

# Questioning BPOM: “Which Syrup Medicine is Safe for My Child?”

Moch Fuad Nasvian<sup>1\*</sup>, Radityo Widiatmojo<sup>2</sup>, Airlangga Daniswara<sup>1</sup>, Duta Ramadhan<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Communication Science Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, 65144, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Communication Science Department, Bina Nusantara University, 11480, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author's email: nasvian@umm.ac.id

## ABSTRACT

### Keywords

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The Food and Drug Supervisory Agency (BPOM) credibility is at stake as the Indonesian Pediatric Society and Indonesia's Health Ministry reported that there was an increase in cases of Acute Kidney Injury in children in 2022. The people and communities consider BPOM to be too slow and is not transparent with this case. As a result, public opinions regarding the case become wilder on social media. This study figures out the interactivity of netizens on the instagram @bpom\_ri in the case of Acute Kidney Injury in children. This study uses the thematic analysis and interactivity concept of McMillan. The results of the study showed that the dimension of interactivity in the comments section of BPOM's Instagram posts was high. The highest dimension was the sense of presence. The message relatedness of the comments was mainly linear with the posts. In terms of response, the most common was insight and information. The reactance of emotions showed a mix of positive and negative emotions, with fear being the most prevalent. This study found that netizens have a high willingness to share insight and information to others. They also express emotions such as fear and happiness when discussing medicine and feel connected to other commenters through a sense of presence. Additionally, there is a willingness to participate in a call of action. They keep commenting in BPOM instagram posts even though the comments did not match with the contents. Additionally, the issue of miss-using substances in children's syrup medicine evokes sadness among netizens.

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia has laws regulating many aspects of its citizens, including customer protection which was regulated in Law No 8 of 1999. Therefore, Indonesia has a controlling system to detect, supervise, and filter products circulating in the market so that it is safe and not harmful to Indonesians (Tampubolon, 2016). In an effort to protect consumer rights, the government formed *Badan Pengawas Obat dan Makanan*, also known as BPOM (Aziz & Musyafa'ah, 2020). BPOM (The Food and Drug Supervisory Agency) is an institution whose responsibility is to ensure the safety of any product, such as medicine, food, and cosmetics, in Indonesia. As a result, people can consume them without any doubt (Gondokesumo & Amir, 2021).

People undoubtedly put high expectations on BPOM's performance, yet the fact stated otherwise. The institution is known to have not optimally conducted its responsibilities. Many products, such as food and medicine, have not fulfilled health standards and Indonesian laws (Aziz & Musyafa'ah, 2020). Take the case of Nestlé in 2021 as an example, at that time Nestlé admitted that 60% of its products do not meet health standards. This case went viral since lots of Nestlé's products are available in Indonesia's market, and people began questioning BPOM's performance in supervising the products (Timorria, 2021). Another example of BPOM's lack of performance was when more than a million illegal cosmetics containing hazardous substances were found in Indonesia's market from

2021 until 2022. This case once again made people question the credibility of BPOM in protecting the safety and health of consumers (Salsabilla, 2022).

BPOM's ill performances are not limited to food and cosmetics, but also to regulations. In 2020 when Covid-19 cases increased, for example, BPOM issued a new regulation demanding that online sellers have to have a production certificate, a distribution certificate, and a marketing authorization if they want to sell the product. Many people were disappointed as it was thought to be too demanding. Also, BPOM was viewed as ignorant and insensitive as at that time people were struggling to survive amidst the Covid-19 (Sandi, 2020).

BPOM's credibility is once again at stake recently. It began as the Indonesian Pediatric Society (IDAI) and Indonesia's Health Ministry (Kemenkes RI) reported that there was an increase in cases of Acute Kidney Injury (AKI) in children, especially in those under 5 years old, since late August 2022 (Maudisha, 2022). The cases continued rising until October 15, 2022 (Ahmad et al., 2022). Furthermore, On October 21, 2022, there were 241 cases of Progressive Acute Kidney Injury in 22 provinces in Indonesia (Ulya, 2022). By October 26, 2022, Indonesia's Health Ministry reported that Acute Kidney Injury (AKI) has reached 269 patients with 58% (157) of them announced dead while the other 24% (73) were in treatment (Firmansyah, 2022). Then, the report said that there were 324 cases with 194 casualties by November 6, 2022 (Tarigan et al., 2022).

