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Hashtags as Digital Mobilisation: A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis of #IndonesiaGelap

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ABSTRACT

Protest discourse has become a fruitful source of data for critical studies, as reflected in the Indonesian socio-political landscape in early 2025. As social media plays an important role in disseminating information and shaping public discourse, narratives and hashtags related to the protests quickly gained widespread attention and became trending topics on social media. This study investigates how digital activism is represented through the #IndonesiaGelap "Dark Indonesia" hashtag on X. This study adopted a corpus-assisted discourse approach to analyse 16,103 posts through the analytical framework of Theo van Leeuwen's Social Actor Theory. The quantitative and qualitative analyses demonstrate that Indonesian citizens use the hashtag to express their rejection, criticism, mobilisation, and solidarity by involving particular social actors. Therefore, netizens used proper names referring to political elites to represent the most dominant social actors, which serves as a discursive strategy to blame the worsening political situation in Indonesia. In addition, the corpus reveals that many users associated those events with previous presidential elections, which they perceived as being controlled by political dynasties, with the metaphor of "dark" reinforcing these negative evaluations. These findings indicate that hashtags functioned to construct the ideological distinction between "us", represented by citizens, and "them", represented by the Indonesian government, elites, and media. This study emphasises the function of hashtags in shaping online political dissent and democratic debate.

I. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social media has encouraged the development of digital activism by transforming political participation from a largely passive activity into an active form of public advocacy for social and political change. In contemporary society, social media serves not only as a platform for information exchange but also as a space for political expression, democratic participation, and collective mobilisation (Masduki & Wendratama, 2025; Saud et al., 2023). Across social media platforms, users employ diverse linguistic resources to frame political issues, foster solidarity, and disseminate political

messages. Although these resources are diverse across platforms, each resource contributes to the organisation of online political communication. On X (formerly *Twitter*), this function is primarily realised through hashtags, which act as powerful discursive markers by facilitating digital activism, such as organising conversations, increasing issue visibility, and encouraging user interaction and engagement (Romero & Bautista, 2022; Singh et al., 2025; Zappavigna, 2011).

Beyond their communicative function, hashtags provide rich empirical material for examining how political meanings, positions, and emotions are discursively constructed. By

capturing the polyphony of users' voices, they provide valuable insight into the dynamics of political discourse (Davis, 2013). They also operate as discursive arenas in which resistance, political attitudes, and ideological affiliations are expressed and negotiated, rather than merely serving as instruments of mobilisation (Gurung et al., 2025). Furthermore, they facilitate the spread of collective emotions, including anger, frustration, and dissatisfaction with prevailing political conditions (Lee & Chau, 2018), which, in turn, intensify the affective dimension of political discourse.

Previous studies have demonstrated that hashtags have become an important resource for expressing collective positions and challenging dominant narratives across different socio-political contexts (Segesten & Bosseta, 2017). In the context of Indonesia, this role became particularly visible through the hashtag *#IndonesiaGelap*, which first emerged on February 3, 2025, before gaining nationwide prominence and becoming a trending topic on February 17, 2025. At that time, university students across Indonesia mobilised in protest against a series of controversial government policies that were widely perceived as harmful, non-transparent, and contrary to public interests. Rather than being triggered by a single event, it emerged from an accumulation of structural problems that many Indonesians perceived as indicative of a broader national crisis. *#IndonesiaGelap* hashtag was initially popularised by *@budibukanintel*, which had previously participated in *#IndonesiaDarurat* 'Emergency Indonesia' campaign (Arofah & Triwardani, 2025). Within a month, over three million posts had been published online using the hashtag (Muzzaki, 2025). This level of engagement reflects its function in raising public awareness and sustaining the social movement (Simpson, 2018).

Research on hashtags is dynamic and evolving in line with changes in the social and political context. Based on Gurr's (1968) relative deprivation theory, Clairine et al. (2025) observed that hashtags *#KaburAjaDulu* 'just run away first' and *#NarasiIndonesiaGelap* "dark Indonesian narrative" had become a medium where irony and resistance against the state's official narrative are articulated. Employing Entman's (1993) framing theory, Muharrom et al. (2025) examined two Indonesian news media. They revealed differences in news coverage between a neutral, descriptive approach that focuses on the visual and logistical

aspects of the protests and a more critical approach that scrutinises government policies while drawing attention to issues of transparency, accountability, and public participation. Another relevant study by Nasution et al. (2025) investigated a news article concerning the *#IndonesiaGelap* hashtag. Their analysis shows that Indonesian news media tend to privilege elite perspectives by employing specific lexical choices that marginalised demonstrators' voices, portraying the public as passive actors and framing the movement as a disruptive event. Recently, Susanto and Oktavian (2026) examined *#KaburAjaDulu* and the reconfiguration of Indonesian national identity in the digital age. Their findings show that users often use this hashtag to express moral outrage, articulate ideological resistance, and foster collective or public participation through emotional content. In this way, social media serve as a site for contesting and renegotiating existing power relations.

Previous studies have also examined the *#IndonesiaGelap* movement across other social media platforms. Mufidah et al. (2025), for instance, examined *#IndonesiaGelap* on *TikTok* by focusing on affective expressions and symbolic resistance practices mediated by its features. Although previous studies have investigated hashtag-based discourse on *X*, they have relied on relatively limited datasets. Consequently, linguistic investigations based on large-scale social media data remain scarce.

