MEDIA, DISINFORMATION, AND PUBLIC DECODING: AN ONLINE RECEPTION STUDY OF POLITICAL DISCOURSES

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the political meaning influenced by the media and disinformation interpreted by Indonesian netizens in the online space, especially the connection with the influence of digital literacy, trust in institutions, and political discord. This study employs a qualitative reception analysis based on the Encoding/Decoding paradigm developed by Stuart Hall in 1980, which produced three reading positions: Dominant-hegemonic, Negotiated, and Oppositional. In addition, Critical discourse analysis (CDA) and digital ethnography also form the theoretical basis of this study. The data was collected from four main social media platforms in Indonesia, namely X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and Threads. The results show that Oppositional reading is the most common type of reading position (40%), followed by Dominant-hegemonic reading (35%) and Negotiated reading (25%). In general, the results show that Indonesian netizens display various decoding methods influenced by many backgrounds. Furthermore, it was also found that social media not only functions as a democratic space but also a space for the spread of disinformation. This study provides valuable insight into the political meanings influenced by the media and disinformation as interpreted by Indonesian netizens in the online space. Furthermore, this study contributes to understanding the relationship between political views and individual backgrounds.

Key Terms: *politics; disinformation; digital; reception; social media.*

INTRODUCTION

Political information and news in Indonesia today have undergone massive changes due to advances in communication technology. There are many social media platforms today, such as X (Twitter), TikTok, Instagram, and many more. These platforms are used by the public as a means of exchanging opinions about politics with larger online groups. However,

due to the rapid spread of information, it is not uncommon for false information or hoaxes to be spread as well. In this context, matters such as beliefs, persuasion, and what is considered right and wrong often become subjects of debate. Therefore, to understand how democracy functions in Indonesia, it is important to know how Indonesians on social media respond to political news, especially when false information or news spreads widely (Chahal, 2023; Rampersad & Althiyabi, 2020; Schumann & Arlt, 2025; Wahyono et al., 2020).

Stuart Hall's (1980) reception theory provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding the process of negotiating meaning. According to Hall (1980), media messages are encoded by producers with meanings or ideological understandings that are currently valid, but audiences understand or interpret them differently based on their cultural background, experiences, and social conditions. There are three reading positions: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional, produced by this approach, which recognizes the active role of the audience as interpreters rather than passive consumers. Hall uses this framework to show how people understand political texts in order to support or weaken the existing power system. Recent studies, such as (Iswarinda et al., 2025), have confirmed this. Researchers examined how Indonesians understand political news in the media and found that many people often have different opinions and interpretations, which often lead to debate. These interpretations also reveal the distance or range of people's beliefs regarding politics. Hall's theory helps explain how Indonesian society understands and reconstructs messages in a digital environment rife with political divisions and widespread misinformation on social media. This causes confusion, as noted by (Annisa et al., 2025), (Astari et al., 2023), (Iswarinda et al., 2025), and Simorangkir (2025).

This acceptance process is becoming increasingly difficult due to the abundance of fake news or information circulating. According to Rampersad & Althiyabi (2020), public rejection or acceptance of hoax news or information widely circulated on social media is greatly influenced by characteristics, demographics, and culture, particularly age and social values. Disinformation is a problem rooted in culture and ideology, much like technological issues in Indonesia. Here, political communication is often mixed with populist attitudes and religious influence, and people's ability to read information digitally varies. Therefore, exposure to biased media, trust in institutions, and overall social and political conditions influence how people understand and interpret information. Schumann & Arlt (2025) also showed how political discontent and media trust interact dynamically to influence voters' long-term views of democratic legitimacy. These results show that when people read or try to understand information, their thoughts aren't entirely neutral. Their personal background and cultural beliefs influence how they understand and interpret what they read. A 2020 study by Wahyono together with his team, they discovered that during the 2019 Indonesian Presidential Election, people responded to false information in three primary ways: pragmatic-creative, ideological, and critical-skeptical. Another research by Lestari in 2023 demonstrated that false news about the Coronavirus vaccine spreading in WhatsApp groups shows how someone's understanding is often shaped by the group, beliefs, and community they belong to. These investigations confirm that disinformation functions not only in technology systems but also in social logics.

