



## Euphemism in Indonesian Online Political Media Discourse: Referents, Social Status, and Communicative Functions

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### Abstract

This study investigates the use of euphemisms in online political news, focusing on three main aspects: (1) the types of referents used, (2) the relationship between the social status of the reported actors and the euphemistic references, and (3) the communicative functions of euphemisms in political discourse. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the data were drawn from political news published between 1–31 January 2025 in four Indonesian online media outlets: Tirto.id, Tempo, CNN Indonesia, and Detik.com. The data were collected through reading and note-taking, coded, and analyzed based on referents, social status, and communicative functions, with validity ensured through data and theoretical triangulation. The findings show that euphemisms most frequently refer to activities (50%) and conditions (37.2%), indicating their role in softening actions and framing political situations. The social status of the actors influences referent selection: state officials often appear with euphemisms that mitigate criticism of actions and policies, politicians use euphemisms related to political maneuvering, and ordinary citizens are framed through euphemisms invoking social sympathy. Overall, euphemisms function primarily to attenuate negative meanings, shape public perception, and construct positive images of political actors and institutions.

**Keywords:** *Euphemism; Communicative Functions; Online Media; Political Discourse; Social Status*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Language functions as a fundamental medium that enables people to express thoughts, emotions, and ideas, while also constructing shared understanding within society (Wijana, 2017). In increasingly complex societies, language is not merely a communicative instrument but also a strategic resource for articulating interests and advancing ideologies. As a result, linguistic choices become strategically significant across various domains, including the political sphere (Supriyadi & Zulaeha, 2017; Zulham et al., 2024).

In political communication, language plays a central role in shaping public perception and reinforcing power relations. Political language is often emotionally charged and ideologically driven

(Mubaligh, 2010; Budiyanto, 2014) and is strategically constructed to create desired images of political actors and institutions (Rosita, 2020; Sofyan, 2014).

Lexical choices in political discourse strongly influence how the public responds to issues, policies, and controversies. Consequently, political communication frequently relies on softened, indirect, or ambiguous expressions to elicit reactions that align with the communicator's intended framing (Sariah, 2017; Kurniawati, 2011).

A key strategy for softening meaning in political communication is euphemism, defined as the use of milder or less direct expressions to replace words that may sound harsh, unpleasant, or controversial (Jayanti et al., 2019). For instance, the term *penyesuaian harga* (price adjustment) is frequently used in place of *kenaikan harga* (price increase) to minimize public resistance toward economic policies (Aytan et al., 2021), as illustrated in Detik.com's report: "*Semua penyedia BBM di Indonesia melakukan penyesuaian harga produk pada awal bulan Desember 2024 ini.*" Another example appears in the use of *berpulang* (to return to God) in Detik.com: "*Mantan Menteri Agama Drs. H. Suryadharma Ali, M.Si., berpulang ke Rahmatullah,*" which euphemistically replaces the more direct term *meninggal* (to pass away) or even the harsher *mati* (to die). Likewise, the phrase *efisiensi tenaga kerja* (labor efficiency) in Tempo: "*Pengurangan jumlah program tersebut berdampak langsung pada efisiensi tenaga kerja karena penurunan pendapatan perusahaan*" is employed to soften the meaning of *PHK massal* (mass layoffs).

Beyond its linguistic form, euphemism serves important interpersonal and pragmatic functions in political discourse. It is used not only to maintain the listener's comfort but also to avoid embarrassment, preserve dignity, and shape public perceptions of political issues (Allan & Burrige, 1991; Aytan et al., 2021). These functions allow euphemistic expressions to operate as a key linguistic resource for managing sensitive and potentially face-threatening issues within public communication. Given these strategic functions, the circulation and reinforcement of euphemistic language do not occur solely through political actors themselves, but are strongly mediated by the channels through which political messages are disseminated, particularly the mass media.

The mass media, as a primary disseminator of political discourse to the public, plays an active role in shaping and spreading euphemism. The media function not only as channels for delivering information but also as actors that actively structure language to frame social and political realities according to particular perspectives (Ristiyani et al., 2023). The need to strategically frame political issues is closely tied to the high public interest in political news. A 2024 survey by Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII), which is the Indonesian internet service providers association, shows that content related to politics, social issues, law, and human rights is the most frequently accessed by internet users at 40.56 percent. This level of interest surpasses that in sports, entertainment, and economic news. Moreover, interest in these issues does not come solely from Generation X and baby boomers but also extends to younger age groups.

More specifically, a survey conducted by Katadata Insight Center (KIC) in October 2023 indicates that Indonesian youth are also highly exposed to political news. A total of 68.3 percent of respondents aged 17 to 42 years, representing Generation Z and millennials, reported frequent exposure to political news, although such exposure does not necessarily reflect active preference or genuine interest. Given the high level of attention and intensity of exposure to political issues, the media often employ euphemistic expressions to reduce the intensity of conflict, soften criticism, or construct more neutral images of political actors and policies (Fernández, 2014).

In the digital era, online mass media have become the primary channel for the distribution of political information. Data from the *Digital News Report 2023* published by the Reuters Institute show that online news platforms have been the main source of news for the Indonesian public from 2021 to 2023, despite a slight decline from 89 percent in 2021 to 84 percent in 2023. Social media and television

follow as secondary sources. These findings indicate that the public remains highly dependent on online media as the principal source of political information.

With its rapid dissemination and broad reach, online media possess significant capacity to shape public perceptions (Laila, 2024). In practice, online media often employ strategic lexical choices, including euphemisms, to frame political issues in ways that align with the intended narrative direction (Sariah, 2017; Kurniawati, 2011). For example, the phrase *relokasi penduduk* (population relocation) is frequently used in place of *pengusuran* (forced eviction), creating an impression of a more orderly and less conflictual process, even though the consequences are often similar, namely the loss of housing and community rights, which may provoke negative public reactions.

Importantly, the use of euphemism by online media is closely tied to strategies of framing the images of particular figures or groups. The selection of euphemistic referents is carried out selectively and is often influenced by the social status of the actors being reported. Influential figures tend to receive different forms of linguistic mitigation compared to non-elite actors (Sharma & Albarakati (2019). These differences are reflected in the types of referents employed, such as activities or conditions, which are aligned with social positioning within political discourse. Therefore, examining the relationship between social status and euphemistic referents is essential for understanding how the media convey political information to the public.