Internationally, a growing body of research has applied Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate hashtag-based discourse. Jaber (2021) discussed "honour killings" as a serious social justice issue faced by women around the world, particularly in Palestine, through the hashtag *#WeAreAllIsraaGharyeb* on *Twitter*. Bouvier and Li (2025) explored how social justice was represented through the *#StandWithWomenInAfghanistan* hashtag by employing a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MMDA) approach. Meanwhile, Ghimier and Rana (2025) revealed how Nepali feminist activists have reconstructed resistance discourse using hashtags on *Facebook* and *X*. In the political domain, Soares and Recuero (2021) analysed the use of hashtags as sites of discursive struggle during the 2018 Brazilian presidential campaign. Their findings revealed how competing political groups strategically utilised hashtags to disseminate disinformation, construct counter-

narratives, and intensify political polarisation on *Twitter*. More recently, Rangsarittikun (2025) used a diachronic corpus-based approach to examine posts on *X* containing the #Woke hashtag and found that its meaning had changed over time, with the discourse shifting from issues of power and coercive politics to gender equality, while racism remained a dominant theme throughout the ten years. Despite examining different contexts, these studies consistently highlighted the role of hashtags for articulating anger, frustration, and resistance in response to perceived social and political injustices.

However, existing studies have largely overlooked how social actors are represented in hashtag-based movements. This gap provides the rationale for conducting the present study by positioning *X* as a representative medium for grassroots political expression. Specifically, this study investigates how the hashtag #IndonesiaGelap is used to discursively represent social actors within Indonesia's contemporary political landscape discursively. To achieve this goal, this study integrates corpus linguistics and discourse analysis to analyse large-scale social media data (Kauk et al., 2025; Moreno-Ortiz & García-Gámez, 2023). Corpus linguistics further provides quantitative instruments for identifying linguistic patterns (Baker, 2006; Baker et al., 2013), while van Leeuwen's (2008) social actor network establishes the theoretical grounding for examining how social actors construct meaning.

Social Actor Network (SAN) analysis is a method commonly used in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to reveal not just what is said, but who is included, how they are represented, and the power dynamics embedded in networks of influence. In this approach, van Leeuwen (2008) maps rigorous social actor categories to explain how agency is included and excluded in the discourse. van Leeuwen (2008) identifies nomination and categorisation as two major strategies for representing social actors. Through nomination, social actors are represented by their unique identities. Meanwhile, categorisation represents social actors based on the social identities, roles, or functions they share with others (van Leeuwen, 2008). Over the past two decades, it has been used to examine how particular social groups are represented in discourse, particularly to foreground the "voices" of marginalised and underprivileged groups (Nartey & Mwinlaaru, 2019)

Guided by this framework, this study examines discourse as a source of representation through which relations of power, inequality, and also legitimacy are produced and negotiated (van Leeuwen, 2015). As one of the key platforms for contemporary activism (Chon & Park, 2020), *X* provides a valuable site for examining how users strategically represent social actors when discussing political issues. Accordingly, this study assumes that the public employs specific linguistic strategies to highlight or exclude social actors deemed responsible for the political situation in Indonesia. Such representations construct in-group (us) and out-group (them) boundaries that shape public assessments of both past and present political events. This study addresses two primary research questions: (1) What themes emerge in *X* posts containing the #IndonesiaGelap hashtag? and (2) How are social actors constructed in these posts?

II. METHODS

According to Rose et al. (2020, p. 221), "representativeness is a key construct in CL research as it determines the appropriateness of using particular corpora to address specific research questions". The dataset of this study comprises a purpose-built corpus of 16,103 *X* posts with the #IndonesiaGelap hashtag. Containing 300,010 running words (tokens), the corpus represented public discussions posted between 3 and 28 February 2025. This timeframe was selected because it captures the early development of the movement, when discussions on *X* became particularly active.

The data were retrieved through web crawling with *tweet-harvest* v2.6.1, which runs in a *Node.js* environment and uses cookie-based authentication to access publicly available *X* search results. The search using the keyword "Indonesia Gelap" returned 19,646 data entries (posts). Following the extraction, the dataset underwent several stages of pre-processing. In this stage, duplicate entries, advertisements, and irrelevant posts or entries without substantial text content were removed. In order to facilitate corpus analysis, only the timestamp and full text of each post are stored, and metadata unrelated to the analysis is discarded. The resulting corpus was stored in UTF-8 encoded plain-text format (.txt) for subsequent analysis.

Although the dataset consisted exclusively of

publicly accessible posts, this study follows current ethical recommendations for internet-mediated study (Coffin, 2025), which recognise that publicly available social media content should not be automatically regarded as ethically unrestricted. Accordingly, all usernames, profile information, account identifiers, and other personally identifiable metadata were excluded from the analysis, except in cases where user accounts were essential to interpreting expressions of collective solidarity. The dataset or corpus was securely stored and accessed solely for academic purposes. Examples presented in the findings were anonymised to minimise the possibility of user identification.

Corpus processing was conducted using *AntConc* version 4.3.1 (Anthony, 2024). This tool supports the identification of frequent lexical items, collocations, or the co-occurrences of words with their surroundings, and the use of words in particular contexts. The corpus was analysed through four complementary stages. *First*, word frequency analysis was conducted in order to identify the most frequent lexical items in the corpus. Because the analysis was based on a single purpose-built corpus, raw frequency was used to identify dominant lexical patterns rather than normalised frequency or keyword analysis.

Second, collocation analysis was conducted to examine words that frequently co-occurred with the node word of *Indonesia Gelap*. The collocation analysis was restricted to the 5L-5R window. This window size is commonly used in CADS as it enables the identification of broader lexical associations than adjacent-word (N-gram) analysis, which makes it suitable for examining discourse patterns rather than merely fixed expressions (Gablasova et al., 2017). Collocations were then considered statistically significant at 3.84, meaning $p < .05$ based on *AntConc*'s log-likelihood test. The log-likelihood statistic shows whether the co-occurrence of two words is greater than expected by chance. Meanwhile, the magnitude of the collocational association is better evaluated using an effect-size measure rather than the likelihood statistic alone (Oakes, 2020). The resulting collocations were examined through concordance lines to interpret their meanings in context.