The relationship between Hall's reception model and local media has been proven by a number of Indonesian academics. For example, according to Simorangkir (2025), using the

encoding-decoding framework to analyze or understand how audiences interpret the film A Man Called Ahok. The findings show that audiences understand political narratives in a negotiated manner and that there are also those who represent various ethnic, individual, and ideological perspectives. Similarly, Wirawan & Munjid (2022) used audience reception analysis to show how different backgrounds can produce different perspectives on democratic ideas in Amanda Gorman's poem, The Hill We Climb. Similarly, Kharista (2022) analyzed how social media users in Southeast Asia use platforms such as Twitter/X to criticize or oppose a group or issue. This study resulted in the understanding that digital space can be a space for people to exchange opinions and participate freely. In addition, Purwaningtyas & Widihastuty (2021) found that Indonesian teenagers on Instagram try to understand and interpret Covid-19 information carefully. They balance skepticism and trust in institutions. Based on the above studies, Hall's theory is still relevant for understanding how audiences or communities absorb political information or news in various cultural and technical contexts (Annisa et al., 2025; Hall, 1980; Iswarinda et al., 2025).

Political discourse in Indonesia is greatly influenced by the degree of polarization within society. On the one hand, there are people who are knowledgeable about digital technology, while on the other hand, there are people who do not fully understand digital technology and have great trust in government institutions. People who do not fully understand digital technology are generally susceptible to being influenced by false information or news. Political polarization also creates an echo chamber where individuals who already have their own understanding are only exposed to understandings or opinions that align with their own beliefs (Lestari, 2023; Sekarhati, 2024).

According to Floriano (2025), online platforms also allow political groups to promote their own narratives, opinions, or interpretations of the truth. The media plays an important role in shaping public opinion and political discourse, not only in Indonesia but also globally (Chahal, 2023). The digital era has made it difficult for many people to distinguish between right and wrong, and can also change their perspectives or thoughts on political ideas. This can certainly lead to the spread of misinformation. A relevant study was conducted by Annisa et al. (2025), which shows how difficult it is for people from different cultures to understand each other's beliefs, especially in Southeast Asia, where there is a great deal of cultural and religious diversity, each with its own perspective. All of these studies explain that understanding a message is an act of interpretation that is greatly influenced by ideology, technology, and socio-politics. This study uses Stuart Hall's reception theory to analyze how Indonesian social media users understand political discourse. The main objective of this study is to answer two important questions:

1. How do Indonesian social media users interpret media-and disinformation-shaped political messages?
2. What effects do elements like digital literacy, faith in institutions, and political discord have on these perceptions in Indonesia's online environment?

This study seeks to provide insight into how Indonesians understand the meaning of political messages on the internet using Hall's encoding/decoding framework. It places audience decoding theory in a context marked by rapid digitization, hybrid political

communication, and the regime of truth. This research also makes a new contribution to international studies on the relationship between media and democracy.

METHOD

This study uses qualitative reception analysis in the encoding/decoding approach proposed by Stuart Hall in 1980. This method focuses on understanding how the public understands and also participates in or interacts with political messages that are not always stated directly, but can be symbols or images in posts. This study also analyzes how the public interprets political discourse, challenges it, or rearticulates it in the digital space through online interactions carried out by social media users. This study collected data through posts by users on social media.

This study analyzes how users on four platforms, namely X/Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and Threads, engage with political discourse. These platforms have become widely used by users to exchange opinions or express their views on politics. By analyzing all these forms, this study is able to explain how political messages are conveyed and reveal how false information can spread widely and circulate on social media in the context of public participation (Chahal, 2023; Sekarhati, 2024).

Systematic online observation was used to gather data between 2020 and 2025. Political and election-related hashtags were used to find relevant posts, comments, and interactions. Purposive sampling was used in the sample strategy, focusing on content that:

1. included partisan tales or overt political messaging, produced a significant amount of audience interaction (likes, shares, and comments), and
2. contained components of ideological framing or false information.