A comprehensive understanding of euphemism in political news is increasingly important to enable the public to interpret information more critically. Euphemistic expressions that soften messages can influence readers' understanding of an issue, making awareness of lexical choices that may shape perception essential. By selecting terms that avoid controversy, political news can shape public opinion in more subtle yet still significant ways. Therefore, understanding how euphemism operates can help readers approach political news more objectively, without being easily influenced by the emotional or ideological content embedded within it.

Despite the growing body of research on euphemism in political discourse, studies that systematically examine euphemistic referents in relation to the social status of political actors and their communicative functions in Indonesian online news media remain limited. Most previous research has focused on euphemism as a rhetorical or pragmatic device in political speeches or general media discourse, with less attention to how online news outlets strategically select euphemistic referents based on the social positioning of the actors being reported. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the use of euphemism in Indonesian online political news by analyzing the relationship between euphemistic referents, social status, and communicative functions, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of how linguistic strategies are employed in contemporary digital political journalism.

## **II. METHOD**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at describing, analyzing, and explaining the use of euphemism in political news published by Indonesian online mass media. The analysis focuses on three main aspects: euphemistic referents, the social status of the actors being reported, and the functions of euphemism in political discourse.

The data consist of political news texts collected from four Indonesian online news outlets: CNN Indonesia, Detik.com, Tempo, and Tirto.id, published between 1 and 31 January 2025. This period was selected to capture recent and relevant political developments at the beginning of 2025, when political reporting tends to be intensive and linguistically varied. Political news in this study refers exclusively to articles published under the politics sections of each outlet. Only written news texts that contain euphemistic expressions at the lexical level were included in the analysis.

The selection of these four media outlets was based on both the frequency of political coverage and distinctive journalistic styles. Tempo is known for its investigative journalism and critical political analysis, emphasizing transparency and accountability. Tirto.id adopts a data driven and in depth reporting approach that is particularly relevant for political discourse analysis (Ciptadi et al., 2018). CNN Indonesia prioritizes factual and formal news presentation with a relatively objective reporting structure (Yulika, 2021). Detik.com is characterized by fast paced, concise, and widely accessible reporting, making it suitable for examining more popular and communicative forms of euphemism. These differences allow for a comparative analysis of euphemism across diverse editorial orientations.

Data were collected using a systematic reading and note taking technique. Political news articles published within the specified period were accessed through the political sections of each media outlet. Each article was read carefully to identify sentences or phrases containing potential euphemistic expressions, based on linguistic features such as semantic softening, indirectness, or meaning obscuration.

Relevant excerpts were recorded in a preliminary data table along with contextual information, including the media source and publication date. Each excerpt was assigned a unique code indicating the media outlet, article sequence, excerpt number, and publication date to ensure traceability and analytical consistency.

Two main instruments were used in this study: the researcher as a human instrument and euphemism parameters. The researcher functioned as the primary instrument, responsible for selecting, interpreting, and analyzing the data, as euphemism analysis requires contextual and theory based interpretation. Euphemism parameters were employed as supporting instruments to ensure consistency and objectivity in identifying euphemistic expressions. These parameters include linguistic and semantic indicators such as politeness, concealment, taboo avoidance, semantic softening, focus shifting, and image protection, adapted from Zhao (2014).

Data validity was strengthened through triangulation. Following Creswell (2016) and Denzin (2000), this study applied data triangulation by comparing euphemistic usage across four media outlets with different editorial characteristics. In addition, theoretical triangulation was employed by interpreting findings in relation to multiple relevant euphemism theories. This approach enhances the credibility and robustness of the analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using the referential and pragmatic matching methods, given the semantic and pragmatic nature of euphemism. Two supporting techniques were applied: substitution and paraphrase. Substitution involved replacing euphemistic expressions with more explicit terms to reveal concealed meanings, while paraphrase involved reinterpreting euphemistic sentences based on broader discourse context.

The analysis proceeded through several stages: identifying euphemistic expressions, determining their substituted meanings, classifying their referents based on Wijana (2017), identifying the social status of the reported actors, and analyzing the communicative functions of euphemism in political discourse. The results were systematically organized into analytical tables to identify patterns and support reliable conclusions.

### ***III. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION***

This section discusses the findings of the analysis of euphemism in Indonesian political news published by four major online media outlets, namely Tirto.id, Tempo, CNN Indonesia, and Detik.com. Based on 250 euphemistic expressions, the discussion examines three analytical focuses: euphemistic referents, the association between euphemistic referents and the social status of reported actors, and the

communicative functions of euphemism in political discourse. The analysis demonstrates how euphemism operates as a strategic linguistic resource in framing political actions and conditions, as well as in shaping public interpretations of political realities.

### A. Euphemistic Referents in Political News

The analysis of 250 euphemistic expressions shows considerable variation in referent types in Indonesian political news. Euphemistic referents denote actions, conditions, events, professions, diseases, or objects that are linguistically softened in political reporting. Based on Wijana's (2017) referent classification, the analysis shows that activity and condition referents dominate euphemistic usage in political news. Activity-related referents emerge as the most dominant category, accounting for 125 cases (50 percent), indicating that euphemism is primarily used to mitigate or obscure politically sensitive actions and manage public evaluation of political behavior.

The second most frequent category involves state or condition referents, with 93 instances, reflecting the tendency of political discourse to reframe social, economic, or political situations in more neutral or favorable terms. In contrast, object referents appear less frequently, totaling 17 instances and largely occurring in metaphorical forms, while references to professions, events, and diseases are relatively marginal. Overall, these findings suggest that euphemism in political news is predominantly oriented toward shaping public interpretations of actions and conditions rather than labeling concrete entities, highlighting its strategic role in political framing.

#### 1. Object Referents

In Indonesian political news, euphemisms referring to objects primarily function as metaphors that reframe political roles and power relations rather than denote concrete entities. In the present data, object referents are used to symbolize institutional identity and political instrumentalization, allowing complex or controversial political realities to be expressed in familiar and non-confrontational terms. By transforming political actors or organizations into object-based metaphors, these euphemisms reduce explicit references to agency, responsibility, and conflict. The following analysis illustrates this pattern through two object referents, namely *sapu* and *kendaraan*, which respectively frame institutional integrity and political instrumentalization.