The government, through The Indonesia Health Ministry and BPOM, as well as several other parties conducted an investigation to find out the root of the case. The result showed Acute Kidney Injury in children comes from the contamination of hazardous chemicals namely Ethylene Glycol (EG), Diethylene Glycol (DEG), and Ethylene Glycol Butyl Ether (EGBE) in syrup medicine consumed by children (Firmansyah, 2022). BPOM announced 198 syrup medicines that do not contain any BEG, DEG, and EG by late October 2022. In addition, several contaminated syrup medicines are taken from the market (Ahmad et al., 2022).

When referring to the law, the case is indeed a violation of law No 7 the Year 1963 about the pharmaceutical industry on its preparation, management, concoction, procurement, storage, mixtures of ingredients and ingredient of medicines. In this case, the manufacturers of syrup medicines containing those hazardous chemicals violate Indonesia's law regarding the mixture of ingredients (Ahmad et al., 2022).

The recent AKI case, along with other previous cases, ultimately decreases citizens' trust in BPOM. Irma Suryani Chaniago, a member of Commission IX DPR RI, criticizes the poor work performance of the institution (Elviza, 2022). Moreover, BPOM receives criticisms from several parties, including a strike by 50 members of the Labor Party and The Confederation of All Indonesian Workers' Unions (KSPSI) demanding that BPOM change its chairperson (Nurshafira, 2022). In regard to the Acute Kidney Injury case, Poros Rawamangun, an anti-corruption community, also demands BPOM's dissolution since the institution fails to protect consumers' safety which in this case resulted in parents' hesitation in giving medicine to their children (Akmal, 2022).

BPOM has actually conducted several actions related to AKI cases (Ahmad et al., 2022). The institution does surprise inspections and rechecks all products under its supervision, especially those related to the pharmaceutical industry (Ahmad et al., 2022). As part of its responsibility, BPOM also provides health education content and current updates on the AKI case through social media (Mantalean, 2022). However, people and communities still consider that BPOM does not take initiative in responding to this case, even blaming other parties (Karina, 2022). As a result, people are anxious and questioning BPOM's professionalism, even many of them begin to distrust BPOM (Saputra, 2022).

Social media has spontaneously become a means of expressing oneself. Its existence gives vast opportunities for people to convey their opinion without any involvement of other parties and participate in certain events (Susilowati & Sukmono, 2021). Furthermore, the availability of virtual space will enable people to communicate and interact with each other (Susilowati & Sukmono, 2021). Such space is different from any other media, in the sense that the interactivity inside it gives uniqueness (Hadi, 2007). With the existence of the Internet, there will be high interactivity among users in the form of text, audio, and video (Lestari, 2022). Furthermore, the interactivity will be wide and global (Hadi, 2007). It will give the opportunity to anyone to access any kind of information across different media as much as they want (Lestari, 2022). Thus, in the case of Acute Kidney Injury in

children, the Internet does provide ad infinitum spaces for people to share information, criticize, and so on.

Regarding BPOM current performance, other studies on the institution have been conducted several times. In *“Strategi BPOM dalam Upaya Mengatasi Pemberantasan dan Penyalahgunaan Obat Ilegal Melalui Gerakan ‘Waspada Obat Ilegal’”*, the researchers tried to figure out strategies that are utilized by BPOM to fight against illegal drugs. The study found that BPOM applies collaboration-based policy with various organizations, such as Indonesian Pharmacist Association (*Ikatan Apoteker Indonesia*). Moreover, BPOM collaborated with medicine manufacturers and Commission IX DPR RI to fight illegal drugs (Afianto & Qona’ah, 2020).

Another study *“The Dilemma of Community Using Medicine and the Performance of BPOM in Medan”* depicted customers’ concern in taking Ranitidine which packaging was contaminated with Nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA), a hazardous substance that can cause the risk of suffering from cancer. The researcher tried to find out several ways in dealing with contaminated drugs. Moreover, the researcher highlighted actions that had been done by BPOM. The result of the study showed that there were several actions that can be taken when having issues with drugs. Though people have complained, BPOM performance is far from expected as the institution has not taken serious actions regarding the Nitrosodimethylamine contamination (Sitompul, 2021).

The two previous studies talked about the performance of BPOM, whereas the focus of the current study is on the case of contaminated syrup medicine resulting in AKI in children. As the case draws lots of attention and is considered vital, the researchers attempt to figure out the interactivity between BPOM IG contents and the people during the increasing case of AKI. In other words, this study tries to see whether or not communication messages from BPOM, as shown in its IG contents, can be received by the netizen well.