Using native platform bookmarking capabilities and screenshot documentation, about 5 posts from X, 5 posts from TikTok, 5 user comments from X and 5 user comments from TikTok. were saved for analysis. Only publicly accessible content was examined in order to uphold ethical norms; no private communications or personally identifying user information were used.

Three reading positions: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and opposing, that were developed by Stuart Hall were used to examine the data. The first part of the research involved figuring out how political figures, influencers, and media accounts spread their messages. For example, they might back certain candidates, share specific ideas, or present political topics in a particular way. After understanding the hidden messages, the researchers examined the comments and responses on chosen posts to see how people received and interpreted those messages. They checked how people reacted to find out if they were disagreeing and criticizing the message, partly agreeing while adding their own views or cultural ideas, or fully agreeing and supporting the message. Also, they studied trends on X and TikTok to compare how similar or different people understood political messages. This process showed how false information influences how people accept or discuss meaning online, and how Indonesian social media users receive, change, or ignore political content.

The results from different platforms were cross-referenced with prior studies on audience responses and fake news to ensure the findings were trustworthy. To minimize personal bias, the researcher kept detailed notes during the analysis. All the data used was publicly accessible. The paper followed the ethical guidelines set by the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) and did not include any usernames or personal information.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

From the research that has been conducted, the researchers found several data samples, including 5 posts from X, 5 posts from TikTok, 5 user comments from X and 5 user comments from TikTok. The data are presented in the following table.

Table 1. The interpretation of comments/posts

Posts/Comments	Interpretation	Source
TikTok post: **"Beda pilihan gapapa, tapi jangan karena rasa benci kalian menghina suatu program, tanpa melihat betapa berharganya program itu di mata orang lain yang membutuhkan"** *"It's okay to have different opinions, but don't let your hatred cause you to insult a program without considering how valuable it is to others who need it."*	This post expresses a moderate view of respect for different social viewpoints and varying political preferences. Tolerance and social empathy are ideals that are embodied in the encoded message, which urges people not to disparage government initiatives based on differences in opinion. Stuart Hall's Reception Theory framework explains this material as a type of negotiated code, in which the message author tries to balance demands for societal harmony and support for government projects.	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSUja18rc/
TikTok post: **"Sikap Warga Negara Yang Baik Dalam satu Situasi Politik"** *"The Attitude of a Good*	This post shows the moral obligation of citizens to respond to national political processes is emphasised. The message that has been encoded highlights how crucial moral conduct and political consciousness are to	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSU6aqEae/

Citizen in a Political Situation"	preserving democratic stability. This post exemplifies a dominant-hegemonic code, according to Stuart Hall's Reception Theory paradigm, where the content provider completely replicates ideal civic values that fit the institutional narrative of the state. This message reinforces the validity of political discourse that portrays citizens as morally and socially responsible, civilised individuals by taking a moral stance.	
TikTok post: **"POV: Belajar politik supaya bisa jadi p3jabat dan menjadi politisi paling korup dari semuanya"** *"POV: Study politics so you can become a goverment and be the most corrupt politician of all."*	This post demonstrates the lack of public confidence in government through political sarcasm. The encoded message generates an ideological critique of the legitimacy of the power structure through the hyperbolic claim that "study politics so you can become the most corrupt." This material exhibits an oppositional coding in the context of Stuart Hall's Reception Theory, in which the message originator strongly contests with the prevailing rhetoric about politics as a moral institution.	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSUjaT6Xr/
TikTok post: **"government is scary. imagine you didn't vote but were affected by it too."**	This post conveys a sentiment of skepticism and estrangement towards governmental entities. The encoded message, "government is scary," demonstrates an ideological construct that opposes the	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSUjafn3q/