##### Data (1)

"... *hilangnya independensi KPK justru membuat mereka kehilangan tujuan awal sebagai sapu yang bersih.*" (TIRTO-10.3-100125)

("... the loss of KPK's independence has caused it to lose its original purpose as a clean broom.")

In data (1), the word *sapu* (broom) in the phrase *sapu yang bersih* (clean broom) is categorized as an object referent. In this context, *sapu* does not denote a literal cleaning tool but functions metaphorically to represent the Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi (KPK), the Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission, as an institution expected to eliminate corruption within the government. The euphemistic use of this object referent symbolically frames the KPK as a "cleaning instrument," while simultaneously highlighting the perceived decline of its effectiveness and institutional courage.

This euphemism obscures a more explicit accusation such as *kegagalan institusional* (institutional failure), *hilangnya integritas* (loss of integrity), or *ketidakmampuan memberantas korupsi* (inability to fight corruption) by presenting it through a symbolic and indirect expression. Rather than directly stating that the KPK has failed to fulfill its mandate, the metaphor of a *sapu yang bersih* allows criticism to be conveyed in a softened yet evaluative manner.

The decline in the KPK's independence is commonly associated with the 2019 revision of the KPK Law, which introduced a Supervisory Board and changed the status of KPK employees to civil servants (Wibowo, 2021; Zulfahmi, 2024). These changes placed the KPK under greater governmental influence, limiting its autonomy in handling corruption cases, particularly those involving actors with close ties to state institutions. This socio-political context reinforces the ironic interpretation of the euphemism.

Based on Allan's (1999) classification of euphemistic forms, *sapu* represents a figurative expression in the form of metaphor, associating abstract actions such as corruption eradication with a concrete object. In this news context, the metaphor functions ironically, underscoring the contrast between the idealized image of the KPK as a decisive anti-corruption body and the public perception of its diminished independence and effectiveness. In addition to institutional metaphors, object referents are also used to frame political strategies in a more indirect and symbolic way.

### Data (2)

"... ormas itu nantinya akan dijadikan *kendaraan politik* Anies untuk Pilpres 2029 nanti." (DETIK-8.1-140125)

("... the organization will later be turned into Anies' political vehicle for the 2029 presidential election.")

In data (2), the word *kendaraan* (vehicle) is classified as a euphemism with a material object referent. In this context, it does not denote a literal means of transportation such as a car or motorcycle, but functions metaphorically to refer to a political instrument used to gain power or support a presidential candidacy. The term appears in news reports discussing Anies Baswedan's plan to establish a mass organization following his defeat in the 2024 presidential election and his failure to run in the 2024 Jakarta gubernatorial election due to the lack of party endorsement.

The use of *kendaraan* reflects a figurative political framing in which the pursuit of power is conceptualized as a journey that requires a means or instrument to reach its destination. Mass organizations or political parties are therefore portrayed as *kendaraan* because they serve to carry political figures toward strategic positions. In this case, *kendaraan* constitutes a euphemism in the form of a figurative expression (metaphor), as it obscures more explicit descriptions such as *alat politik* (political tool), or *sarana ambisi kekuasaan* (instrument of power ambition).

Overall, object-referent euphemisms in Indonesian political news primarily function through metaphorical framing to present sensitive political realities in more acceptable terms. By employing familiar material imagery, such as *kendaraan* and *sapu yang bersih*, the media subtly reshapes public interpretations of power, institutional roles, and political ambition without direct confrontation. This pattern supports Sultanovich's (2024) argument that euphemisms in political discourse function as strategic linguistic devices to mitigate the negative impact of controversial issues and render them more acceptable to public audiences. Consequently, object-related euphemisms serve not merely as linguistic creativity but as persuasive tools in managing public perception within political communication.

Beyond object-based metaphors, euphemistic references also appear in descriptions of social roles and occupations. The following section therefore explores how professional referents are used to construct and legitimize political identities in news reporting.

## 2. Professional Referents

In political discourse, professions frequently become objects of euphemism used to reframe an individual's role so that it appears more neutral, professional, or respectable, particularly when the figure involved has a controversial background. This section examines euphemisms with professional referents in Indonesian political news.

**Data (3)**

“... *serta Staf Khusus di Lingkungan Kementerian Komunikasi dan Digital (Komdigi) ...*”  
(TEMPO-33.2-130125)

(“... as well as Special Staff within the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Komdigi) ...”)

In data (3), the term *Staf Khusus* (Special Staff) refers to an individual appointed to assist with specific tasks outside the formal structural positions within a ministry or state institution (Oktarianda, 2024). In the context of appointments at the Kementerian Komunikasi dan Digital (Komdigi), or the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs, the use of the term *Staf Khusus* to designate Rudi Susanto, who is publicly known as a political buzzer during the administration of President Joko Widodo, serves to obscure his actual role.

In the Indonesian political context, the term buzzer refers to individuals or accounts that systematically amplify political narratives on social media, often in a coordinated and strategic manner (Sugiono, 2020). Unlike its neutral or technical meaning in English, buzzer in Indonesia carries strong political and ideological connotations, frequently associated with propaganda, opinion manipulation, and paid online campaigning.

By labeling Rudi Susanto as *Staf Khusus*, the media and official discourse create the impression that the position is professional and neutral, despite the appointee’s background not originating from a governmental career path. This euphemistic designation downplays the political nature of his prior activities and frames the appointment as administratively legitimate rather than politically strategic.

Historically, the position of *Staf Khusus* in Indonesia was introduced during the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to support strategic areas such as politics, law, and communication. This practice expanded under President Joko Widodo, including the appointment of younger figures, and has continued under President Prabowo Subianto, particularly in communication and public relations roles.

In practice, the position of *Staf Khusus* has often been subject to criticism due to the lack of clear task descriptions and measurable responsibilities. Many observers regard this position as a form of political accommodation or reciprocal reward for loyalists and campaign teams, without transparent performance indicators (Raseukiy, 2022). This criticism resonates with David Graeber’s (2013) argument regarding socially unnecessary jobs that are nevertheless preserved for purposes of power, symbolism, or the maintenance of political networks. Accordingly, the euphemistic use of *Staf Khusus* conceals political proximity to power while projecting professionalism and institutional contribution.

