JCC jogjakarta communication conference

Narrative Network Analysis on Social Media Concerning the XYZ Ministry in Indonesia: Constructive Criticism vs. 'Pseudo-Haters'

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Social media; pseudo-haters; narrative network analysis

This article analyses the network of narratives circulating on social media regarding the XYZ Ministry in Indonesia, focusing on distinguishing between constructive criticism and the activities of "pseudo-haters." Criticism of government institutions on social media often intertwines with destructive and constructive negative narratives. Through narrative network analysis, this research aims to identify interaction patterns and information dissemination that indicate the presence of groups spreading unfounded negative narratives classified as "pseudo-haters." Social media has emerged as the primary platform for the public to express aspirations and criticisms; however, it is also susceptible to spreading harmful narratives that tarnish the institution's image. This article employs a narrative network analysis approach to identify key actors, narrative themes, and information dissemination patterns related to the XYZ Ministry. The research results are anticipated to map the current narrative landscape and uncover the presence of "pseudo-haters" groups that may contribute to the spread of factually unfounded negative narratives. These results are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of criticism and the dissemination of negative narratives on social media, along with their implications for Ministry XYZ's reputation and public communication.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Transformative Role of Social Media

Social media has fundamentally altered the landscape of public expression and discourse. It has evolved into a primary platform where individuals, organizations, and governments communicate, interact, and shape public opinion. This evolution has democratized communication, providing an accessible venue for diverse voices and fostering civic engagement. Islam and Bhuiyan (2023) emphasize that social media empowers citizens to express their views and actively participate in governance and policy making. This participatory environment supports democratic processes through constructive criticism and public feedback (Islam & Bhuiyan, 2023). Moreover, social media has become a vital communication channel for government agencies and social organizations, facilitating direct interaction with the public and enhancing transparency and accountability (Maulvi et al., 2023). In Indonesia, the adoption of social media for e-government initiatives by local governments exemplifies its role in information dissemination and service delivery (Yusmanizar et al., 2023)

However, the power of social media to disseminate information rapidly also presents challenges. Irawan (2021) demonstrates its effectiveness in communicating public health policies, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic (Irawan, 2021). Badr et al. (2022) illustrate the transformation of traditional governmental communication towards a two-way model (Badr et al., 2022). Yet, Ahmed et al. (2022)

caution about the potential for disinformation to spread quickly, complicating social media's role as a constructive platform. This duality necessitates strategic approaches to maximize the benefits of social media while mitigating its potential harms (Ahmed et al., 2022).

1.2 The Challenge of Negative Narratives and Online Criticism

While social media facilitates public expression, it also presents the risk of disseminating negative narratives that can damage the image and reputation of government institutions. High levels of user interaction can inadvertently contribute to the spread of inaccurate information and misinformation (Widyawati et al., 2021). Furthermore, the anonymity afforded by some social media platforms can enable the spread of negative narratives and the activities of "buzzers" (Abbiyyu & Nindyaswari, 2022). Adding complexity to this issue is the frequent intertwining of constructive criticism with destructive negative narratives. Constructive criticism aims to provide specific and actionable suggestions for improvement (Mahmud et al., 2023; Suhendra & Pratiwi, 2024). In contrast, destructive negative narratives often focus on disapproval and can escalate into personal attacks, cyberbullying, or disinformation campaigns (Effendi & Febriana, 2023; Gresenz et al., 2023; Nurleli, 2023). As Prasad and Ioannidis (2022) note, political discussions are particularly susceptible to this phenomenon, where debates can quickly devolve into hostility. The inability to distinguish between these forms of online communication poses a significant challenge for government institutions seeking to engage constructively with the public (Prasad & Ioannidis, 2022).

1.3 The Phenomenon of "Pseudo-Haters"

This study also addresses the phenomenon of "pseudo-haters," a term used to describe individuals or groups on social media who engage in activities that resemble traditional hatred but lack genuine conviction. Pseudo-haters often adopt extreme stances to provoke discourse or elicit reactions, rather than contributing to meaningful critique (Huang, 2023; Sulhin et al., 2023). This behavior is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context, where socio-cultural factors such as strong collective identities and political instability can influence online interactions. Sampío & Carratalá (2022) suggest that in societies with a strong emphasis on national identity, pseudo-haters may exploit this by exaggerating criticism of government policies, potentially skewing public sentiment and fostering societal divisions. The presence of pseudo-haters contributes to a trend of digital vigilantism and the use of social media as a battleground for ideologies, where sensationalized narratives often overshadow substantive discussion. Understanding the motivations and impact of pseudo-haters is crucial for developing strategies to promote constructive online discourse and mitigate the spread of harmful narratives (Sampío & Carratalá, 2022).