	idea that the state is the people's protector. This post exhibits an oppositional coding from the standpoint of Stuart Hall's Reception Theory since it portrays the state as a terrifying and symbolically denies its legitimacy.	
TikTok post: **"Love your country, hate your government"**	There is a logical conflict in this post between nationalism and defiance of the state. The phrase "love your country, hate your government" illustrates how political legitimacy and national identity have different meanings. According to Stuart Hall's Reception Theory, this material reflects a negotiated code in which the message maker rejects the dominant discourse that conflates state allegiance with patriotism while acknowledging the importance of nationalism as a universal concept.	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSU6mbDk8/
Tiktok Comments **"Sakit banget kak bapak Prabowo di kata-katain"** *"It really hurts, to see Mr. Prabowo being insulted"*	This phrase exemplifies a hegemonic reception that is based on social morality and empathy. By internalizing the political figure as a moral being worthy of compassion, the audience does more than just endorse a policy. It is clear from the pain and empathy that political meaning has been individualized; the leader is now seen as a moral being whose dignity needs to be upheld, rather than just a public figure.	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSUj5H2yJ

TikTok Comments **"Gue sedih banget Prabowo sekarang dihujat habis-habisan, padahal dulu mereka pilih dia."** ***"I feel genuinely sad that Prabowo is now being harshly attacked, even though those who are criticizing him were once his supporters."***	This comment exemplifies defensive hegemonic reception, when the audience creates a counter-narrative in response to criticism from the general public. The user emphasizes the societal injustice that the leader faces while presenting themselves as a moral supporter of the political figure. This pattern demonstrates how political loyalty as an ideology functions as a safeguard against speech that opposes it. This is what reception analysis refers to as hegemonic alignment through affective defense, which is a form of acceptance based on emotional solidarity with the authority figure.	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSUj5H2yJ/
Tiktok Comments **"Syarat jadi presiden/pemerintah: Islam, Jawa, bukan sipi"** ***"Requirements to become president/government: Muslim, Javanese, not slant-eyed"***	This comment demonstrates mistaken ideological resistance, when religious and ethnic bigotry are used to show opposition to power. The audience engages in a kind of ideological misrecognition, turning the conversation about political injustice into one about identity-based discrimination, rather than expressing a structural critique. This phenomenon demonstrates how polarisation and a lack of digital literacy increase the likelihood of ethically skewed oppositional decoding in the digital realm.	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSUj5mbar/
TikTok Comments **"Tante ku bilang kalau pilih 2 itu buta :) ga liat kah**	This is an example of a harmful body-shaming method of decoding. Physical humiliation,	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSUj56XH8/

kakinya bapak tu udah pincang ga bisa jadi presiden dia" *"My aunt said that those who choose number 2 are blind :) Can't you see that man's leg is already limping, he can't be president"*	not a meaningful argument, is used to express rejection of the political person. This trend indicates the breakdown of ethical norms in digital public communication by exposing the transformation of political discourse into hate speech that is tailored to the individual. This is an ideological rejection devoid of reasoned discussion, or opposition that has lost its intellectual underpinnings.	
TikTok Comments **"tangkap anies. gurl, yesss! let's go tangkap that anies guy and start a new country with him as a president"** *"Arrest Anies. gurl, yesss! let's go arrest that Anies guy and start a new country with him as a president."*	This comment is an example of dominant-hegemonic reading that is performative and exaggerated. Through an extreme political fantasy— "creating a new country" with the idolized leader as president—the user not only displays agreement with the story of support for an alternate political figure (Anies), but also does so. Political loyalty is portrayed as a cultural performance rather than as ideological commitment in this type of decoding, which combines affect and performativity.	https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSUj5Hb5K/
X post: **"Terbukti beliau emang terbaik #PrabowoDiakuiDunia Posisi Indonesia Global"** *"Proven to be the best #PrabowoDiakuiDunia Indonesia's Global Position*	This post uses affirmative hashtags and a nationalistic narrative to show how the populace supports a political figure. The content creator's message is a type of dominant-hegemonic discourse, which is the complete acceptance of the leader as a representation of Indonesia's power and international renown. The	https://x.com/Folkstima/status/1964892051256050107?t=UNj_Nppu_gliCFvYd1RCGg&s=19