From Allan’s (1991) typology, *Staf Khusus* represents a substitution euphemism, replacing more explicit labels such as *tim sukses* (campaign team member) or *loyalis politik* (political loyalist), which could invite public criticism or undermine the ministry’s institutional image. Beyond professional labels, euphemistic language also appears in the reporting of public health policies, particularly in references to diseases that affect vulnerable groups such as the elderly and infants.

**3. Disease Referents**

In news reporting on public health policies, euphemisms are frequently employed to refer to diseases in technical or scientific terms. This strategy aims to prevent excessive public anxiety, particularly when the diseases involved are serious or high-risk. By using medical terminology or professional jargon, both the media and the government seek to maintain public calm while conveying the impression that policy responses are grounded in scientific knowledge and professional expertise.

**Data (4)**

"... akan ada pendeteksian penyakit seperti kanker untuk lansia dan **congenital hypothyroid** untuk bayi." (TEMPO-16-030125)

("... there will be disease detection such as cancer for the elderly and congenital hypothyroid for infants.")

Data (4) appears in news coverage of a free health screening program introduced in early 2025 as a national public health initiative. According to the Indonesian government, the program was funded through the state budget and aimed to reach tens of millions of citizens by providing free medical checkups as part of a "birthday health service." Its primary focus is early disease detection, including cancer screening for the elderly and congenital hypothyroid screening for infants.

The term *congenital hypothyroid* is classified as a disease referent because it denotes a congenital thyroid hormone disorder in newborns that can lead to serious developmental problems if left untreated. In everyday language, this condition could be described more bluntly as *gangguan kelenjar tiroid sejak lahir* (a thyroid defect at birth) or *gangguan hormon yang menghambat perkembangan bayi* (a hormonal disorder causing developmental delay in babies), expressions that sound more alarming and emotionally charged. The use of the technical medical term therefore functions euphemistically by softening the emotional impact of the disease reference and making it less threatening for general audiences. This aligns with Tayler and Ogden's (2005) observation that specialized medical terminology can reduce public anxiety and negative perceptions compared to more direct labels.

From Allan's (1991) typology of euphemism, *congenital hypothyroid* represents technical jargon, as it relies on specialized medical terminology commonly used in professional health discourse. Such usage reinforces scientific authority and institutional credibility in public health communication.

In contrast to disease-related euphemisms, which rely on technical terminology, activity-related euphemisms focus on reframing politically sensitive actions. The following section discusses euphemisms with activity referents.

**4. Activity Referents**

Activity referents in political euphemisms involve actions or behaviors performed by political actors, state institutions, or members of the public. In media discourse, euphemistic expressions are commonly used to soften or reframe activities that may attract negative public evaluation, particularly those related to power, conflict, or political contestation.

**Data (5)**

"... upaya **memobilisasi** kepala desa untuk memenangkan Prabowo-Gibran" (TEMPO-5.3-010125)

("... efforts to mobilize village heads to secure a victory for Prabowo-Gibran")

Data (9) appears in news coverage summarizing Indonesia's political dynamics in the period leading up to the 2024 presidential election. In this context, the term *memobilisasi* (mobilize) does not merely refer to administrative coordination or organizational efforts, but instead denotes the political deployment of village heads to support a specific candidate pair, Prabowo–Gibran. Such involvement of local officials in partisan politics is legally and ethically prohibited, indicating that the underlying meaning of *memobilisasi* points to an abuse of power for electoral purposes.

From Allan's (1991) typology, this expression represents a substitution euphemism, as it replaces more explicit and critical descriptions such as *memaksa perangkat desa untuk berkampanye* (forcing village officials to campaign), *menggunakan aparat negara untuk kepentingan partisan* (using state

apparatus for partisan interests). The word *memobilisasi* carries a neutral, bureaucratic tone that frames the action as routine administrative activity, thereby concealing its controversial and potentially undemocratic nature.

Following the use of *memobilisasi* to euphemistically describe the political deployment of village heads in support of a specific candidate pair, another activity-related euphemism can be observed in the media's portrayal of state responses to public protest. The next example illustrates how coercive actions by security forces are linguistically softened through the term *membubarkan*.

#### Data (6)

“Ratusan petugas keamanan *membubarkan* massa ...” (TEMPO-10.9-010125)  
 (“Hundreds of security personnel dispersed the crowd ...”)

In data (6), the term *membubarkan* (dispersed) appears in a report on the Jogja Memanggil demonstration held in Yogyakarta as a response to the government's plan to raise the value-added tax to 12 percent starting in January 2025. This protest continued a tradition of critical public demonstrations against state policies, similar to the earlier Gejayan Memanggil movement, and even echoed the historical Gejayan 1998 protests that marked an important moment in Indonesia's reform era.

Literally, the term *membubarkan* means to stop an activity or instruct people to leave a particular place. However, in practice, such actions often involve physical violence, including beating, dragging, firing tear gas, or forcibly arresting demonstrators. From Allan's (1991) typology, *membubarkan* functions as a substitution euphemism, replacing more explicit expressions such as *menyerang* (attacking), *memukuli* (beating), or *menggunakan kekerasan terhadap demonstran* (using violence against protesters). The use of this term presents the actions of security forces as neutral, orderly, and procedural, thereby minimizing negative impressions and obscuring potential violations of human rights.

The analysis of data (5) and (6) supports Chovanec's (2019) argument that euphemisms are used to blur the boundary between actual actions and public perception. In his study, the military term *blue-on-blue* refers to friendly-fire incidents in a way that avoids tragic connotations and direct attribution of blame. A similar mechanism is evident in the use of *memobilisasi* and *membubarkan* in Indonesian political discourse. Both terms mask actions that may violate ethical norms or rights, such as violence against protesters or political intervention by state officials, through language that appears procedural and legitimate.

This pattern is consistent with Ridwan et al. (2020), who note that euphemisms can normalize problematic political actions and statements by obscuring their negative implications. Euphemism thus functions not merely as a stylistic device, but as a strategic linguistic tool for reframing controversial practices in ways that reduce public criticism.

## 5. Event Referents

Event referents in political discourse refer to major occurrences or critical moments that have a broad impact on society. In this context, euphemisms are employed to convey significant events, such as crises, disasters, or emergency situations, in a softer or more familiar manner, thereby reducing tension or traumatic impressions.

#### Data (7)

“... persoalan yang dihadapi di tengah *pagebluk*.” (TEMPO-10.8-010125)  
 “... the problems faced amid the epidemic.”