Third, the collocations were grouped into semantic and thematic categories by using an inductive approach (based on the emerging data).

These categories were derived from repeated examination of concordance lines rather than from a predetermined framework. To enhance reliability, the researchers independently reviewed the semantic and thematic classifications through a cross-examination procedure until consensus was reached (Gillings et al., 2023). *Finally*, the discourse was further analysed by employing van Leeuwen's (2008) Social Actor Network (SAN). This is a socio-semantic model used in Critical Discourse Analysis to reveal ideologies by examining the way individuals and groups are represented linguistically (van Leeuwen, 2008). High-frequency lexical items, together with their concordances, were used to identify how social actors were represented and how that representation contributed to the construction of responsibility, legitimacy, and political positioning within the movement.

III. RESULTS

Word lists and collocation analysis of #IndonesiaGelap

The initial step in this corpus-assisted discourse study is to investigate the discursive construction of *#IndonesiaGelap* from the word lists and collocations. This study examined the 100 most frequent lexical items of the corpus. Frequency is treated as a marker of discursive salience rather than inherent importance, and it functions as a heuristic device for mapping dominant thematic categories. Through semantic categorisation, 60,335 lexical words and multi-word units were classified into eight domains, as shown in Figure 1.

The dominance of *government*-related tokens has made state institutions the central focus of the discourse, which highlighted concerns about accountability and governance. Frequent reference to the *country* positions these protests or movements as a national issue, rather than an individual or local one, which then emphasises that the crisis being experienced is affecting the nation as a "whole". The employment of *citizens*, *demonstrations*, and *protests* constructs collective action as a means of political engagement, which positions the public as active rather than passive agents. Meanwhile, the themes of *demand* and *hope* indicate that the public is engaging with governance policy. On the other hand, items referring to the *media* and *politicians* are used to identify certain figures as the responsible actors in the demonstration.

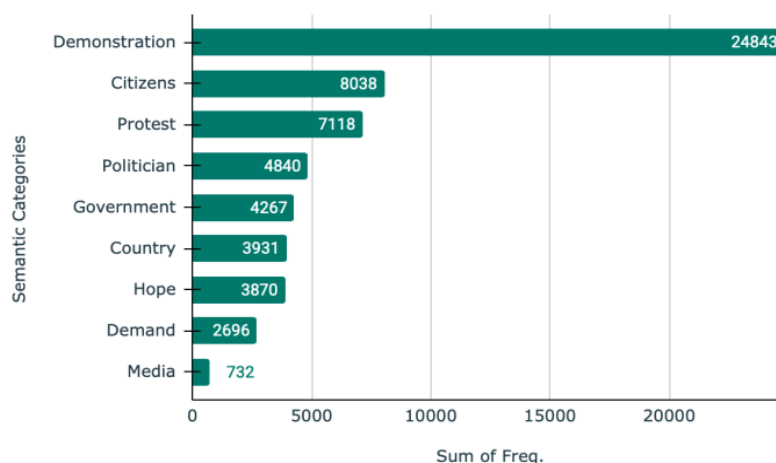


Figure 1. Semantic categories of identified words in the #IndonesiaGelap discourse

Table 1. Thematic categories of collocates associated with the #IndonesiaGelap discourse

Thematic Categories	Collocates
opposition	<i>adilijokowi</i> “prosecute Jokowi” (961,793), <i>ndasmu</i> “your head!/nonsense” (241,843), <i>tolakdanantara</i> “reject Danantara” (74,222), <i>jokowiluhutmusuhrakyat</i> “Jokowi-Luhut are citizens’ enemies” (54,474), <i>wok</i> (exclamation/sarcastic interjection for Prabowo) (52,497), <i>jokowiperampokapbn</i> “Jokowi is the robber of the state budget” (43,926), <i>meongnyamulyono</i> “Mulyono’s cat (satirical insult)” (41,132), <i>indonesiaemas</i> “Golden Indonesia” (40,365), <i>pidatoblunderprabowo</i> “Prabowo’s blunder speech” (37,478), <i>penjahatkemanusiaan</i> “crimes against humanity” (34,318), <i>indonesiagelapndasmu</i> “Indonesia is dark? Nonsense!” (34,528), <i>budibukanintel</i> “Budi is not the intelligence agent” (31,211), <i>indonesiandasmu</i> “Indonesia? Nonsense!” (30,260), <i>democrazymedia</i> “democracy gone mad (media)” (29,543), <i>burukbersamaprabowo</i> “worse with Prabowo” (29,467), <i>fufufafaabnasional</i> “fufufafa, a national disgrace” (29,396), <i>prabowo</i> (28,786), <i>adilijokowimeluas</i> “put Jokowi on trial is expanding” (25,516), <i>pagarlaut</i> “sea fence” (25,072), <i>kebijakan</i> “policy” (25,033)
crisis	<i>peringatan darurat</i> “emergency warning” (656,289), <i>darkindonesia</i> (522,915), <i>indonesiagelap</i> “dark Indonesia” (197,469), <i>indonesiacemas</i> “anxious indonesia” (60,801), <i>daruratpendidikan</i> “education emergency” (46,166), <i>gulita</i> “total darkness” (42,494), <i>indonesiagelapgulita</i> “Indonesia in total darkness” (40,103), <i>indonesiamadesu</i> “Indonesia is doomed” (25,582), <i>gelap</i> “dark” (21,833), <i>indonesiadarurat</i> “Indonesia in emergency” (30,082)
mobilisation	<i>kaburajadulu</i> “just escape for now” (200,820), <i>menang</i> “win” (40,084), <i>ramaikan</i> “make it viral” (47,090), <i>aksi</i> “action/protest” (45,924), <i>lawan</i> “resist/oppose” (44,529), <i>kabursajadulu</i> “just escape for now” (43,646), <i>jalan</i> “march” (33,580), <i>demo</i> “demonstration” (31,388), <i>lawanajadulu</i> “just resist first” (28,747)
solidarity	<i>umur</i> “age” (257,092), <i>panjang</i> “long” (246,140), <i>perjuangan</i> “struggle” (217,527), <i>kamibersamasukatani</i> “we stand with Sukatani” (155,743), <i>artisbersuara</i> “artists speak up” (94,710), <i>teman</i> “friend” (86,373), <i>hidup</i> “life/live” (57,624), <i>barengwarga</i> “together with citizens” (45,488), <i>semangat</i> “spirit/keep the spirit up!” (45,422), <i>mahasiswa</i> “college students” (44,828), <i>masyarakat</i> “the public/society (31,243)