	overwhelming reading of the audiences taking part in this discussion supports the theme of patriotism and enhances Prabowo's reputation as a symbol of Indonesia's diplomatic achievements. In the online public domain, hashtags like #PrabowoDiakuiDunia serve as a semiotic tactic to foster political legitimacy and digital solidarity.	
X post: **"Presiden Prabowo dorong percepatan pembangunan #3JutaRumah demi memastikan setiap keluarga Indonesia memiliki hunian layak, nyaman, dan bermartabat. Komitmen Hunian Layak"** *"President Prabowo pushes for the acceleration of the #3JutaRumah program to ensure that every Indonesian family has access to decent, comfortable, and dignified housing. Commitment to Decent Housing"*	This post provides a nationally #3JutaRumah program-based political representation that is centered on social development initiatives. A pro-people leadership image is emphasized in the content creator's message. The encoding/decoding theory of Stuart Hall states that audiences typically exhibit a dominant reading, which is the complete acceptance of the ideological message about a leader who is welfare-oriented and responsive. Using the hashtag #3JutaRumah serves as a semiotic tactic to enhance the perception of a focused and effective government. In digital political communication, the story of "decent, comfortable, and dignified housing" highlights the ethical and humanitarian aspects, strengthening the emotional bond between the people and their government.	https://x.com/ressagaa/status/1975036167717585160
X post:	This post exemplifies a radical	https://x.com/te

"RIP Indonesia's Democracy. F**K THE COPS F**K THE MILITARY F**K THE GOVERNMENT F**K THE STATE F**K THE JUDGE F**K DPR F**K ALL FASCIST !!!"	kind of online political resistance in Indonesia. The post shows a strong oppositional reading of the government system and democratic legitimacy through its absolute rejection of official institutions and use of vulgarity. Societal anger at political leaders who are thought to have failed to preserve the values of justice and transparency is reflected in the message encoded by the content creator. The message in this post actively rejects and challenges the prevailing meanings about democratic legitimacy and political stability that are usually created by state institutions and mainstream media. This is known as oppositional code, according to Stuart Hall's Reception Theory.	ampojokkanan/status/1961157970328178984?t=vMCuHJ5QigdadexIvAvEZg&s=19
X post: "Pemerintah indonesia adlh segala bentuk kesialan hidup yg mungkin didapat rakyat di sebuah negara, nggak kapabel, nggak punya visi, nggak punya niat baik, nggak mau usaha, berbuat kekerasan, maruk, manipulatif, maunya kaya dr korupsi." *"The Indonesian government is the embodiment of every misfortune a nation's*	This post's use of sentimental and overstated language demonstrates an intense dislike of Indonesian government institutions. Deep societal dissatisfaction with the abuses of power, corruption, and the ineptitude of the state bureaucracy is reflected in the encoded message. According to Stuart Hall's Reception Theory, this content exemplifies oppositional reading, where the message originator deliberately challenges the prevailing interpretations of the legitimacy and prosperity of	https://x.com/_MasWis/status/1921860502780526813?t=LvXPKQxvbKCkyL1SnYiZ9A&s=19

people could experience, incapable, visionless, lacking good intentions, unwilling to work, violent, greedy, manipulative, and obsessed with getting rich through corruption."	the state that are usually created by the media and the government. Terms like "manipulative," and "Incapable" are examples of symbolic creations that contradict the idealized view of the government as the people's guardian.	
X post: **"Ya Allah... Negara dengan penduduk 280 juta jiwa kayak kekurangan orang pinter dan yg berintegritas."** *"Oh God... A country with a population of 280 million feels like it's running short of smart and honest people."*	This post contains hyperbolic language and satirical tone convey a strong rejection of Indonesian government institutions. "A country with a population of 280 million seems to lack intelligent people with integrity" is one example of a statement that emphasizes both intellectual and moral criticism of the state machinery for allegedly failing to uphold the values of public accountability and meritocracy. According to Stuart Hall's Reception Theory, this post represents as "oppositional code," which is the content creator's attempt to question and reject the prevailing meanings formed by official state discourse regarding the legitimacy and professionalism of government.	https://x.com/BangPino /status/1972323648049709093?t=6dv2NlssjU_r44pVBR5cPA&s=19
X Comments **"Presiden Prabowo dorong percepatan pembangunan #3JutaRumah demi memastikan setiap keluarga Indonesia memiliki hunian layak, nyaman, dan**	Hegemonic acceptance is best exemplified by this comment. The audience specifically mimics the official government language, which highlights the story of national progress and care for the wellbeing of the populace. Negotiation or	https://x.com/ressagaa/status/1975036167717585160