The term *pagebluk* in data (10) is classified as an event referent referring to the COVID-19 pandemic, a major crisis that affected multiple aspects of social life, including public health and economic

conditions. In the news article, *pagebluk* appears in the explanation that the Jogja Memanggil protest was shaped by a series of socio-political pressures, including the pandemic, which intensified social inequality.

From Allan's (1991) typology, *pagebluk* functions as a substitution euphemism, replacing the more formal and potentially anxiety-inducing term *pandemi COVID-19* (COVID-19 pandemic) with a simpler expression rooted in local cultural usage. Although the term is familiar within Javanese linguistic tradition, its use helps avoid the formal and large-scale connotations associated with international medical terminology. In addition to fostering emotional proximity, this euphemism also serves to reduce the psychological pressure associated with directly naming the crisis.

This pattern aligns with Singh's (2021) findings that Indian media used alternative labels such as *Chinese virus* or *invisible enemy* to soften public tension during the pandemic. Similarly, Rovino et al. (2022) argue that euphemisms in pandemic reporting function to reduce public panic by obscuring the severity of health emergencies. These studies support the view that *pagebluk* is not merely a stylistic variation, but a strategic linguistic choice that shapes how large-scale crises are perceived and emotionally processed by the public.

In addition to framing major events, euphemisms are also employed to describe ongoing conditions or situations in political discourse. The following section analyzes euphemisms with condition referents that soften the portrayal of social and political realities.

## 6. Condition Referents

In political news reporting, euphemisms with condition referents are used to present social and political conditions in a less confrontational way. Rather than emphasizing conflict or decline directly, such expressions frame changing situations through milder and more symbolic language. This discursive strategy helps shape public interpretation of political developments by reducing the perceived severity of sensitive conditions. As noted by Rohmatullah and Degaf (2025), political media discourse often employs euphemism to reframe controversial conditions in ways that appear neutral or symbolic, thereby mitigating negative public reactions.

### Data (8)

“*Jokowi Memudar, PDI Perjuangan Melunak*” (DETIK-12.1-170125)  
 (“Jokowi Fading, PDI Perjuangan Softening”)

In Data (8), *memudar* (fading) refers to the decline of President Joko Widodo's political influence after the 2024 General Election, while *melunak* (softening) describes the shift in stance of PDI Perjuangan, one of Indonesia's major political parties, from a critical position to a more accommodating attitude toward the new government. Both expressions replace more direct and potentially negative formulations such as *kehilangan kekuasaan* (loss of power) or *kompromi politik* (political compromise). As euphemisms, *memudar* and *melunak* obscure these political conditions through milder and more neutral language.

From Allan's (1991) typology of euphemism, *memudar* and *melunak* are classified as figurative expressions. The term *memudar* conveys the idea of a gradual fading process, framing the decline of political influence as something natural rather than as a direct loss of power. Meanwhile, *melunak* implies a transition from a firm or rigid stance to a more flexible position, presenting political realignment as a moderate adjustment instead of a strategic compromise. Through such figurative wording, political change is represented in a less confrontational manner, helping to soften public perceptions of shifting power relations and policy positions.

This finding is consistent with Mironina and Porchesku (2023), who argue that euphemisms in political media discourse are not merely employed to soften actions, but also to reconstruct public perceptions of social and political realities in ways that appear more acceptable. Thus, the use of softened language in describing political conditions serves as a strategic tool for managing public opinion rather than merely a stylistic choice.

## B. Association between the Social Status of Reported Actors and Euphemistic Referents

This subsection explores how euphemistic referents are associated with the social status of reported actors in Indonesian political news. The distribution of euphemisms across different social groups indicates that language choices are shaped by levels of authority, public visibility, and political sensitivity. By comparing the use of euphemistic referents for state officials, politicians, and the general public, this section highlights how media discourse strategically frames political information to manage image, legitimacy, and audience perception.

**Distribution of Euphemistic Referents across Social Status Categories**

No.	Social Status	Euphemism Referents						Total
		Object	Professional	Disease	Activity	Event	Condition	
1.	State Officials	6	3	-	72	4	57	142
2.	Politicians	10	3	-	35	2	20	70
3.	General Public	1	-	1	18	2	16	38
<b>Total</b>		17	6	1	125	8	93	250

The table shows that euphemistic expressions are most frequently used when reporting on state officials. These expressions mainly refer to activities and conditions, suggesting that institutional actions and political conditions are often presented in softened or indirect terms. Politicians are also commonly described using euphemisms, particularly in relation to their actions and political positions, although the intensity of euphemistic framing is less pronounced than for state officials.

In contrast, the general public is associated with fewer euphemistic expressions, and these tend to focus on everyday activities and social conditions. Overall, the dominance of activity and condition referents across all social groups indicates that media discourse prioritizes the softening of actions and situations rather than objects, professions, or health related issues. This pattern suggests that euphemism functions as a strategic tool to regulate public interpretation of politically sensitive matters, especially when powerful actors are involved. The following discussion first examines euphemistic strategies used in reporting state officials.

### 1. Euphemism in Reporting State Officials

The findings indicate that euphemisms referring to activities and conditions dominate news reports involving state officials. This reflects their central role as policy makers whose decisions directly affect the public. When official actions involve legal controversy, ethical issues, or potential abuse of power, media discourse often relies on euphemistic language to soften criticism and reduce public backlash.

#### Data (9)

“*Presiden mengakali undang-undang ...*” (TIRTO-3.1-030125)  
 (“The President maneuvered around the law ...”)

The report features an interview with constitutional law expert Feri Amsari, who criticizes the 2024 election process under President Joko Widodo’s administration, highlighting systematic irregularities, the

misuse of state resources, and the manipulation of legal institutions to sustain political power. He refers to practices such as the exploitation of legal and institutional mechanisms for political advantage, including what he terms the “Gentong Babi” case.

Within this critical context, activity-related euphemisms are particularly prominent. The verb *mengakali* (to outsmart or maneuver) is used to describe presidential actions that effectively bypass legal constraints. Rather than employing more explicit and legally charged terms such as *melanggar* (violating), *mengakali* frames the action as strategic or tactically skillful. This lexical choice minimizes the legal and ethical implications of the act by presenting it as political ingenuity rather than a breach of the law, thereby softening accusations of legal abuse and democratic erosion.