To further investigate how these categories are linguistically constructed, an analysis of collocates was conducted to identify the words that frequently co-occur with the hashtag. By analysing statistically significant co-occurrences, this study further identifies the most dominant themes surrounding the #IndonesiaGelap movement. As presented in Table 1, the collocates can be grouped into four major themes such as opposition, crisis, mobilisation, and solidarity, with the corresponding log-likelihood scores shown in brackets. The log-likelihood statistic was used to

identify statistically significant collocates, while thematic categorisation was used to organise these collocates into broader semantic patterns. In this study, grouping collocates into themes facilitates the interpretation of discourse by identifying the broader meanings and functions underlying each lexical association, rather than interpreting each collocate in isolation.

In Table 1, the collocation patterns surrounding the #IndonesiaGelap hashtag show that netizens largely used this hashtag to voice their opposition to the government

and political elites through evaluative, critical, and often satirical expressions. The repeated occurrence of expressions, such as *adilijokowi* (961,793), *jokowiluhutmusuhrakyat* (54,474), *wok* (52,497), *jokowiperampokapbn* (43,926), *meongnyamulyono* (41,132), *pidatobluderprabowo* (37,478), *burukbersamaprabowo* (29,467), *fufufafaabnasional* (29,396), as well as *adilijokowimeluas* (28,516) shows several discourse patterns. First, these lexical items indicate the presence of personalisation in political criticism by constructing political elites such as *Jokowi*, *Prabowo*, *Luhut*, and *Gibran* as the main agents responsible for the perceived political situation. Second, the emergence of creative hashtags, sarcastic labels, and derogatory expressions indicates how netizens creatively employ linguistic strategies as a form of political resistance. Third, these expressions show the loss of legitimacy of political actors through their negative portrayal as social actors.

The Javanese word *ndasmu* (241,843), which co-occurs with, and was originally uttered by, *Prabowo*, is realised as an expressive speech act conveying a verbal insult towards the targeted political actor. From a politeness perspective, this expression constitutes bald-on-record impoliteness, as it challenges the Javanese norm of respectful speech (Nursanti et al., 2023, 2024). Therefore, within the discourse, this lexical item is categorised under the theme of opposition since it violates conventional expectations of respectful language from a political elite, which reinforces the public's antagonistic stance towards political authority. Likewise, in the corpus, the collocate *kebijakan* (25,033), which is frequently found in the phrase *kebijakan tidak pro rakyat* "policies that do not favour the citizens", targets the government. As a result, it is also classified under the theme of opposition.

Crisis-related collocations then reinforce this opposition by representing the national condition as a state of emergency. They are marked by some hashtags and adjectives, such as hashtags *peringatan darurat* "emergency warning" (656,289), *darkindonesia* (522,915), *indonesiagelap* "dark Indonesia" (197,469), *indonesiacemas* "anxious Indonesia" (60,801), *indonesiagelapgulita* "Indonesia in total darkness" (40,103), *indonesiamadesu* "Indonesia is doomed" (25,582), and *indonesia darurat* "Indonesia in

emergency" (30,082), and adjectives *gulita* "total darkness" (42,494) and *gelap* "dark" (21,833). The adjective "dark" is employed metaphorically to link Indonesia's socio-political situation to the crisis. While it literally refers to the absence of light, the metaphor is utilised by digital citizens in order to signify political deterioration, economic hardship, weakened democratic governance, and uncertainty about the future. In addition, the collocation analysis also indicates mobilisation through hashtags and imperatives, including *kabur aja dulu* "just escape for now" (200,820), *ramainkan* "make it viral" (47,090), *lawan* "resist" (44,529), and *lawanajadulu* "just resist first" (28,747). As underscored by Carney (2016), social media functions not only as a space for disseminating information about the movement's actions but also as a platform for fostering discussion on social issues.

The other category pertains to solidarity and is realised through lexical items such as *panjang umur perjuangan* "long live the struggle", *hidup mahasiwa* "long live students", and *semangat* "keep the spirit up!". Given that the data are in Indonesian, the collocate *umur* "life or age" is a figurative expression conveying the hope for the continuity and resilience of the protest movement. Similarly, *hidup mahasiswa* is a slogan often chanted at demonstrations to reinforce students' collective identity and their commitment to social change, while the word *semangat* "keep it up!" was used as an expression of encouragement to motivate and strengthen mutual support among the demonstrators.

In addition to the semantic and thematic categories of *#IndonesiaGelap*, this study examines the social actors embedded within these categories. The analysis further identifies some social actors, which are primarily manifested through nomination and categorisation, as presented in Table 2.