bermartabat." *"President Prabowo encourages the acceleration of the #3JutaRumah development program to ensure that every Indonesian family has a decent, comfortable, and dignified place to live."*	opposition to the message are not evident. By using terms like "decent, comfortable, and dignified," the state's moral discourse is internalized, and the government is positioned as the primary player in enhancing the social dignity of the populace.	
X Comments "Standing ovation sampe 8 kali? Diplomasi Berani Indonesia sukses bikin Indonesia dipandang serius di level global. #PrabowoGuncangPBB" *"Eight standing ovations? Indonesia's bold diplomacy has succeeded in making Indonesia taken seriously at the global level. #PrabowoGuncangPBB"*	The audience here interprets political performance as a symbol of national glory and the success of the country's diplomacy. Words such as "brave," "taken seriously," and "shook the PBB (United Nations)" indicate a positive acceptance of the leader's image as a symbol of national strength.	https://x.com/saggate/status/1971053164649742415
X Comments "Statemen konyol khas pejabat RI.. trus kita harus maklumi kegagalan kalian gitu?" *"Typical ridiculous statements from Indonesian officials... so we're supposed to just accept your failures?"*	The institutional narrative is directly rejected in this comment. The audience rejects both the speaker's authority and the message's content. A crisis of legitimacy and a decline in public confidence in the state are shown by the use of the phrase "typical of Indonesian officials," which indicates a negative generalization towards the political class. According to reception theory, this is an example of oppositional decoding via	https://x.com/GITAMAGAGITA/status/1974128091720249397

	cynicism, in which resistance serves as a symbolic act of defiance against the language of power.	
X Comments **"Negara INDO penduduknya emang itu doang. Gak Bahlil, Luhut, gak Luhut yah Ngabalin"** *"This country really only has those people. If it's not Bahlil, it's Luhut — and if not Luhut, then Ngabalin"*	This comment rejects the discourse of power pluralism and portrays politics as an oligarchy controlled by small elite. Sarcasm is used as an instrument of resistance, signifying the subversion of ideology through humor. The audience employs political humor to express disappointment with a power structure perceived as stagnant and unrepresentative.	https://x.com/Team_kreativ/status/1972327505215565921
X Comments **"Konohanya dipimpin oleh orang-orang bodoh berduit yg dihasilkan dari usaha haram..."** *"This Konoha is led by rich fools whose money comes from illicit means..."*	The imaginary world ("Konohanya"), which is a metaphor for the moral decay of the elite, is used by the audience to resemanticize the discourse of power. Using this word shows how popular culture is used as a means of oppositional decoding, resulting in culturally and symbolically significant	https://x.com/alham1970/status/1972475065611735328

Results and Discussion: Deep Theoretical Elaboration

This section combines Digital Ethnography, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding paradigm to reveal how political meanings are created, shared, and disputed in Indonesia's digital environment. This triangulated framework conceptualizes digital political discourse as a dynamic process of ideological negotiation, involving content creators (encoding), audience interpretations (decoding), emotional mediation (affectivity and performativity), and structural influences of technological architectures (platform affordances and algorithms).

1. ENCODING: RHETORICAL AND SEMIOTIC STRATEGIES OF CONTENT CREATORS

In Indonesia's digital political communication, content makers function as ideological actors that convey meaning through intentional linguistic, visual, and emotional methods. Their rhetorical choices—tone, imagery, symbolism—function as discursive tools that situate the audience inside particular ideological frames. Fairclough (1995); Hall (1980).