1.4 Research Focus and Significance

Given the complexities outlined above, this research focuses on analyzing the network of narratives circulating on social media regarding the XYZ Ministry in Indonesia. The XYZ Ministry is chosen due to its prominent position in the Indonesian government and its active engagement with the public through social media. Analyzing online narratives related to this ministry provides valuable insights into the dynamics of public perception, government communication, and the challenges of navigating online criticism. This research is significant for several reasons:

- It contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between social media, public opinion, and government institutions in the Indonesian context.
- It provides a framework for differentiating between constructive criticism and the activities of "pseudo-haters," which is crucial for fostering healthy online discourse.
- It offers practical guidance for government institutions, specifically the XYZ Ministry, in managing public communication and responding to negative narratives in the digital age.

Research Questions and Objectives

This research seeks to address the following key questions:

- What are the interaction patterns and information dissemination related to the XYZ Ministry on social media?
- How to identify and differentiate between constructive criticism and "pseudo-haters" activities?

- How can the formed narrative network affect the reputation and public communication of the XYZ Ministry?

To answer these questions, the research will pursue the following objectives:

- Identify key actors, narrative themes, and information dissemination patterns related to the XYZ Ministry.
- Map the narrative landscape circulating on social media.
- Uncover the presence of "pseudo-haters" groups that spread factually unfounded negative narratives.
- Provide an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of criticism and the dissemination of negative narratives on social media.

1.5. Literature Review
Social Media and Government Communication

Social media has revolutionized public communication and governance, shaping interactions between government entities and the public. Social media platforms have become essential tools in modern governance, enabling governments to communicate more openly and effectively with citizens (Fransisca & Ningsih, 2023). In Indonesia, the increasing penetration of internet usage and social media has significantly influenced public discourse, allowing government entities to manage communication strategies that enhance civic engagement. Research by Maryani et al. (2020) suggests that the use of social media has become an integral part of media consumption, especially among younger demographics, thus altering how information is relayed and consumed (Maryani et al., 2020). This shift facilitates a direct line of communication, allowing for real-time updates and engagement on critical issues such as public health, politics, and disaster management (P. W. Handayani et al., 2023). Furthermore, social media promotes participatory governance by allowing citizens to express opinions and engage in discussions around government policies. This is particularly crucial in a diverse society like Indonesia, where public opinion can greatly influence policy-making processes (Misran et al., 2023).

The dynamics of interaction between government and the public on social media are characterized by a shift from unilateral communication to a more dialogical approach. Governments are increasingly recognizing that engagement through social media facilitates transparency and accountability. Studies have shown that when governmental bodies interact with the public online, they can enhance public trust and build a favorable public image (Darmastuti et al., 2021). This is notable in contexts where citizen participation is essential for effective governance, as citizens expect responsive government action in the digital realm (Moy et al., 2020). However, the rapid dissemination of information on social media also brings challenges, such as the spread of misinformation and polarizing narratives. The critical need for governments to balance transparency and manage public perceptions in the face of potential backlash becomes evident (Ahmad, 2022). The phenomenon of cyber hate and negative campaigns can complicate constructive dialogue and public trust (Sulhin et al., 2023).

Effective management of government image and reputation in the digital era requires strategic communication practices that leverage social media's reach and immediacy. A proactive approach to engaging with social media users—by answering queries, providing timely information, and addressing grievances—can significantly enhance public perception (Adzra & Iryanti, 2024). Government agencies must develop crisis communication strategies that involve outlining clear protocols for dealing with feedback and managing potential disinformation campaigns (Wibisono & Darmalaksana, 2022). In Indonesia, public relations strategies are increasingly informed by the need for dynamic engagement on platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, where citizens are actively participating in discourse (Iskandar et al., 2023). Tailoring messages for digital platforms, analyzing user interactions, and employing partnerships are increasingly common tactics for enhancing governmental outreach and image.