## 2. Method

This thematic analysis study uses a qualitative approach to get a depth overview from visual data of 27 Instagram posts of BPOM ([https://www.instagram.com/bpom\\_ri/](https://www.instagram.com/bpom_ri/)), through the comment section, in the fourth quarter of 2022. The data was taken in the fourth quarter of 2022 since that was the time when the case of BPOM negligence on supervising children’s syrup medicine arised. Furthermore, Instagram was chosen as BPOM mostly provides its latest updates and information through it. The researchers focused on scrapping 100 comments per content. Additionally, the researchers utilized the website *“https://exportcomments.com/”* to scrap the comments.

The data processing method are conducted in several stages, (1) familiarization with the data, labeling the codes, (2) doing coding, (3) generating initial themes, (4) developing and reviewing themes, (5) refining, defining and naming themes, and (6) conducting the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The first step in the data processing method was familiarization with the data. This involved reading through the data, in this case, comments on 27 Instagram posts of @bpom\_ri, to get a general understanding of the content. Next, the data was labeled with codes, which were used to identify specific themes and patterns within the data. This step involved identifying key words and phrases that were relevant to the interactivity concept. Codes In this research are classified to the responses from commenters to the contents (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

The next step was generating initial themes, which involved identifying patterns and commonalities within the coded data. Following this, the themes were developed and reviewed, which involved adding more detail and specificity to the initial themes. This step involved looking for connections and relationships between the themes, checking for any inconsistencies and also contradictions. The final stages of the data processing method involved refining, defining, and naming the themes (Heriyanto, 2018).

When researching this Instagram study, the researchers observed that social media ethics is important to be highlighted. However, until this study was authored, the Internet Research Association (AoIR) has only advocated ethical awareness when using data for research but has not yet provided official guidance (A. Markham & Buchanan, 2012). As a matter of fact, social ethics is interwoven with research methods. Therefore, it should become a concern during data collection, analysis, as well as dissemination (A. N. Markham et al., 2018; Ravn et al., 2020). Thus, in accordance with the issue

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of ethical reasons, researchers will only use comment data and not publish the identity of the Instagram account that posted the comment (Highfield & Leaver, 2016; Zimmer, 2010).

### 3. Result and Discussion

The data presented in this study is based on a dataset of 1750 Instagram comments from 27 posts of @bpom\_ri, collected over a period of 13 October-27 December 2022. The comments were analyzed by using Thematic Analysis. The labeling code process in this study (Table 2) uses the Interactivity Dimension concept of (Quiring & Schweiger, 2008), Six Basic Emotion (Ekman, 2004), and Message interactivity (Nedumkallel, 2020).

The results of this study showed that netizens who commented on the BPOM Instagram post demonstrated a high level of interactivity. Out of the 1750 comments, 781 comments showed a strong sense of presence, indicating that the participants felt actively engaged in the conversation. Additionally, 654 comments reflected a strong feeling of connectedness, which highlights the importance of creating a supportive and informative online community where individuals feel connected and can openly share information and insights. When analyzing the message relatedness, the results showed that while a majority of the comments were linear with the original post (1191 comments), there were still significant numbers of non-linear comments (559 comments). This indicates that the participants were not just passively responding to the post, but actively engaged in the conversation and willing to deviate from the original message.

Regarding the response, 961 comments shared insight and information, which shows a high level of engagement and willingness to share knowledge among the participants. Additionally, 177 comments reflected personal experiences, indicating that the participants were willing to share their own experiences and emotions. Furthermore, 202 comments expressed opposing opinions, demonstrating a diversity of perspectives and opinions among the participants. Finally, 410 comments showed a willingness to participate in the call to action, which highlights the level of engagement and investment the participants have in the topic being discussed.

The analysis of the reactance of emotions showed that 663 comments expressed fear, reflecting the concern and anxiety felt by the participants. 312 comments expressed anger, indicating that the participants felt a strong emotion on the topic being discussed. 325 comments expressed happiness, highlighting the positive experience and emotions felt by the participants. 191 comments expressed sadness, indicating that the participants were feeling emotional and invested in the conversation. 185 comments expressed disgust, demonstrating a strong negative emotion towards the topic. Finally, 74 comments expressed surprise, indicating that the participants were taken aback by certain aspects of the discussion.

The results of the labeling process in this study (Table 3) reveal interesting insights into the behavior and attitudes of netizens who commented on BPOM's Instagram posts. The top data combination shows that these netizens are highly connected and exhibit a strong desire to share insights and information. They expressed fear about the dangers of miss-using substances in children's syrup medicine and the sharing of personal experiences and emotions highlights the level of engagement and investment they have in the topic. This data combination was found in 330 comments out of a total of 1750 comment data.