The representation of social actors in the *#IndonesiaGelap* collocation appears to be heavily skewed towards categorisation (13,126) rather than nomination (4,734). References to *citizens* and *government* are more frequent than *politicians* and *media*. It can be observed that lexical items, including *rakyat* "citizens", *kita* "inclusive we", *orang* "people", *mahasiswa* "students", *pemerintah* "government", *presiden* "president", and *pejabat* "government officials", dominate the discourse.

Table 2. Representation of social actors through the collocates of #IndonesiaGelap

Social Actor Strategy	Semantic Category	Sum of Freq.	Social Actor
Categorisation	Citizens	8,038	<i>rakyat/rakyatnya</i> “people” (2,073), <i>kita</i> “we” (1,089), <i>orang</i> “people” (801), <i>mahasiswa</i> “college students” (755), <i>kalian</i> “you (plural)” (581), <i>anak</i> “children” (420), <i>aku</i> “I” (398), <i>gw</i> “I” (311), <i>kami</i> “we” (302), <i>masyarakat</i> “society” (302), <i>saya</i> “I” (292), <i>teman</i> “friends” (282), <i>gue</i> “I” (281), <i>rakyatnya</i> “the people” (151)
	Government	3,321	<i>pemerintah</i> “government” (792), <i>presiden</i> “president” (571), <i>pejabat</i> “government officials” (461), <i>koruptor</i> “corruptor” (321), <i>rezim</i> “regime” (316), <i>polisi</i> “police” (313), <i>pemerintahan</i> “administration” (194), <i>pemimpin</i> “leader” (189), <i>menteri</i> “minister” (164)
	Politician	1,233	<i>mereka</i> “they” (853), <i>dia</i> “he” (380)
	Media	534	<i>media</i> (330), <i>buzzer</i> (204)
TOTAL		13,126	
Nomination	Government	946	<i>Danantara</i> (500), <i>Pertamina</i> (246), <i>KPK</i> “Corruption Eradication Commission” (200)
	Politician	3,607	<i>Prabowo</i> (1,345), <i>Jokowi</i> (872), <i>Pak</i> “Sir” (followed by name) (549), <i>Mulyono</i> (314), <i>Gibran</i> (199), <i>Gerindra</i> (177), <i>Bapak</i> “Mister” (followed by name) (151)
	Hope	181	<i>Allah</i> “God” (181)
TOTAL		4,734	
GRAND TOTAL		17,860	

Meanwhile, *media*-related terms, comprising *media* and *buzzer*, along with *hope*-related terms, do not reach a comparable frequency threshold. This pattern suggests that the discourse prioritises the representation of collective social groups and governing authorities over individuals. While these findings should be interpreted cautiously, they demonstrate that high-frequency lexical patterns reveal the key issues and ideological stances embedded in discourse.

Concordance-based discursive analysis of #IndonesiaGelap

The following discussion draws on concordance analyses of the most salient lexical items identified in the corpus. McEnery and Wilson (1996) note that a corpus usually consists of a sample that is maximally representative of the variety under examination. By examining concordance lines, the analysis reveals how these lexical items are used in context and how they contribute to the discursive construction of meanings, themes, and social actors within the discourse. As proposed by Rose et al. (2020, p.229), “concordance allows the researcher to see how a search term has been used in context within the corpus and is thus very useful for investigating collocations and patterns of language use”. Here, concordance analysis does not merely identify frequently occurring words, but also exposes how social actors are represented in discourse. This section reveals an oppositional

representation or a dichotomy between “us” and “them”, in which citizens are collectively positioned as “us”. In contrast, governments and political elites are constructed as “them”.

In relation to the representation of “us”, the most frequently represented social actors belong to the semantic category of citizens, as shown below.

Perjalanan baru dimulai 100 hari memperlihatkan arah kebijakan yang menindas rakyat. Pajak tambang hingga kebijakan serampangan yang menciptakan gejala sosial di masyarakat. Perjuangan tak akan pernah berakhir terimakasih kawan kawan SKP Kabinet KM ITB #IndonesiaGelap

[The journey has only just begun. The first 100 days have revealed a policy direction that oppresses **the people**, from mining taxes to hasty policies that have triggered social unrest within **society**. The struggle will never end. Thank you, comrades of the SKP Cabinet, KM ITB #IndonesiaGelap]

In the excerpt above, citizens are consistently constructed as victims of government policies and unequal power relations. The lexical items *rakyat* “people” and *masyarakat* “society” portray ordinary citizens as those who suffer from oppressive policies, economic hardship, and social inequality. They are presented as those most affected by economic hardship, widening disparities between the rich and the poor, and an unjust legal system that favours the wealthy. At the same time, they were portrayed as a symbol or agent of resistance, as reflected in support for the student movement and the ongoing

struggle against perceived injustice.

With regard to the construction of “them”, the most salient hashtag co-occurring with *#IndonesiaGelap* expresses insults directed at the Indonesian government and political elites. The collocation analysis placed *#AdiliJokowi* “Bring Jokowi to the court” (961,793) as the most statistically significant hashtag associated with *#IndonesiaGelap*. Besides expressing broader dissatisfaction with the country’s governance, netizens often voice their political criticisms, both personally and collectively, by calling certain political figures to account, as reflected in this post.