**Data (10)**

“... *putusan MK yang memuluskan jalan Gibran menjadi cawapres.*” (TEMPO-5.9-010125)  
 (“... the Constitutional Court’s ruling that facilitated Gibran’s path to the vice-presidential candidacy.”)

Similarly, the verb *memuluskan* (facilitated) describes a Constitutional Court ruling that enabled Gibran’s controversial vice-presidential candidacy. This figurative expression draws on the image of smoothing a path to represent political and legal processes, framing the ruling as natural and orderly. In doing so, it replaces more explicit and critical descriptions such as *campur tangan dalam proses hukum* (intervening in the legal process) or *memanipulasi prosedur peradilan* (manipulating judicial procedures).

As a result, allegations of conflict of interest and political intervention are downplayed, and a highly contentious judicial decision is presented as a routine legal process. The euphemistic wording diverts attention from possible legal and ethical violations and portrays the ruling as administratively normal rather than politically motivated.

Overall, activity-related euphemisms in reports on state officials function to normalize contentious actions, preserve institutional credibility, and avoid direct confrontation with political authority. Through figurative wording, sensitive political decisions are presented as orderly, strategic, and legally acceptable. Beyond activity-related expressions, euphemisms are also used to describe political and institutional conditions in reports involving state officials. Such language allows the media to present sensitive developments in a more restrained and indirect manner.

**Data (11)**

“... *Indeks Persepsi Korupsi (CPI) yang masih stagnan ...*” (TEMPO-6.3-010125)  
 (“... the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) remains stagnant ...”)

The term *stagnan* (stagnant) is used to describe the Corruption Perception Index in a way that avoids more explicitly negative evaluations such as *menurun* (declining) or *memburuk* (worsening). Rather than emphasizing failure, the expression suggests a temporary lack of progress. This euphemistic framing helps preserve governmental credibility by softening the perception of institutional shortcomings.

Taken together, euphemisms referring to political states and conditions function to stabilize narratives, reduce public alarm, and protect institutional image. They frame political realities as controlled or transitional rather than as conflictual or indicative of failure.

The concentration of euphemistic expressions in reports on state officials reflects broader power relations between the media and political authority. As Mironina and Porchesku (2023) argue, media discourse often avoids direct confrontation with those in power by employing indirect and mitigated language. Euphemisms enable journalists to convey criticism while minimizing the risk of political or legal repercussions.

Similarly, Crespo-Fernández (2018) observes that euphemistic framing is a common strategy for maintaining a positive governmental image, even when underlying conditions involve conflict, failure, or abuse of power. In this sense, euphemisms do not merely soften language; they actively shape perceptions of political legitimacy.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that euphemism use is most frequent and diverse in reporting on state officials, whose high institutional status requires greater discursive caution. Media outlets manage this constraint through figurative language, technical terminology, and evaluative minimization, allowing sensitive information to circulate without overtly challenging political authority.

## 2. *Euphemism in Reporting Politicians*

Similar to the findings on state officials, euphemisms referring to activities also play a central role in the representation of politicians in political news discourse. However, unlike state officials who are typically framed as institutional actors, politicians are more often portrayed in relation to political alignment and inter-party relations. As a result, euphemistic expressions in reports about politicians tend to obscure explicit political support and reduce the appearance of strategic positioning, presenting political dynamics as moderate, pragmatic, and non-confrontational.

### Data (12)

“... PDI Perjuangan *tidak mau berseberangan* dengan Prabowo.” (DETIK-13.8-210125)

(“... PDI Perjuangan does not want to be at odds with Prabowo.”)

This expression employs the phrase *tidak mau berseberangan* (does not want to be at odds) to describe PDI Perjuangan’s stance toward the Prabowo administration following the 2024 general election. Rather than using more explicit terms such as *mendukung* (supporting) or *berpihak* (aligning with), the phrase emphasizes the absence of opposition. This euphemistic formulation allows the media to imply political closeness without openly declaring allegiance. By framing the relationship in negative terms (not opposing), the report avoids presenting PDI Perjuangan’s position as a strategic or opportunistic move, instead portraying it as a reasonable and non-confrontational stance.

Taken together, this data shows that euphemisms referring to political activities are primarily realized through lexical substitution. These forms function to regulate public perceptions of political alignment by softening explicit support, minimizing the visibility of strategic calculations, and presenting politicians as engaging in acceptable and pragmatic political positioning rather than overt power maneuvering.

Beyond political activities, euphemisms referring to condition referents are also prominent in news coverage of politicians. In this context, condition referents are used to describe the public position and political relevance of a political figure in a softened and indirect manner.

### Data (13)

“Adi menilai upaya tersebut tentunya adalah cara Anies agar tetap *eksis* ...” (DETIK-8.3-140125)

(“Adi considers the move as Anies’ way to remain relevant.”)

In data (13), the term *eksis* (relevant) is used to describe Anies Baswedan’s efforts to maintain political visibility following his electoral defeat. This euphemism replaces more overtly strategic or ambitious expressions such as *mempertahankan pengaruh* (preserving influence) or *mempersiapkan pencalonan ulang* (preparing for future candidacy). By framing his actions in terms of relevance rather than ambition, the media presents his continued political engagement as participatory and socially acceptable rather than power-driven.

Overall, euphemism in reports on politicians tends to soften political positioning and public visibility by using neutral and indirect expressions. Political closeness is implied through the absence of opposition rather than explicit support, while continued political activity is framed as maintaining relevance instead of pursuing influence or strategic advantage. This linguistic strategy reduces the appearance of ambition, alignment, or maneuvering, presenting politicians' actions as moderate, acceptable, and non-confrontational within post-election dynamics.

In line with Crespo-Fernández (2018), euphemism enables political actors to maintain a positive public image even when they are involved in controversial or strategic actions. Within news discourse, such euphemistic framing reflects media caution as well as a broader narrative strategy aimed at preserving political stability and public trust.

### 3. *Euphemism in Reporting the Public*

In political news coverage, the public, including students, activists, academics, and ordinary citizens, plays an important role as both participants in social action and groups affected by public policy. Although they do not hold formal authority like state officials or politicians, their experiences and responses remain politically significant. Therefore, media representations of the public often employ euphemistic language to present sensitive issues in a neutral, sympathetic, and non-confrontational manner, particularly when referring to public activities and social or economic conditions.