The second most prominent theme, as shown by the 95 netizens who wrote comments with the exact pattern, was the feeling of immersion and willingness to participate in the call to action. The comments also revealed anger towards BPOM for its perceived negligence in carrying out its obligations as a drug and food regulatory agency in Indonesia. Despite some comments not being linearly aligned with the original post, there was a strong determination among netizens to raise awareness about the issue. This willingness to share information highlights the strong connection and importance of spreading awareness among these netizens.

The third top data showed that 80 comments out of the 1750 analyzed were marked with a sense of presence. This indicates that the netizens felt actively engaged in the conversation and were willing to share their insights and information. They expressed happiness when they received information they needed from other netizens, highlighting the importance of creating a supportive and informative online community. The non-linear nature of the comments also reflects this sense of presence and the desire for a dynamic and interactive online experience.

From the aforementioned results, there are various emotions, from sadness to anger, being shared by Instagram users in @bpom\_ri comment sections during the rising case of AKI in children (see Table 2 for details). Such appearances of emotions do indicate that people consider this case vital as emotions are able to mobilize people to deal with what they consider important in life; a child's life in this matter (Ekman, 2004). Besides, showing emotions in @bpom\_ri comment sections also indicates that social media does have a powerful effect on its users. Surely, it is in line with the notion that emotional effect can be magnified when users use social media, including giving comment on a particular content (Rost & Ye, 2016; Steinert & Dennis, 2022).

Another thing to point out from this study is related to how users perceive @bpom\_ri posts. In fact, Instagram users commenting on @bpom\_ri account reacts differently though they are seeing the same post. Several users commented that they felt connected with the post, other users commented in sarcastic manners, and the others merely reacted jokingly. This is in unison with an interactivity theory stating that interactivity is actually in the eye of the beholder. It means that it does depend on how an individual comprehends a content (McMillan, 2006).

Not only that users use social media to express emotion and opinion, Instagram users also use it to exchange information. This can be seen from the result of the study which shows that 54.91% of the comments are about exchanging information and giving insight. It surely proves the notion that people use social networks to exchange information on various themes (Biancovilli et al., 2022).

Still related to interactivity, Rafaeli stated that interactivity can be identified when there is relatedness of information exchange among participants. It is not only one-way "action" or two-way "reactions" that is possibly not responsive. As a matter of fact, each message reflects other preceding messages though the message sender still retains primary control (McMillan, 2006). From @bpom\_ri posts, the researchers can depict that interactivity is not merely about communication between @bpom\_ri, as the message sender, and Instagram users. Interactivity, in this case, can happen between users to users under certain posts talking about issues which may be linear or not linear to the content being shared by the message sender. Furthermore, the combination of interactivity dimension, the message interactivity and emotion that invest on the issue, makes netizens on @bpom\_ri comment sections keep exchanging information, even though they are getting farther from the post.

#### 4. Conclusion

The results of the study showed that the dimension of interactivity in the comments section of BPOM's Instagram posts was high. The highest dimension was sense of presence, with 781 comments marked, followed by connectedness with 654 comments and immersion with 275 comments. The low dimension was playfulness with only 40 comments marked. The message relatedness of the comments was mainly linear, with 1191 comments marked as such. However, there were also 559 comments marked as non-linear, indicating that some netizens deviated from the original post made by BPOM. In terms of response, the most common was insight and information, with 961 comments marked as such. Personal experience and opposing opinions were also present, with 177 and 202 comments marked respectively. The willingness to participate in a call to action was present in 410 comments. The reactance of emotions showed a mix of both positive and negative emotions, with fear being the most prevalent, followed by sadness and happiness. Anger and disgust were also present, while surprise and disgust were the least prevalent.

In conclusion, this study found that netizens have a high willingness to share insight and information to other netizens, especially in relation to BPOM Instagram content. They also express emotions such as fear and happiness when discussing medicine and were connected to other commenters through a sense of presence. Additionally, there is a willingness to participate in call of action. They keep commenting in BPOM instagram posts even though the comment did not match the content. It shows that they feel connected and are both afraid of this incident because they see that there are children who are victims, therefore they provide information to each other so that there are no more victims. Some netizens feel anger and immersion in the case, and question BPOM capability and responsibility of monitoring the Indonesian food and drugs, because this case did not happen only this time and has fallen many victims.

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