Anehnya Jokowi nominasi koruptor OCCRP yang ditunjuk sebagai Dewan Pengawas DANANTARA? #IndonesiaGelap #AdiliJokowi

[Strangely, Jokowi, who the OCCRP nominated as a corrupt figure, has been appointed to the Supervisory Board of DANANTARA? *#IndonesiaGelap #AdiliJokowi*]

Joko Widodo, better known as Jokowi, served as president of Indonesia for two consecutive terms prior to the current administration. Within the corpus, the frequent co-occurrence of *#AdiliJokowi* with *#IndonesiaGelap* suggests that netizens often linked broader criticisms of governance to a specific political figure by directing demands for accountability towards the former president. This pattern may reflect public reactions to contemporary political issues, including debates surrounding Jokowi’s appointment to the supervisory board of Danantara and the publication of a report by the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), which have attracted considerable public attention. The OCCRP has listed Jokowi as one of the figures in 2024 linked to organised crime and corruption (OCCRP, 2025). It is reported that Jokowi, along with several other world leaders, has been shortlisted as a finalist in the category of the most corrupt figure, based on the highest number of votes from global public nominations. This list has worsened Jokowi’s public image, reinforced mistrust, and sparked widespread criticism on X.

Jokowi’s name also appears in hashtags, such as *#jokowi-luhutmusuhakyat* “Jokowi- Luhut as citizens’ enemies” (43,926), *#jokowiperampokapbn* “Jokowi as state budget robber” (43,926), *#meongnyamulyono* “Mulyono’s cat” (41,132), *#adilijokowimeluas* “put Jokowi on trial is expanding” (25,516), which began to trend since the demonstrations in February 2025. In March

2025, thousands of workers lost their jobs, such as 10,000 Sritex employees, 3,000 Nike employees, and more than 1,000 Yamaha Music employees. This surge has contributed to growing social instability and sparked mass demonstrations across the country.

Moreover, demonstrators also expressed opposition to fuel shortages and the policies associated with Danantara, in this excerpt (5).

Tulisan hitam background gelap. ini yang design beneran merepresentasikan #IndonesiaGelap. Bukti KPK Dilemahkan adalah Keluarga Koruptor OCCRP. #JokowiPerampokAPBN #fufufafaaibnasional #praboworezimboneka #IndonesiaGelap #IndonesiaGelap2025 #kaburduhaja

[Black text on a dark background. This is the kind of design that truly represents *#IndonesiaGelap*. The evidence that the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) has been weakened is the OCCRP’s designation of the corruptor’s family. *#JokowiPerampokAPBN #fufufafaaibnasional #praboworezimboneka #IndonesiaGelap #IndonesiaGelap2025 #kaburduhaja*]

As with the previous datum, Jokowi’s name was again mentioned specifically and inclusively through nomination by using his proper name. This strategy also belongs to individualisation, as responsibility is attributed to individuals rather than to the government or collective actors. Jokowi is portrayed as the central figure responsible for economic mismanagement and social instability, making him the main target of public anger and criticism in the discourse.

Apart from Jokowi, nominations were identified through several prominent figures, such as “Luhut” and “Prabowo”. Prabowo faced criticism over the word *blunder* and *buruk* “worse”, which highlighted serious shortcomings in Prabowo’s speech and reflected public views that the country’s condition had worsened under his influence or leadership. The word *musuh* “enemy”, apart from Jokowi, is linked to Luhut, who was the Chairman of the National Economic Council at the time. Gibran is also mentioned through nominalisation, where his identity as the son of former President Joko Widodo is discursively linked to the perceived continuation of oligarchic power.

The construction of “them” is also manifested through categorisation by mentioning the government and its representatives, as evidenced in the following excerpt.

Kata gw mah pejabat dan kabinet sekarang dulunya

kagak lulus mata pelajaran akidah akhlak. Alias woiii hati nurani lu di mana? Yang harusnya kena efisiensi tuh kalian para pejabat, menteri, dan para anggota legislatif yang dikasih fasilitasnya kelewat mewah. #IndonesiaGelap

[In my opinion, today's **government officials** and cabinet members must have failed their moral and religious ethics classes. Seriously, where is your conscience? Those who should be subjected to budget cuts are **government officials, ministers**, and members of the legislature, whose privileges and facilities are excessively luxurious. #IndonesiaGelap]

Some social actors are realised through categorisation, seen from the lexical choice referring to institutional roles, such as *government officials, cabinet members, ministers, and members of the legislature*, rather than by their personal names. This form of categorisation foregrounds their political authority and collective responsibility for issues deemed to affect Indonesian citizens. The government is further characterised as a tyrannical regime that fails to side with the people. Moreover, government officials, ministers, and legislators are represented in posts as morally deficient and excessively privileged, which suggests that they have abandoned public interests while continuing to enjoy luxurious state-funded benefits. This representation portrays political elites as the primary beneficiaries of state resources. Therefore, the hashtag #IndonesiaGelap further reinforces the dichotomous narrative of 'us' versus 'them', in which the political elite are depicted against ordinary citizens demanding accountability and social justice.

Furthermore, the media and influencers also became targets of public criticism, as they were perceived as being politically biased, as presented in the following excerpt.

Pembela pemerintah sibuk ngurusin retreat buzzernya sibuk hina demonstrasi pejabatnya sibuk yakinkan rakyat... Sementara DANANTARA jalan terus dan yakin RAKYAT MAKIN SENGSARA #IndonesiaGelap

[The government's supporters are busy attending retreats, the **buzzers** are busy insulting the protesters, and government officials are busy trying to reassure the public... Meanwhile, Danantara keeps moving forward, while the people are certain to become even more impoverished. #IndonesiaGelap]

Linguistically, the media and influencers are represented through categorisation. The lexical choices, such as *media pro penguasa* "pro-government", *pembela pemerintah* "government supporters), and *buzzernya* "the buzzers", construct

these actors as ideologically aligned with the government instead of neutral communicators. This then positions them as members of a collective out-group that is framed as supporting the government's interests and questioning the legitimacy of the protests.