#### **Data (14)**

*“Peneliti dari Indonesia Corruption Watch atau ICW diduga mengalami **doxing** oleh pemilik akun Instagram @volt\_anonym.”* (TEMPO-19.3-030125)

“A researcher from Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) was allegedly subjected to doxing by the owner of the Instagram account @volt\_anonym.”

In data (14), the term *doxing* is used to describe the online dissemination of personal information targeting a researcher from Indonesia Corruption Watch. As a technical borrowing from digital and cyber discourse, *doxing* replaces more emotionally charged expressions such as *intimidasi digital* (digital intimidation), or *teror daring* (online terror). The use of this technical term allows the media to report a serious violation without intensifying accusatory or emotive tones. This reflects a cautious framing strategy when covering incidents involving civil society actors, particularly in cases where the perpetrators remain anonymous or unverified.

Following the discussion of activity-related euphemisms, the analysis proceeds to examine euphemisms with condition referents that describe the social and economic conditions experienced by the public. These expressions function to present policy impacts in a more restrained and non-confrontational manner.

#### **Data (15)**

*“... pelaksanaan PPN 12 persen akan membuat posisi **masyarakat kecil** makin **sulit**.”* (DETIK-13.12-210125)

“The implementation of a 12 percent VAT will make the position of lower-income communities increasingly difficult.”

Data (15) contains two euphemistic expressions, namely *masyarakat kecil* (lower-income communities) and *sulit* (difficult). The phrase *masyarakat kecil* replaces the more direct term *masyarakat miskin* (the poor), thereby reducing the negative stigma associated with economic hardship. Meanwhile, *sulit* is used to describe the economic impact of the 12 percent value-added tax without referring to more severe outcomes such as new poverty or livelihood crisis. Together, these expressions soften the portrayal of policy consequences while maintaining sensitivity toward vulnerable groups, reflecting a cautious and empathetic media framing of public conditions.

Overall, the use of euphemism in reporting on the public reflects the media's tendency to represent social actions and conditions through neutral, sympathetic, and non-confrontational language. Euphemistic expressions are employed to describe both digital attacks and the socio-economic impact of public policy in ways that avoid overtly accusatory, emotive, or stigmatizing tones, thereby softening the portrayal of sensitive issues affecting ordinary citizens.

This pattern indicates that the social status of the public as non-power holders encourages the media to adopt polite and empathetic language, reinforcing sensitivity toward public perception and strengthening the image of the media as an inclusive and socially responsible narrator. These findings align with Mironina and Porchesku (2023), who argue that euphemism in media discourse functions to obscure social injustice, mitigate conflict, and protect the dignity of individuals or groups occupying lower social positions. Accordingly, euphemism in political reporting not only serves to soften expression but also reflects underlying social hierarchies and the media's stance toward different social actors within political discourse.

### C. Functions of Euphemism in Political News

#### 1. *Mitigating Negative Meanings*

In political reporting, sensitive actions and controversial practices are often conveyed through euphemistic language to reduce negative meanings and avoid direct confrontation. The media tend to replace harsh or stigmatizing expressions with milder and more neutral terms, allowing politically problematic issues to be presented in a more acceptable manner. Such lexical choices help soften public perception of actors and actions that may otherwise be associated with manipulation, abuse of power, or unethical conduct.

This mitigating function reflects a strategic effort to maintain narrative balance, particularly when the reported actors are linked to political institutions or authority. By employing euphemism, the media can address contentious realities without explicitly assigning blame or moral judgment. As Jaganegara and Wijana (2023) note, euphemism in political discourse serves to avoid semantic conflict and public controversy, while Sydoruk (2022) emphasizes its role in concealing or softening negative realities. Accordingly, euphemism functions not only as a linguistic device but also as a framing strategy that renders politically sensitive issues more socially palatable.

#### Data (16)

“... *Meutya menunjuk **pegiat sosial** Rudi Susanto ...*” (TEMPO-33.3-130125)  
 (“... Meutya appointed social activist Rudi Susanto ...”)

This example illustrates the mitigating function of euphemism. In data (16), the term *pegiat sosial* (social activist) is used to refer to Rudi Susanto, who is widely known as a *buzzer politik* (political buzzer). The euphemism replaces a label associated with negative connotations. By framing him as a *pegiat sosial*, the media present his political involvement as socially oriented rather than strategically partisan, thereby softening public perception and reducing potential disapproval.

#### Data (17)

“... *sebagian kalangan menyebutnya sebagai **pendengung** ...*” (TEMPO-33.3-130125)  
 (“... some groups referred to him as a rumor spreader ...”)

The term *pendengung* (rumor spreader) is derived from *dengung*, which originally refers to a continuous buzzing sound, such as that produced by aircraft engines or insects. Through metaphorical extension, the term has come to denote individuals who create “echoes” in public discourse by repeatedly spreading information and attracting attention. In contemporary usage, *pendengung* commonly refers to rumor spreaders or attention-generating figures on social media, without an inherent political orientation.

When used in political reporting as a substitute for *buzzer*, *pendengung* functions as a euphemism that softens the political and manipulative connotations associated with coordinated propaganda. Rather than emphasizing strategic or paid political messaging, the term highlights the communicative act of generating public attention. This metaphorical framing reduces stigma and presents the activity as a general information-spreading practice rather than an explicitly deceptive political operation.

**Data (18)**

"... *dalil pemohon soal politisasi bansos dan mobilisasi aparat ...*" (TEMPO-5.4-010125)

"... the petitioner's arguments regarding the politicization of social assistance and the mobilization of the apparatus ..."

Data (39) further illustrates this mitigating function through the phrases *politisasi bansos* (politicization of social assistance) and *mobilisasi aparat* (mobilization of the apparatus). The term *politisasi* substitutes for more explicit expressions such as *penyalahgunaan bansos untuk kepentingan* (electoral abuse of social aid for electoral gain), while *mobilisasi* replaces phrases like *pengerahan secara paksa* (coercive deployment). These euphemisms soften the representation of alleged misconduct and avoid direct moral or legal judgment against state institutions, despite the serious ethical implications involved.

