

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF HATE SPEECH ON INSTAGRAM: A POLITICIAN'S EDUCATIONAL DOCUMENTS IN INDONESIA, 2025

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Abstract

Hate speech has become an increasingly prevalent issue on social media platforms. Instagram, initially designed as a social networking space, has evolved into a medium for public and political discourse while simultaneously facilitating the spread of hate speech. This study examines the forms and linguistic strategies of hate speech found in Instagram comments related to the controversy surrounding an Indonesian political figure's educational credentials. Using a qualitative method and a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, data were collected through documentation and purposive sampling. A structured recording technique was applied to document, categorize, and code relevant comments. The results found show that hate speech appears in the form of insults, defamation, unpleasant acts, and the spread of potentially misleading or false information. Such expressions are not only emotional but also display structured patterns intended to construct stigma and delegitimization. These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening digital literacy and implementing regulations to foster more ethical and responsible online interaction.

Keywords: *Hate Speech; Instagram; Critical Discourse Analysis; Digital Politics*

A. Introduction

In the digital age, social media has become a key platform for public discussion, allowing people to share opinions, access information, and engage in political debates. Instagram, in particular, is no longer just a social space but has evolved into a hub for political controversies. While it encourages public participation, it also enables the rapid spread of hate speech, hostile comments,

and offensive expressions. This phenomenon highlights the crucial role of language in shaping online interactions because Language serves as a means of communication that allows humans to interact with each other. It is an inseparable part of human life (Waruwu, O., 2025, p. 53).

The phenomenon of online hate speech poses a significant challenge to the social order, legal systems, and



democratic processes worldwide. With the massive adoption of social media, platforms like Instagram have transformed from mere visual sharing spaces into primary arenas for public discourse, political debate, and, regrettably, the rapid and widespread dissemination of hateful rhetoric.

In Indonesia, a nation boasting one of the largest internet user bases in Southeast Asia, political dynamics are frequently exacerbated by sharp polarization, which is directly mirrored across social media. Political controversies especially those involving public figures or sensitive national issues quickly trigger waves of comments that are not only critical but also offensive, disparaging, and meet the linguistic and legal definitions of hate speech.

Freedom of expression is now deeply felt by every Indonesian citizen. This freedom is guaranteed by Indonesia as a nation governed by the rule of law. It is protected for both individuals and groups in a democratic country. Freedom of opinion is also regulated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Article 28E, Paragraph (3), which states: "every person has the right to freedom of association, assembly, and expression" (Sirait, 2020).

From the right to freedom of expression, of course, there are certain limitations that do not diminish the ideas and thoughts of every citizen. The restricted actions are stipulated in the 2016

Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE), Article 27, which prohibits hate speech (Jamal, 2019). The rapid development of technology has led some parties to misunderstand the boundaries of expressing opinions and ideas. It is important for every citizen to understand freedom of expression in relation to hate speech, in accordance with the guarantees of rights to freedom as regulated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. Therefore, every citizen must also understand what actions are considered hate speech (Widayati, 2018).

The investigation into utterances alleged to contain hatred is continuously examined by Indonesian government institutions to create a peaceful life free from hostility between individuals or groups. Based on the ITE Law (Information and Electronic Transactions Law) and the Criminal Code (*Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana* or KUHP), the types of hate speech mentioned include: insult, dissemination of false news, blasphemy, acts of unpleasant conduct, defamation, and provocation/incitement. Hate speech often arises from public communication regarding a topic currently under discussion. An example is in the political sphere. Communication that should serve as an exchange of opinions instead becomes utterances containing hatred. This is because the public, especially netizens, are given personal freedom to



explore those social media platforms, allowing them to be free.

The forms of hate speech in Indonesia are regulated through several legal frameworks, including the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP) and the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE). First is insult/defamation, statements that degrade or insult the dignity and reputation of an individual or group. Second is blasphemy/denigration, forms of insult often related to religious issues or beliefs. Third is unpleasant acts, actions that cause discomfort or distress to the victim or targeted group. Fourth is provocation/incitement, encouraging others to commit acts of discrimination, hostility, or violence against a specific group and the last is spreading false information, disseminating fake news intended to incite hatred and conflict against individuals or specific groups (Indonesian National Police, 2015).

Hate speech is defined as any behaviour, word, writing, or act that can incite prejudice and violence against a victim, perpetrator of violence, or the statement. Hate speech is defined as a deliberate and willful public statement meant to disparage a certain group of people (Delgado & Stefancic in Paz et al., 2020).

