pro and contra. These findings highlight that MBG is understood by society not only as a technical nutrition policy but also as a symbolic political instrument influencing government legitimacy in the digital sphere.

Based on these findings, this study offers several recommendations. First, the government needs to strengthen transparency and accountability in the implementation of MBG to minimize public suspicion. Second, there must be mechanisms for community participation, particularly involving parents and local communities, so that the program becomes more contextualized and responsive to actual needs. Third, public communication strategies should be directed at reducing polarization by providing narratives based on data, evidence, and education rather than pure political rhetoric. Fourth, in the long term, MBG should be integrated with broader education and social welfare policies to ensure more holistic impacts. Thus, the legitimacy of MBG can be reinforced not only through political claims but also through the acceptance and lived experiences of society as program beneficiaries.

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