Furthermore, crisis management during events such as natural disasters or public health emergencies necessitates a dedicated focus on maintaining reputation through timely and empathetic communication, public communication and governance, allowing for nuanced interactions between

government and citizens (Handayani et al., 2023). While the dynamics of these interactions pose challenges, they also provide unique opportunities for advancing public participation and enhancing governmental reputation. Embracing strategic communication practices in the digital sphere is crucial for navigating the complexities of contemporary governance in an increasingly interconnected world.

Constructive Criticism and Negative Narratives

Social media platforms facilitate public discourse, enabling the expression of both constructive criticism and negative narratives. Constructive criticism is aimed at improvement and is characterized by offering specific, actionable suggestions (Mahmud et al., 2023; Suhendra & Pratiwi, 2024). In contrast, negative narratives can range from disapproval to personal attacks, cyberbullying, and the spread of disinformation (Effendi & Febriana, 2023; Gresenz et al., 2023). The interplay between these forms of communication significantly impacts public discourse on social media. While constructive criticism can foster improvement and engagement, the rise of destructive narratives hampers productive discussions and can lead to significant societal ramifications (Tynes et al., 2021). Addressing this duality in social media discourse requires robust engagement strategies and the development of media literacy to empower users toward constructive interactions (Saputra & Al Siddiq, 2020).

"Pseudo-Haters" and Online Behavior

The phenomenon of "pseudo-haters" adds another layer of complexity to online discourse. Pseudo-haters are individuals or groups on social media who engage in activities that resemble traditional hatred but lack authenticity or genuine conviction, often adopting extreme stances to provoke reactions rather than contribute to meaningful discussion (Huang, 2023)). In the Indonesian context, this phenomenon is influenced by socio-cultural factors such as strong collective identities and political instability. Pseudo-haters may exploit these factors to amplify criticism of government policies and foster societal divisions. Their behavior often contributes to digital vigilantism and the use of social media as a battleground for ideologies, where sensationalized narratives can distort public perception (Sampío & Carratalá, 2022). Understanding the motivations and impact of pseudo-haters is crucial for developing strategies to promote constructive online discourse and mitigate the spread of harmful narratives.

2. Method

The research adopts a quantitative approach through narrative network analysis, which allows for the systematic examination of social media interactions and the identification of patterns and relationships within discourse surrounding the XYZ Ministry. This approach facilitates the analysis of large datasets from various social media platforms, enabling the study to quantify the presence of themes and sentiments pertinent to the ministry. Alongside the quantitative methodology, a qualitative approach is employed for interpreting the findings. This facet of the research focuses on understanding the context and nuances behind the data, particularly the motivations and implications of the narratives constructed by users. The qualitative analysis is critical in distinguishing between constructive criticism and negative narratives, offering a comprehensive understanding of user engagement and sentiment.

To support the research objectives, the following data collection techniques are employed:

- **Crawling Data from Social Media Platforms:** Automated tools will be used to gather data from high-traffic social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. These platforms are selected based on their relevance to public discourse in Indonesia and the variety of user interactions they capture.
- **Collection of Narrative Data Related to the XYZ Ministry:** The researchers will focus specifically on posts, comments, and articles pertaining to the XYZ Ministry, allowing for the collection of narrative data that reflects public sentiment and perceptions of government actions. This narrative data is essential for identifying interaction dynamics and themes associated with constructive criticism and negative narratives.

The analysis of collected data will involve multiple techniques to ensure comprehensive insights are obtained:

- **Narrative Network Analysis:** This technique will be utilized to map out interaction patterns, identifying key actors and the flow of information among users discussing the XYZ Ministry. This method allows for visualizing connections and understanding how narratives are constructed and propagated.
- **Thematic Analysis:** Through thematic analysis, dominant narrative themes will be identified within the collected data. This analysis will involve coding the data and grouping similar themes to discern patterns that highlight the nature of interactions, especially those oriented toward constructive criticism or negativity.
- **Content Analysis:** This method will differentiate between constructive criticism and negative narratives effectively. The analysis will focus on the language used, sentiments conveyed, and underlying intentions, providing a clearer picture of how social media discourse affects public perception of the government.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Presenting the Results

The findings of this research, based on an internal investigation by the XYZ Ministry in 2024, reveal several key insights into the nature of online criticism directed at the ministry. The study initially defined "haters" as individuals or entities who consistently express opposition and criticism towards the XYZ Ministry's social media content, encompassing statements and policies. Haters can be interpreted as subjects who are in the opposition who constantly criticise the content of the main subject who has a social media account, which in this context, the subjects identified by the Ministry of XYZ are subjects who criticise the news to create content from statements to policies issued by the Ministry of XYZ through their official social media accounts. Of the seven haters accounts identified by the Ministry of XYZ, some of the content tends to lead to criticism of the label 'haters' to the seven accounts. The tendency of content designed and uploaded by all accounts shows a critical element that criticises, regrets and opposes the policies provided by the Ministry of XYZ and its subsectors.