The corpus is also characterised by crisis-oriented lexical patterns, as represented by the frequent use of "dark" metaphors. This indicates that the productivity of human language occurs at all levels, including vocabulary, phrases, and sentences (Revita et al., 2024). The following is an example of a post on *X* referring to a state of emergency.

#IndonesiaGelap Dimulai dari pemilihan presiden yg semuanya gelap gulita.. Indonesia butuh perubahan..dan rakyat yg harus memulai perubahan #IndonesiaGelap

[#IndonesiaGelap started with the presidential election, which was completely shrouded in total darkness. Indonesia needs change... and it is the citizens who should initiate this change. #IndonesiaGelap]

Concordance analysis of the collocate *gelap* "dark" indicates that it is predominantly used to frame discussions surrounding the 2024 presidential election and Indonesia's broader socio-political condition. The repeated occurrence of *gelap* (21,833) in posts and hashtags indicates that users consistently employ the metaphor to construct a discourse of crisis and uncertainty. It frequently appears alongside expressions referring to political dynasties, human rights, and democratic governance, which suggests that these issues are linked to perceptions of political decline.

Several other collocates indicate mobilisation, which reflects a shared determination to take action, participate, and strengthen protest. Another prominent theme emerging from the linguistic construction of the hashtag is solidarity. The collocates *umur* "age" (257,092) and *panjang* "long" (246,140) appear together, forming the Indonesian expression *panjang umur* "long life". This lexical choice signals netizens' support for the demonstrators by positioning them at the forefront of the struggle. This solidarity takes the form of robust solidarity or solidarity among, which encompasses the obligations and responsibilities of group members towards those who are affected, in need, or oppressed (Taylor, 2015), as illustrated in this post.

Terima kasihhh orang-orang keren! stay safe yaa... doaku dari jauh menyertai kalian semua. panjang umur perjuangan #IndonesiaGelap #DarkIndonesia

[Thank you so much, awesome people! Stay safe, my prayers from afar are with all of you. **Long live** the struggle. #IndonesiaGelap #DarkIndonesia]

Here, netizens expressed their support by labelling the demonstrators as *orang-orang keren* “awesome people”. This support highlights the pro-democracy movement emerging on social media platforms. In this context, the focus is not on individual experiences or feelings, but on collective and also collaborative processes. The collocate *perjuangan* “struggle” (217,527) is personified through the human attribute of *panjang umur* “long life”, with college students (represented by *Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa Seluruh Indonesia* (BEM SI) “The Association of Indonesia Student Executive Board”) and netizens acting as social actors who actively spread protest campaigns against the government.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this corpus-assisted discourse study demonstrate that *#IndonesiaGelap* serves not only as a topic marker but also as a discursive tool through which users negotiate meanings, construct collective identities, and coordinate public participation in digital political discourse. This finding is consistent with studies that conceptualise hashtags as social semiotic resources that organise public discussions and facilitate collective action in digital networks (Romero & Bautista, 2022; Singh et al., 2025; Zappavigna, 2011). *#IndonesiaGelap* helped users express their dissatisfaction with government policies and unite individual voices into a broader public movement, as previously stated by Lee and Chau (2018). These findings also demonstrate that language choices in digital communication play a critical role in representing public opinion and encouraging collective action, as shown by Simpson (2018).

Within van Leeuwen’s SAN framework, explicit references to Jokowi constitute a strategy of nomination, in which an actor is represented through a unique personal identity, rather than as a member of a broader social category. As highlighted by van Leeuwen (2008, p. 41), “nomination is typically realised by proper nouns, which can be formal (surname only, with or without honorifics), semiformal (given name and surname),

or informal (given name only)”. Here, political leaders are delegitimised by being associated with poor governance, which in turn contributes to the emergence of mass protests in the digital spaces.

The quantitative collocation analysis also indicates mobilisation, which further reflects a shared determination to take action, participate, and strengthen protest. As stated by Romero and Bautista (2022), the dynamics arising in digital communication have triggered new practices and reflections on information distribution. Here, hashtags have transformed into a powerful tool for driving digital activism and expressing political views, which is also known as “hashtag activism” or clicktivism (Östin & Lindgren, 2024). *X* posts also involve the hashtag *#kaburajadulu* “just run away first” (200,820), which has invited young citizens to leave the country. Social media used these hashtags to mobilise political action, disseminate information, and coordinate protest activities (Hasan & Paul, 2025). These findings reveal that hashtags also serve to strengthen solidarity, signal political awareness, and reflect alignment among users (Gurung et al., 2025).

While opposition and crisis constitute two dominant discursive themes, the findings also highlight solidarity as another prominent pattern in the dataset, through the categorisation of citizens and social media users, which serves to construct political identities and negotiate power relations in the digital sphere. The dominance of themes referring to opposition and crisis confirms the function of social media as a platform for power negotiation and resistance to the government. Keywords related to mobilisation that appear in the corpus confirm the role of hashtags and *X* in triggering mass participation, while also revealing netizens’ support and solidarity with the demonstrators. These findings align with the aforementioned study, which emphasises the function of hashtags to garner support, raise public awareness, and extend the reach of protests beyond physical boundaries (Singh et al., 2025).

Our findings also demonstrate that *X* has evolved into a digital public sphere where identities are negotiated through public discourse, both in-group and out-group identities, as manifested in the emergence of social actors in netizens’ posts and interactions (Lüders et al., 2022). The study of social actors in protests underscores how the orientations

of social agents are contextually constructed and illustrates the way contextual variables shape the attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions of social actors toward the protests (Akinrinlola et al., 2025). In *#IndonesiaGelap*, netizens employ specific linguistic strategies to highlight the social actors involved, either intentionally or unintentionally. The analysis further identifies references to public figures, institutions, and state policies by framing the government as the central actor responsible for the situation in Indonesia.