As we see, there are still many people who use language as hate speech on social media to attack other groups. Hate speech is defined as any word,

behaviour, writing, or performance that is forbidden because it can incite violence and prejudice on the side of the perpetrator or victim of the crime. Hate speech is defined as a deliberate and willful public statement meant to disparage a certain group of people (Delgado& Stefancic in Paz et al., 2020). Hate speech can occur when the perpetrator has negative prejudice against a particular group. There are also people who hate speech, not because of bad prejudice but because of trolling. This trolling is not triggered by hatred but by personal enjoyment.

Hate speech detection is a complex problem that has received a lot of attention from the Natural Language Processing (NLP) community. It shares a lot of challenges with other social media problems (emotion detection, offensive language detection, etc), such as an increasingly amount of user generated content, unstructured.” (Antypas & Camacho-Collados, p. 231 in Elsayed et al., 2019)

According to Geissler, Maarouf, and Feuerriegel (2023), hate speech is defined as “abusive speech targeting specific group characteristics, such as ethnic origin, religion, gender, or sexual orientation” [51]. As such, hate speech expresses animosity against specific groups and might even call for real-world violence. In general, hateful posts tend to go more viral than normal content since



their cascades are larger, live longer, and are of larger structural virality.

On social media, hate speech can manifest in comments, captions, hashtags, and memes. It often escalates conflicts, polarizes communities, and influences public opinion, especially in politically sensitive contexts. Setiadi (2022) states that social media is a medium on the internet that allows users to represent themselves, as well as interact, cooperate, share, and communicate with other users to form virtual social bonds. Instagram, as a visual platform, adds a new dimension. Images and videos can amplify sentiment and trigger faster emotional reactions, often resulting in comments that are brief, reactive, and aggressive. Social media has become a primary battleground in Indonesian politics, especially during elections and major controversies. The phenomena of buzzers and anonymous accounts are often used to polarize opinions and attack political opponents, making the case of the educational document controversy an easy target for structured disinformation and hate speech campaigns.

This study aims to analyze hate speech on Instagram related to the controversy surrounding a politician's educational documents in Indonesia. By employing a case study approach combined with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research examines the patterns, themes, and linguistic strategies employed by users in

expressing hostility. CDA is particularly useful for understanding how language reflects and reproduces social and political power relations, making it suitable for analyzing contentious online discussions.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach to discourse studies that examines the relationship between language, power, and ideology in society ... In the context of hate speech on social media, CDA serves as an effective framework for deconstructing how such speech is shaped not only by lexical choices or sentence structures but also by underlying socio-political and ideological contexts (Saud, J., & Dewanti, R. 2025). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines how language reflects and reproduces power relations, social dominance, and inequality in societal contexts (van Dijk, 2015).

Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995) studies the relationship between language, power, and ideology. CDA examines how discourse shapes social relations and reflects broader societal structures. In analyzing online hate speech, CDA helps uncover the linguistic strategies, framing, and persuasive techniques used to influence public perception or reinforce social hierarchies.

In this research, hate speech was found on Instagram. The social media platform Instagram is one of the most popular platforms besides WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook. Many people from



various backgrounds use Instagram as a medium for disseminating information, exchanging ideas, and also expressing themselves.

On Instagram, speech suspected of containing hate speech was found in #FaktaIjazah. In the context of the controversy surrounding a politician's educational documents in Indonesia, particularly related to the hashtag #FaktaIjazah, various comments and posts suspected of containing hate speech have emerged. This hashtag serves as a medium for users to discuss, criticize, or even ridicule certain individuals, creating potential conflicts and polarization in the digital sphere. Hate speech under hashtags like #FaktaIjazah is not only verbal but can also take the form of memes, videos, and visual symbols accompanying the text, all of which contribute to shaping public perception.

This phenomenon is important to analyze because hate speech can influence public opinion, reinforce stereotypes, and even threaten social cohesion. The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach is particularly relevant in this context, as it allows researchers to examine how language, discourse strategies, and framing are employed to spread particular ideologies or generate social impact. By analyzing Instagram content under the hashtag #FaktaIjazah, this study aims to understand the patterns of hate speech, rhetorical strategies, and social

implications embedded within these posts.

B. Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based on the analytical framework developed by Teun A. van Dijk. This design is selected to enable an in depth examination of linguistic features, discursive strategies, and sociopolitical meanings embedded in hate speech expressions within user generated Instagram comments.

This research method produces descriptive data in the form of text or information that can be read or observed by humans. The type of research employed is content analysis with a media study approach, which aims to examine media content contained within specific expressions in this case, hate speech found on social network platforms, particularly Instagram, directed at the educational background documentation of a political figure in Indonesia.

This study employed a documentation method as the primary strategy for collecting qualitative digital discourse data. The documentation method is widely used in contemporary digital linguistics research as it allows researchers to systematically extract, archive, and examine naturally occurring texts from online environments (Rahmawati & Susanto, 2023). Through this method, publicly available Instagram comments discussing the controversy surrounding the politician's educational documents were collected and compiled as research data.



Data were retrieved using a purposive sampling approach, where selection was based on predefined relevance criteria rather than randomization (Rahi, 2022). Only comments that were publicly visible and directly related to the issue under investigation were included to ensure ethical compliance with digital research standards. Comments classified as spam, bot-generated, irrelevant, or lacking linguistic substance were excluded.

The data recording process applied a structured note taking technique in which each relevant comment was documented, categorized, and coded. A digital data card was used as the primary research instrument to record metadata such as the comment type, user anonymity code, lexical features, sentiment orientation, and hate speech classification following international definitions of online hate speech (Gagliardone et al., 2022; Meta Oversight Board, 2024).

Data analysis followed a multi stage qualitative process consisting of data organization, reduction, coding, categorization, and interpretation, aligned with updated qualitative analysis frameworks (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2023). During data reduction, only comments that explicitly indicated hate speech such as personal attacks, identity based hostility, threats, profanity, or derogatory expressions were retained.

C. Result and Discussion

In the results section, several categories of hate speech were identified within the collected posts and comments, including insults, defamation,

blasphemous remarks, harassment, the dissemination of false information, and provocative or inciting statements. Overall, these findings illustrate that hate speech within this digital discourse is not solely expressed as spontaneous emotional reactions but also appears in more systematic and intentional forms. The patterns observed indicate a combination of personal attacks, reputation damage, narrative manipulation, and collective mobilization attempts, suggesting that hate speech in online political conversations can function both as individual expression and as a strategic discursive instrument aimed at influencing public perception and social polarization. Determining whether a statement qualifies as hate speech requires attention to multiple dimensions, including who is speaking, the context in which it is spoken, the intention behind the expression, the content itself, and how the message is communicated (Khurana et al., 2022).

The study found that several analyzed statements contained elements of insult, defamation, unpleasant acts, and potential hoaxes, as they were expressed without supporting evidence and carried the risk of misleading the public as well as harming the reputation of certain individuals or institutions. The result found are:

1. Insult



The following data belongs to the category of hate speech related to humiliation.

@bayuajisaputro_17 : “Bisikan harga ijazah S1 UGM dong Bu?” Whisper me the price of your UGM bachelor's degree, ma'am?" #FaktaIjazah.

Yes, the sentence “bisikan harga ijazah S1 UGM dong Bu” can be categorized as an insult. The sentence implies that the person being addressed did not obtain their degree legitimately, but instead bought it. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, the sentence “Bisikan harga ijazah S1 UGM dong Bu” functions as a form of symbolic delegitimization. The utterance implicitly suggests that the degree was not earned through legitimate academic effort, but could be purchased. Through sarcasm, presupposition, and casual wording, the speaker constructs a power position by undermining the credibility and integrity of the person addressed. Therefore, the deeper meaning of this statement is not merely a question, but an act of questioning and challenging the person's academic and social legitimacy.

@poksian : “UGM: Universitas Gendong Mulyono” Gendong Mulyono University #FaktaIjazah.

The sentence “UGM : Universitas Gendong Mulyono” contains a derogatory discursive strategy by mocking and

distorting the formal name of the institution. By replacing the official university name with a phrase that carries a tone of ridicule, the speaker constructs a negative social representation that undermines the institution's symbolic value, dignity, and credibility. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this is not merely a linguistic play but a form of delegitimization, as it positions the institution as unprofessional, biased, or controlled by an individual rather than functioning as an independent academic body. Pragmatically, the statement indicates an intention to belittle and damage the image of the targeted party, and therefore can be categorized as insulting, especially when expressed publicly and with the purpose of mocking or diminishing reputation.