Accounts identified as haters	
Specific content about XYZ Ministry: @txt*** @raihanaulia	Content that is not specifically about the XYZ ministry: @akbarfaisal; @fajarnugroho; @Partai Socmed; @PNS Ababil; @Jejak Digital

Source: internal research in 2024

From the table above, 7 (seven) haters tend to target different content, so they are classified into two categories. In the first category, out of the seven accounts, two accounts specifically criticise the policies of the Ministry of XYZ (as well as sub-sectors). In the second category, five other accounts do not specifically direct the focus of the content to the policies of the Ministry of XYZ but also criticize policies from different ministries and those related to issues that are rife among the public. Based on the analysis in the first category, the tendency of the content generated from the two accounts leads to criticism of transportation facilities and infrastructure for the public. However, what needs to be highlighted is that the two accounts have different target messages.

In the second category, the 5 (five) accounts identified as haters by the Ministry of XYZ tend for content to criticise other ministries related to issues that are hot in the public. Sometimes, content is directed at the Ministry of XYZ. Still, the content only occurs within the time span of public issues related to the Ministry of XYZ (such as train and bus accidents). These five accounts have content characteristics that will criticise other ministries and even private parties without specifically pointing to one Ministry. Thus, the author feels it is inappropriate to identify the five accounts as XYZ Ministry hater's accounts because the content produced is not dominated by content in the form of satire or criticism of actions or policies created by the XYZ Ministry.

However, the Ministry's internal data shows that the accounts are identified as haters, which raises the question of the extent of identification or keywords used by the Ministry in the categorisation of haters and influencers. What kind of action will the XYZ Ministry take in responding to these accounts and public opinion circulating through opinion leaders titled haters?

The following is a discussion of 3 accounts that are categorised as (pseudo) haters:

1. The X and IG@fajarnugr accounts of an art activist (director and writer) have raised many concerns about accident cases and the shortcomings of the management of the XYZ sector in Indonesia. Daily activities on his X account include tweets and reposts of various accounts or news being discussed by the public. This is also related to the characteristics of X social media, where users are more free and use more cynical and sarcastic sentences and words to respond to events/news, making them look like fighters for the voice of the people. This can be captured from the data from January to June 2024, where various accidents attracted public attention because they were related to how the XYZ sector was organized, which covered crucial sectors for citizens. For example, the study tour bus accident that claimed the lives of SMK students in Subang on 11 May 2024 led to a tweet made to voice disappointment in the XYZ ministry. The tweet given was "What does it do?". Not only these cynical tweets, this account also features many posts sharing experiences using public transport such as trains, MRT, and Transjakarta. His X account is followed by 110.2K. His IG account is followed by 72.1 K. When tweets or posts are cynical/critical of government performance but not politically aimed at specifically attacking the government. In contrast, when sharing experiences, there are still positive or neutral posts, which can be categorised as the pseudo-haters group, which is not hating but conveying the opinion/opinion that is at the top of his mind, things that are unrest, disappointment, or supportive things, things that show one's feelings and thoughts that are freely conveyed on social media.

2. General text t*** account
   Originating from the 'Txt**' account, it tends to criticize policies regarding pedestrian facilities for the public, which, if examined from the various content they create, will relate to the content of the 'Txt T*** Umum' account, which is still in the same account network. This account has 30.9K followers. One of the posts in December 2024 with an image and the tweet "What do officials know about public tr***?" where this content is associated with the use of escort patrols and going through sterile lanes (busway) during rush hour and congestion. This post provoked 123 comments, 26K likes, 9.2K shares, and 604K interactions on X media.

