

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a description of the study. In this chapter, the background of the study and formulation of the problem will be explored to provide insight into the context and urgency of the issue under study. Following this, operational definitions, the aim of the research and its significance will be discussed, thus clarifying the research objectives and the benefits derived from this study.

A. Background of the Study

Indonesia elected a new president on October 20, 2024, Prabowo Subianto as its eighth president, who introduced numerous programs under his leadership. One of them is the Free Nutritious Meal Program (*Makan Bergizi Gratis*), a part of prioritized programs aimed at tackling the issue of malnutrition and stunting. The program was started on January 6, 2025, and implemented gradually in 26 provinces throughout Indonesia and funded with APBN which costs seventy-one trillion rupiahs. The program targeted four main categories: students from preschool to high school, children under five, expectant mothers (mothers in pregnancy), and nursing/lactating mothers. The implementation of the program achieved various responses, be it positive, or negative. Success stories such as how the program successfully raised the employment rate around SPPG units (*Satuan Pelayanan Pemenuhan Gizi*) which are responsible for supplying nutritious food in their respective regions (Aulia, 2025), and aiding parents in ensuring their children's nutritional intake with additional meals from schools (Putri, 2025). In contrast, despite the positive results, numerous news reports the negative outcomes of this program, such as food poisoning in schools caused by spoiled food (BBC Indonesia, 2025) and the loss of farmers caused by the program's inability to absorb farmer's excessive stock of chicken, causing a drop in selling price (Rizky 2025).

The recurring polemics of the Free Nutritious Meal program has become a problem that still has not met any resolution. Different media contain differing stances or views in responding to an issue, thus affecting how they serve the news. The issues surrounding the program were documented and published by numerous online media, including online newspapers. However, how media serves an issue to the public is an under-explored topic while in fact, the media shapes how issues are understood by bringing attention to certain attributes, making them dominates public's mind, and the media links multiple attributes together and highlights those associated attributes, this constant association reinforces public to link them in their mind as a unified aspects (Wang et al., 2021). In addition, there is a lack of coverage or issues regarding how the media serves the news of this issue to the public until it becomes polemic.

The media serves as a tool that influences public opinion and merges public agenda with the agenda or interest of other systems (Japerson in Santos 2022). The media has increased power as a 'political public space when it focuses on themes related to government actions, and it functions as a tool that supports the processes of political control and decision-making, by not only sharing the political issue in public, but also helping the political system to understand what public expect and how acceptable their policies are (Esteves in Santos, 2022).

In recent years, research about the Free Nutritious Meal Program was made to discover its effects and implications. A critical discourse analysis conducted by Wulan et al (2025) a study examined how discussion on social media, particularly through the *#MakanBergiziGratis* reflects ideological tensions surrounding food security and nutrition policies. Another research performed by Ansori et.al. (2024) analyzed media framing of the Free Nutritious Meal Program in Kompas, employing the appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005) to examine attitude and ideological positioning in news reporting. Their study found that Kompas maintains a balanced state (53.8% positive, 46.2% negative) in its coverage, presenting both government justifications and public skepticism. Although much research has been conducted to examine the polemics of the free nutritious meal program in various digital media, there has not been much work

that examines how media has the power to highlight certain aspects of an issue through the lexical choices that construct the headline which also reflect their ideological representation by supporting or opposing an issue.

This research is Critical Discourse Analysis that primarily analyzes how text and speech in social and political contexts create, reinforce, justify, or challenge power abuse and equality (Van Dijk, 1993). The data are gathered through the document analysis method in selecting several news. The first is from AFP (2025) posted in The Jakarta Post titled “Indonesia Launches Ambitious Free-Meal Program to Combat Stunting” second news is from Wihardja & Patunru (2025) posted in Channel News Asia titled “The real Costs of Indonesia’s Free School Lunch Programme Can’t be Ignored” and lastly from Weda (2025) posted in Al-Jazeera, titled “Indonesia Kicks off First Free Meal Programme for Children, Pregnant Women” Later, analysing the text uses the foundation of Fairclough’s (1995) three-dimensional model, which consists of description (text analysis), interpretation (processing analysis), and explanation (social study) to reveal the ideology of online newspapers headlines from how it presents the issue of Free Nutritious Meal Program in their media.

B. Formulation of the Problems

Based on the background above, the research question focuses on “what lexical choices are used by the media to represent their support or opposition to the free nutritious meal program as their ideological representation?”

C. Operational Definitions

1. Free nutritious meals program polemics:

Free nutritious meal program polemics refers to news that conveys their arguments, whether to support the Free nutritious meals program or to oppose it.

2. Online newspaper:

News presented in digital format, which are contributed by different news agencies on the internet (The Jakarta Post, Channel News Asia, and Al-Jazeera).

3. Critical discourse analysis :

In this study, CDA foundation is based on Fairclough's Three-dimensional model consisting of description, interpretation, and explanation is used to analyse the text from three online media about free meal programs.

D. Aim of the Study

The research aims to uncover the ideology of online news media (The Jakarta Post, Channel News Asia, Al-Jazeera) through lexical choices which shows support or opposition in the texts that are presenting Free Nutritious Meal Program polemics.

E. Significances of the Study

1. Theoretical Uses

Theoretically, this study complements the previous studies on analyzing online newspaper articles specifically about government policy in the educational sector.

2. Practical Uses

Practically, this study's result contributes as learning material in learning such as writing, reading comprehension, or even as Critical discourse analysis.

3. Empirical Uses

In this study, CDA foundation is based on Fairclough's Three-dimensional model consisting of description, interpretation, and explanation is used to analyse the text from three online media about free meal programs.