@ubayretsa : “Bubarkan UGM” Disband UGM #FaktaIjazah.

The sentence “bubarkan UGM” uses a direct, provocative command that is delegitimizing toward the institution. From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, this sentence functions to construct a negative narrative, implying that UGM is unworthy of existence or has failed in its role. The discourse positions the speaker in a rhetorical position of power, as if they have the authority to determine the fate of the institution, and encourages listeners or the public to agree with an extreme action (dissolution). Socially, this statement creates pressure on



the institution's reputation and has the potential to be considered a form of insult or provocation.

2. Defamation

The indicator of hate speech in the form of defamation is tarnishing someone's reputation with statements that are not in accordance with reality, causing discomfort to individuals or groups. The following are data classified as defamation:

@nofr.ian : *"kalau dilihat dari kenyataan yang berlarut-larut Saya juga yakin se yakin-yakin nya ijazahnya sudah bisa di pastikan PALSUUUUUUU!!!!!!"* Seeing how this situation keeps dragging on, I am completely convinced that her diploma can already be confirmed as fake #FaktaIjazah.

This sentence expresses an accusation as if it were a confirmed truth *"bisa di pastikan PALSUUUUUUU!!!!!!"* toward someone's reputation. If this accusation is not supported by valid evidence, it may be classified as defamation, especially when published in a public space such as social media. In the context of Indonesian law (Electronic Information and Transactions Law, Article 27 Paragraph 3), this statement may fall under the category of defamation.

The sentence *"Kalau dilihat dari kenyataan yang berlarut-larut, saya juga yakin, seyakinyakinnya, ijazahnya sudah bisa dipastikan palsu"* reflects a discourse strategy that constructs authority through claims of certainty without presenting evidence. The rhetorical expression *"I am sure, absolutely sure"* serves to position the speaker as someone with credible judgment, even though the statement remains speculative. The phrase *"bisa di pastikan PALSUUUUUUU!!!!!!"* transforms a personal opinion into an asserted fact, shaping a narrative that implies finality and truth. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this sentence does more than convey information it constructs stigma, influences public perception, and frames the targeted individual negatively. This type of discourse reinforces bias, potentially damages reputation, and creates an unequal power dynamic, especially when expressed in a public context.

@drummer_pemula : *Yah kan sesuai bayaran maka semua mengatakan asli"* Well, because they were paid, everyone says it's authentic #FaktaIjazah.

The sentence *"yah kan sesuai bayaran, maka semua menyatakan asli"* contains an insinuation that a person or certain party received money to give a dishonest statement. From a CDA perspective, this sentence constructs a negative image and attacks the integrity of



the targeted party through an unsupported accusation. Linguistically, the phrase “*sesuai bayaran*” serves as an implication that someone's decision or statement is not based on facts but on monetary exchange. Legally, such a statement has the potential to constitute defamation, as it fulfills the elements of an allegation that damages reputation, as regulated under Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE) Article 27 Paragraph (3) and the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP) Articles 310–311, especially if expressed in a public setting.

3. Unpleasant Acts

The following are data classified as hate speech in the form of unpleasant acts:

@unclebarn_ : “*setelah dt tengok*”
wajahnya penuh beban dan tekanan
dalam menyatakan ini...tapi kami
cuma minta tunjukan ijazah aslinya”
After we looked at him, his face seemed full of burden and pressure while saying this... but we only asked him to show the original diploma #FaktaIjazah.

This sentence contains an evaluative remark and a pressuring request. The phrase “*setelah ditengok wajahnya penuh beban dan tekanan*” can be perceived as belittling or embarrassing because it comments on someone's emotional state in a subjective and negative way. Meanwhile, the part “*tapi*

kami cuma minta tunjukan ijazah aslinya” functions as a directive that may sound demanding. Overall, the sentence can be categorized as an *unpleasant act* because it has the potential to cause discomfort or offense to the person being addressed.

@ba.stian1529 : “UGM memiliki dokumen otentik? pas di pengadilan, perwakilan dari UGM menjawab: tidak memegangnya, baik itu ijazah legalisir maupun transkrip legalisir. Coba deh lain kali pengadilan panggil ibu ini saja tanpa berwakil” Does UGM have the authentic documents? In court, the representative from UGM answered that they did not hold them, neither the legalized diploma nor the legalized transcript. Next time, the court should just summon this lady directly instead of sending a representative #FaktaIjazah.