3. Raihan audio account
   Raihan Aulia (X and IG) tends to content that talks explicitly about public t*** but specifically focuses on t*** policies that occur in West Java and are more dominated by public t*** in Bandung. Based on the analysis results, there is very little content criticizing ministry policies that are national and occur in other regions. This can be realized because the account owner is part of a community engaged in public t***. In 2022, Raihan was a speaker for a chat about public tr*** in Bandung, organized by Beritabaik.id. His X account has 1282 followers. One of the most recent posts (19 April 2025) features a collaboration between the txt account t****, which re-tweets content from Raihan Aulia with photos and tweets: "Oh, this is what it feels like commuting on a line whose headway is stuck at 10 minutes because in 2025 the signaling is still waiting for the train to enter the next station". This tweet attracted 52K views. The resulting discussion was on her post and other accounts (as the text did).

The research identified a subset of accounts that exhibited characteristics of *"pseudo-haters."* These accounts, while critical, did not consistently engage in targeted attacks on the XYZ Ministry. Instead, their content often included:
- Cynical and sarcastic remarks.
- Expressions of public sentiment (e.g., unrest, disappointment).
- Provocative language intended to ignite discussion.

From the exposure of media text data through social media accounts above, the author looks at the category of Pseudo-haters who use sentences that can provoke and ignite discussion (Sulhin et al., 2023). Analysis of posts from pseudo-haters tends not to lead to more meaningful and directed criticism of the intended issues and subjects (Huang, 2023) because if traced discussions or conversations are only limited to comments, there are rarely specific movements such as sending official letters, visiting the relevant Ministries or other direct actions. An interesting phenomenon of viral social media content uploads is that audiences tend to come to the content if they see hundreds or even thousands of comments, giving rise to the question of who came here because they wanted to read the comments. The comments are sometimes very entertaining, with terms like *"diluar nurul"* or *"diluar prediksi BMKG."* This shows social media's unpredictable, unique, and entertaining nature, even if it is unpleasant for those being criticized/discussed.

Social media is one of the communication tools that government institutions can use to avoid wild balls when developing issues that can create a loss of public trust and affect the institution's overall reputation. Communication programmes and handling of communication crises are strategic steps that the Ministry of XYZ can take. A democratic government is a government that listens to the voice of the people and supports and criticizes. The classification of haters (pseudo) indicates the lack of preparedness of the communication program for the policies made. Posts and content created show concern for the advancement of community services. We are not waiting for it to go viral and become an easy target for netizen comments; this participation needs to be addressed with government participation in social media. As concluded, the importance of responsive action from the government is a digital reality today (Moy et al., 2020).

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this research provide a nuanced understanding of online criticism directed at the XYZ Ministry. The categorization of "haters" accounts reveals the importance of distinguishing between accounts that consistently target the ministry and those that engage in broader public discourse, only occasionally focusing on the ministry. The identification of "pseudo-haters" further complicates the landscape, highlighting the presence of accounts that utilize criticism as a means of expressing public sentiment or provoking discussion, rather than solely aiming to undermine the ministry's reputation.

The analysis of specific accounts demonstrates the diverse nature of online criticism. Some accounts focus on specific policy areas (e.g., transportation infrastructure), while others reflect broader public concerns and sentiments. The prevalence of sarcastic and provocative language, coupled with the tendency for discussions to remain confined to comments, underscores the challenges of fostering constructive dialogue on social media.

These findings have several important implications for the XYZ Ministry. The ministry's classification of online accounts requires careful consideration of the intent and nature of the content. A more nuanced approach, distinguishing between different forms of criticism and recognizing the role of "pseudo-haters," can lead to more effective communication strategies.

The research also highlights the need for government institutions to actively engage with online discourse, moving beyond simply monitoring social media to participating in constructive conversations and addressing public concerns. As Moy et al. (2020) emphasize, responsive action from the government is a digital reality today (Moy et al., 2020).

4. Conclusion

This research has shed light on the complexities of online criticism directed at the XYZ Ministry, particularly the challenge of distinguishing between constructive criticism and the activities of "pseudo-haters." The analysis of narrative networks and online discourse reveals the diverse motivations and behaviors of social media users, as well as the potential for both constructive engagement and destructive negativity. The findings underscore the importance of nuanced analysis and strategic communication for government institutions in the digital age. By understanding the dynamics of online criticism and engaging proactively with the public, ministries like XYZ can foster greater trust, enhance accountability, and navigate the challenges of online reputation management more effectively. Further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of "pseudo-haters" on

public opinion and the development of effective strategies for countering disinformation and promoting constructive online dialogue.

5. Acknowledgement

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