Pro-government narratives frequently utilize moral framing (Lakoff, 2004), associating civic virtue with allegiance to the state. Expressions like "being a good citizen" or "acting in Indonesia's best interest" integrate morality into nationalism, so validating power as kind and capable. This rhetorical tactic exemplifies what Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) refers to as the naturalization of power, when linguistic normalization converts state legitimacy into a type of common sense (van Dijk, 2008).Decoding: Varieties of reading positions as a social phenomenon

In contrast, oppositional creators utilize semiotic resistance by employing hyperbole, obscenity, or irony—exemplified by phrases like "RIP Indonesian Democracy" or "F**k the Government"—to disrupt hegemonic coherence. These discursive actions provide symbolic inversions that reveal ideological discrepancies between the state's self-representation and the lived experiences of citizens. Critical Discourse Analysis elucidates the ideological foundations of this discourse, demonstrating how oppositional language operates as a kind of counter-hegemonic resistance (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

In Hall's approach, encoding constitutes a politically charged act of representation rather than a neutral transmission. Encoders meticulously craft messages to align with the attention-centric dynamics of social media, incorporating ideological motives in formats tailored for emotional dissemination. Encoding operates both representationally (expressing beliefs) and performatively (stimulating participation), demonstrating that meaning is inextricably linked to the emotive and computational frameworks that facilitate its distribution.

2. DECODING: VARIETIES OF READING POSITIONS AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

The decoding process illustrates that meaning is not static; it is negotiated, contested, and collaboratively constructed through social interpretation. Hall's (1980) three decoding positions—dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional—are distinctly evident in Indonesia's digital discourse.

At the dominant-hegemonic level, users replicate state narratives using hashtags like #3JutaRumah or #PrabowoDiakuiDunia. These provide an unthinking endorsement of state legitimacy and advancement, encapsulating Hall's notion of preferred reading—a interpretation consistent with the encoder's ideological purpose. This decoding method exemplifies what Gramsci (1971) refers to as consensual hegemony, as citizens accept authority through moral and cultural alignment.

In negotiated readings, audiences exhibit partial concordance while also incorporating skepticism. Expressions like "Love your country, hate your government" exemplify this dual mindset, merging patriotism with criticism. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this hybrid decoding illustrates discursive ambivalence, wherein ideological acceptance is moderated by contextual resistance (Fairclough, 2015).

Consequently, decoding in digital politics functions as a socially ingrained activity: audiences interpret and challenge meaning within the emotional and ideological dynamics of daily online existence. This validates Hall's claim that interpretation constitutes a locus of political contention, wherein meaning emerges as a fluid result of continuous negotiation between structure and agency.

3. AFFECTIVITY, PERFORMATIVITY, AND THE NORMALIZATION OF POWER ABUSE

Emotions are the structural logic of conversation, not just one of its results. The main process by which ideology is absorbed, disseminated, and challenged is affectivity (Ahmed, 2014). Digital political participation creates emotive publics, which are networks based on shared emotions rather than facts, according to Papacharissi (2015). Emotions like pride, thankfulness, and optimism are encoded to justify power in pro-government speech. Due to emotional habituation, which is facilitated by these affective cues, loyalty becomes instinctive and even enjoyable. This illustrates how emotional discourse maintains symbolic supremacy from a CDA perspective: ideology is felt rather than debated (van Dijk, 2006). On the other hand, oppositional material uses sarcasm, grief, and rage to subvert authority. Digital ethnographic observation demonstrates that anger expressions, such as memes, parodies, or sarcastic comment threads, are performative acts of dissent rather than just forms of amusement. They transform rage into a shared emotional resource that keeps critique and community alive. Accordingly, performativity describes how people express their political subjectivity on the internet (Butler, 1997). People engage in ideological alignment or opposition through their daily digital rituals, such as publishing, sharing, and reacting. Together, affectivity and performativity show that digital politics is not just representational but also corporeal and emotional, functioning as an affective economy that may motivate democratic resistance and legitimize the abuse of power.