The sentence “UGM memiliki dokumen otentik? pas di pengadilan, perwakilan dari UGM menjawab tidak memegangnya... Coba deh lain kali pengadilan panggil ibu ini saja tanpa berwakil.” carries a tone of sarcasm and personal criticism. It uses rhetorical questioning and insinuation to undermine the competence or credibility of the person being addressed. This form of expression can create pressure, embarrassment, and psychological discomfort. Therefore, the utterance can be categorized as an unpleasant act or verbal harassment, as it is not merely conveying information but



also implicitly aiming to belittle and discredit the individual.

4. Hoax

The indicator of hate speech in the form of spreading false news/hoaxes is information that is untrue or fabricated, disseminated to create panic in society. The following are data illustrating hoax statements.

@aldianmakmur : *"Jadi ini ya presiden memilih rektor. Cari aman rupanya"* So this is it, the president chose the rector. It seems he just wanted to play it safe #FaktaIjazah.

The hoax potential in the sentence *"Jadi ini ya presiden memilih rektor. Cari aman rupanya"* arises because the statement presents an assumption as if it were a fact, without providing any proof, data, or verifiable sources.

The sentence *"Jadi ini ya presiden memilih rektor. Cari aman rupanya"* reflects a form of opinion-based discourse that functions as a critical remark delivered through subtle sarcasm. The lexical choice, particularly the phrase *"cari aman,"* implies that the decision was not grounded in formal evaluation or professionalism, but rather in political convenience or risk avoidance. Its structure, beginning with the conclusive expression *"jadi ini ya"* signals a presupposition that the allegation is already accepted as true without presenting supporting evidence. In terms

of discursive practice, the sentence resembles digital public commentary that tends to be expressive and evaluative rather than factual. Socially, such a statement may contribute to public distrust toward governmental and academic institutions, especially when shared without verification. Because it conveys a negative inference toward specific actors without clarification or factual reference, the sentence may be interpreted as legitimate critical opinion, yet it simultaneously carries the potential to be perceived as misinformation or defamation if treated as a factual claim rather than a subjective viewpoint.

@catur.wibisono : *"Kampus yang terjerat politik tidak punya integritas sebagai lembaga pendidikan yang kredible"* A campus trapped in politics has no integrity as a credible educational institution #FaktaIjazah.

The potential hoax in the statement, *"Kampus yang terjerat politik tidak punya integritas sebagai lembaga pendidikan yang kredible"* arises when the sentence is understood or shared as a definite fact, even though it is not supported by evidence, data, or verifiable references. The sentence *"Kampus yang terjerat politik tidak punya integritas sebagai lembaga pendidikan yang kredible"* displays characteristics of discourse that presents an assumption as if it were a factual claim without evidence. The word choices such



as “*terjerat*” and “*tidak punya integritas*” create a sense of accusation and absolute generalization. In a broader social context, this sentence can shape negative public opinion about the institution and influence perceptions in a misleading way. Therefore, the statement has the potential to become a hoax because it may spread stigma or unverifiable assumptions as truth.

D. Conclusion

This study reveals that Instagram has become a significant platform for the spread of hate speech, especially in politically sensitive contexts such as the controversy surrounding a politician's educational documents in Indonesia. The analysis using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) demonstrates that hate speech in the observed discourse appears not only in spontaneous emotional reactions but also in intentional and systematic forms. Various linguistic strategies including insults, defamation, unpleasant acts, blasphemous implications, and hoax-based statements were used to delegitimize individuals and institutions, shape public perception, and intensify polarization.

The findings indicate that comments categorized as hate speech

often employed sarcasm, rhetorical questioning, presupposition, labeling, direct commands, and unsupported allegations. These strategies construct narratives that undermine credibility, reproduce social and political bias, and reinforce ideological positioning within the digital space. Additionally, the discourse documented under the hashtag #FaktaIjazah reflects the dual nature of social media: while it enables public participation and democratic expression, it simultaneously facilitates anonymity supported hostility and misinformation.

The results of this research support the argument that hate speech on social media is influenced by sociopolitical context, user intentions, and platform characteristics. Without adequate digital literacy and clear ethical considerations, online communication may shift from constructive dialogue into harmful verbal aggression. Therefore, this study highlights the urgency for improved public awareness, stronger digital ethics education, and more effective enforcement of legal mechanisms such as the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP) and the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE) to prevent the spread of harmful discourse.

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