The aforementioned discussion highlights that public protest and dissatisfaction have become the main forces driving mass mobilisation in the *#IndonesiaGelap* discourse. At the micro level, the discourse is manifested through lexical choices, metaphors, and evaluative strategies employed by netizens. Collective dissatisfaction arises from the accumulation of personal expressions, such as complaints, sarcasm, and moral judgements regarding political, social, and economic conditions. According to the relative deprivation theory, people who are satisfied enough with their current circumstances tend to be less interested in seeking social change (Gurr, 2015; Tobar, 2022). This theory further proposes that social movements arise because of people's perception of being mistreated (Tobar, 2022) or when social conditions hinder their aspirations. However, these expressions function not only as an emotional release but also as a means of building affiliation with other users through shared experiences and attitudes.

The language of protest at the micro level gradually builds solidarity and encourages collective action, while clarifying netizens' position towards the responsible political actors. This serves to reinforce the "us versus them" polarisation that creates categories of belonging and exclusion between the in-group and out-group, and frames those in power as entities that are opposed to the citizens' interests. This corresponds with the perspective articulated by Erdoğan and Uyan-Semerici (2025) and also Lee et al. (2025), which proposed that emotional responses to political content on social media, such as anger and disgust, are implicated in the reinforcement of affective polarisation, especially in polarised digital environments. This also affirms Oyeboade's (2024) finding that the current development of social media has fostered digital activism, through which people protest against repressive traditions

or policies and participate in civic activities. Therefore, when political actors are represented as opponents or enemies, expressions of opposition tend to be perceived as reasonable and also justifiable in protest discourse.

This study provides empirical evidence of how grassroots voices articulate opposition and criticism to the government by using their own names as a strategy of inclusion within the Indonesian political context. While prior studies have mainly addressed the identification of problems at a macro or surface level (Muharrom et al., 2025), this study sheds light on how previous presidential leadership is performed as the principal agent that contributes to the *#IndonesiaGelap* mobilisation. Moreover, this study highlights the different stances between discourse on *X* and mainstream mass media. While *X* tends to be evaluative, personal, and confrontational by pointing to political actors as responsible parties, mainstream mass media generally present a more institutional, neutral, and distanced framing through careful language and a focus on events or policies. This is because "media power is generally symbolic and persuasive, in the sense that the media primarily have the potential to control to some extent the minds of readers or viewers, but not directly their actions" (Dijk, 1995, p. 10). By analysing lexical choices, representation strategies, and inter-actor relations, this study highlights how *X* underscored the personalisation of accountability, while mass media tend to depersonalise and mitigate responsibility in representing crises perceived by the public.

The dominance of actor-oriented hashtags further affirms the role of social media as a discursive infrastructure for protest discourse, where meanings, affiliations, and oppositions are collectively constructed (Al-Qteishat, 2024; Aman & Jayroe, 2013). Beyond serving as a channel for expressing policy-related dissatisfaction, they also contribute to the circulation of evaluative narratives that frame political authority, legitimacy, and accountability in an easily accessible and emotionally resonant manner. Therefore, social media does not merely reflect public opinion but actively shapes the way the public interprets and assesses political actors.

Importantly, this study advances previous research by offering empirical evidence from the analysis of lexical items, demonstrating

how language choices shape public perceptions, express collective concerns, and construct political meanings in digital discourse. A better understanding of these discursive strategies may encourage more critical engagement with political content circulating on digital platforms. Findings of this study may also serve as a useful reference for educators, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to promote responsible digital communication and strengthen public resilience against polarising political narratives.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examines the use of the hashtag *#IndonesiaGelap* on the *X* platform as a means for the public to articulate their response to the political situation in Indonesia. The wave of demonstrations in early February 2025 generated widespread online engagement, reflected in the high volume of posts using this hashtag. Adopting a corpus-based integrated discourse analysis approach, the findings show that hashtags serve not only as topic markers, but also as a discursive resource for expressing opposition, dissatisfaction, and criticism of the government. The analysis further reveals a clear distinction between “us” and “them” by positioning citizens as collective actors and “victims” while representing governments and political elites as the primary targets of criticism. By connecting online and offline activism, the hashtag extends the visibility of the protests, strengthens collective identity, and sustains public participation in the protest movement.

This study contributes to discourse studies, particularly corpus-based research utilising social media data, by demonstrating how language is employed in digital spaces to challenge injustice and abuses of power. However, as the study focuses on a single national context, the findings cannot represent Indonesian protest discourse as a whole. The study also recognises possible sampling bias, as *X* users may not represent the wider population, and the data were collected through specific hashtags.

Therefore, future research could address these limitations by including data from different social media platforms, using broader data collection methods, and comparing online discourse with offline protest materials. Hence, studies across different democratic countries could also provide a broader understanding of how protest movements are constructed through language.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The authors have read and followed the ethical requirements for publication in the **Jurnal Arbitrer** and confirm that (a) user-generated data were fully anonymised in order to ensure confidentiality and to protect the identities of platform users; and (b) all data were collected, processed, as well as reported in compliance with the data redistribution and usage policies of the respective platform involved in this study.

CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

Novi Eka Susilowati was responsible for the conceptualisation of the research, data analysis, investigation, funding acquisition, as well as writing of the original draft of the manuscript. **Nadia Khumairo Ma'shumah** was involved in the conceptualisation, methodology, resources, data analysis, investigation, validation, and manuscript revision. **Arina Isti'anah** contributed to the conceptualisation, data curation, project administration, analysis, investigation, supervision, validation, and manuscript revision. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript.

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DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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