4. THE ROLE OF PLATFORMS: AFFORDANCES, ALGORITHMS, AND THE ATTENTION ECONOMY

Digital platforms are ideological technological infrastructures rather than neutral sources of information. Emotion is given priority over reason in their algorithmic structures, which emphasize engagement-driven content (Zuboff, 2019). Posts that are emotionally charged, whether they are considered pro-government or anti-government, receive disproportionate attention in this attention economy, whereas moderate or analytical information is disregarded.

According to CDA, algorithms are new institutional discourse control agents. By rewarding emotional patterns that maintain engagement, regardless of their political valence, they subtly support the dominant ideology. As a result, algorithmic governance shapes what is observable, credible, and debatable, constituting an imperceptible extension of hegemony. (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

Users and creators strategically respond to these algorithmic pressures, according to digital ethnography. Through humor, emotional hooks, and visual appeal, content is created to optimize virality, demonstrating the mutually beneficial connection between humans and algorithms where producers intentionally design for attention. A cyclical hegemony is created by this dynamic: emotion drives visibility, visibility strengthens ideology, and ideology forms emotional expression.

As a result, the digital public sphere transforms into a contested emotional space where censorship is replaced by visible hierarchies as the means of power. Thus, algorithms

turn emotion into an instrument of control and commodified participation through expressing ideology in code.

5. SYNTHESIS: THE DYNAMICS OF DIGITAL POLITICAL CULTURE

Integrating these findings, Indonesia's digital political culture emerges as a multilayered ecosystem of ideological production and negotiation:

- Encoding functions as ideological inscription through language and semiotics.
- Decoding reveals interpretive plurality and the active role of citizens in meaning-making.
- Affectivity and performativity demonstrate how emotion and embodiment reproduce or resist power.
- Platform affordances and algorithms institutionalize ideological hierarchies through engagement metrics.

Together, these dynamics reveal a digital environment that simultaneously democratizes expression and reconstitutes control. Hall's (1980) theory elucidates the interpretive multiplicity of digital publics; CDA exposes the structural and linguistic dimensions of ideological power; and digital ethnography captures the lived, affective, and performative aspects of political participation.

Ultimately, the findings address the study's objectives by demonstrating that:

- Digital political discourse in Indonesia constructs and contests ideology through discursive encoding and participatory decoding.
- Audience interpretation functions as a social negotiation of hegemony, producing dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings.
- Emotional and performative practices serve as vehicles of ideological reproduction and resistance, transforming feeling into political action.
- Platform affordances and algorithms operate as technological agents of hegemony, commodifying emotion and structuring visibility.

Hence, Indonesia's digital political culture encapsulates the dialectic of hegemony and resistance—a continuous, emotionally charged negotiation of meaning within an algorithmically mediated public sphere.

CONCLUSION

This research has shown that political communication in Indonesia's online environment is a dynamic and contested process influenced by ideology, technology, and audience agency. Employing Stuart Hall's Reception Theory, the results indicate that the meaning in political discourse is not static or one-dimensional; rather, it is perpetually negotiated through the interpretative actions of users on platforms like X and TikTok. The three reading positions (dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional) appear in various types of online interaction, from moral support of state stories to ironic or emotional pushback against political power.

The analysis additionally demonstrates that digital media platforms do not merely facilitate communication; they actively shape political discourse through their algorithmic and emotional frameworks. Feelings like empathy, anger, and sarcasm serve as tools for ideological expression, while algorithmic promotion favors sensational and divisive content. As a result, social media functions as a democratizing platform that fosters diverse voices while also serving as a tool that perpetuates ideological control and misinformation.

Within this intricate setting, Indonesian netizens act as proactive interpreters who redefine meanings influenced by cultural, emotional, and social contexts. Their interpretation methods mirror larger conflicts regarding legitimacy, truth, and involvement in the post-truth age. Thus, comprehending how audiences perceive and disseminate political meanings is vital for evaluating the state of Indonesia's democratic public sphere.

Future studies ought to investigate long-term and cross-platform comparisons to understand how audience interpretations change over time and how algorithmic governance persists in shaping public discourse. In conclusion, the results of this research confirm that Indonesia's digital political culture involves not just sharing information but also the continual negotiation of ideology, identity, and power within the algorithmic frameworks of modern communication.

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