Taken together, these findings indicate that Indonesian online media strategically employ euphemistic expressions to balance factual reporting with discursive caution. Euphemisms that mitigate negative meaning function to reduce the perceived severity of controversial actions, shield powerful actors from explicit criticism, and minimize the risk of social or political backlash. Through this linguistic strategy, politically sensitive realities involving coercion, manipulation, or ethical ambiguity are reframed as administratively normal, emotionally neutral, and publicly acceptable.

## 2. *Constructing and Sustaining a Positive Image*

One important function of euphemism in political discourse is the construction and maintenance of a positive public image for political actors. Rather than presenting political actions in strictly administrative or policy-oriented terms, media reports often employ affective and figurative expressions that highlight care, generosity, and moral commitment. Through such linguistic choices, political initiatives are framed as socially meaningful and emotionally resonant for the public.

In political news reporting, this image-building strategy commonly appears in narratives about public services and symbolic actions associated with political leaders. The use of softened and evaluative language allows these actions to be perceived as personal, benevolent, and socially attentive, rather than merely political or strategic. As a result, political figures are represented as compassionate and responsible actors who are closely connected to citizens' everyday experiences.

**Data (19)**

"*Mereka yang masuk dalam penerima layanan cek kesehatan gratis dan berulang tahun di awal tahun 2025, berhak mendapat kado dari Presiden Prabowo.*" (TEMPO-22.1-030125)

("They who are registered as recipients of free health check services and whose birthdays fall in early 2025 are entitled to receive a *gift* from President Prabowo.")

In Data (19), the term *kado* (gift) is used in the context of the inauguration of a government health program launched in February 2025, where citizens who receive free medical check-ups and celebrate their birthdays in early 2025 are said to receive a "gift" from the President. However, *kado* does not refer to a literal birthday present but symbolically denotes government assistance.

This lexical choice serves an image-building function by introducing a personal and affective tone to what is essentially a state policy. Instead of framing the program as an administrative action, the word *kado* constructs the image of President Prabowo as a caring leader who offers something special to the public. The metaphor replaces more neutral expressions such as *bantuan pemerintah* (government assistance), which may carry explicit political connotations. In contrast, the metaphor *kado* introduces a lighter and more emotional nuance that is psychologically more appealing to the public. Bas and Grabe (2015) argue that audiences tend to respond more positively to terms that sound familiar and convey a personal tone, which helps explain the persuasive effect of this lexical choice.

#### **Data (20)**

“Didik Haryadi mengaku akan berjalan kaki dari Jakarta menuju Boyolali, Jawa Tengah sebagai bentuk *menunaikan janji*.” (CNN-3-010125)

(“Didik Haryadi stated that he would walk from Jakarta to Boyolali, Central Java, as a way of fulfilling a promise.”)

In Data (20), the phrase *menunaikan janji* (fulfilling a promise) is used to describe the action of a member of parliament who walked from Jakarta to Boyolali. This euphemistic expression replaces alternative interpretations that might frame the act as a *kampanye simbolik* (symbolic campaign) or *strategi pembentukan citra politik* (a political image-building strategy). The verb *menunaikan* carries strong moral and religious connotations, suggesting sincerity, responsibility, and ethical commitment. As a result, the action is presented as a form of devotion and dedication to public trust rather than as a strategic effort for political visibility.

However, the “promise” being fulfilled does not involve a policy commitment or a concrete obligation toward the public, but rather a personal and symbolic vow. Despite its limited practical impact on society, the use of *menunaikan janji* elevates the act into a morally meaningful gesture. This lexical choice reinforces the image of the politician as a leader who is faithful to his promises, thereby strengthening a narrative of integrity and moral responsibility.

Collectively, these examples demonstrate that euphemism functions not only as a linguistic softener but also as a powerful tool for positive image construction in political reporting. Through carefully selected lexical choices, the media is able to transform potentially strategic or self-interested actions into narratives of care, heroism, and moral responsibility. This finding aligns with Karimova and Boltayeva (2024), who argue that euphemism plays a crucial role in shaping favorable public perceptions by reframing politically actions in ways that minimize controversy and enhance legitimacy. In political news discourse, euphemism thus operates as a subtle yet effective mechanism for reinforcing trust and admiration toward political figures and institutions.

### **3. Obscuring Responsibility and Accountability**

In political news reporting, euphemism often functions to obscure responsibility and soften perceptions of potential wrongdoing, particularly in corruption-related cases. Through neutral and constructive-sounding lexical choices, controversial actions can be reframed as routine administrative handling, thereby diverting attention away from issues of accountability. This strategy allows the media to present sensitive situations without explicitly foregrounding unlawful conduct or individual culpability, guiding readers toward a less critical interpretation of the actors involved.

#### **Data (21)**

“... perannya *memberskan* kasus korupsi BLBI ...” (DETIK-9.1-140125)

“... his role in *resolving* the BLBI corruption case ...”

The function of obscuring responsibility or fault is clearly illustrated in data (21). In this example, the verb *memberskan* (resolving) is used to describe an individual’s involvement in the major BLBI

corruption case. This expression replaces more explicit and potentially accusatory terms such as *menutupi* (covering up), *mengamankan* (securing illicit interests), or *terlibat dalam penghilangan bukti* (being complicit in the disappearance of evidence). By employing the term *membereskan*, the media frames the action as a form of administrative problem-solving rather than participation in unlawful conduct. As a result, public attention is diverted away from possible criminal accountability, and the actor is implicitly portrayed as playing a constructive or corrective role.

This euphemistic framing neutralizes the moral weight of the corruption case and reduces the likelihood of critical interpretation by readers. Instead of emphasizing systemic failure or individual wrongdoing, the narrative highlights efficiency and responsibility. Such usage demonstrates how euphemism can normalize questionable actions and shield political actors from explicit blame, reinforcing the media's role in moderating public judgment through strategic lexical choices.

This euphemistic framing redirects attention from potential wrongdoing toward notions of efficiency and responsibility, thereby reducing the critical impact of corruption-related narratives. In politically sensitive contexts, such lexical choices help protect institutional image and soften perceptions of accountability. Such usage demonstrates how euphemism can normalize questionable actions and shield political actors from explicit blame, reinforcing the media's role in shaping public judgment through strategic language use.

These findings are consistent with the work of Jaganegara and Wijana (2023), whose analysis of political discourse in online media reveals that euphemism is frequently employed not only to mitigate semantic harshness but also to avoid direct responsibility for problematic actions. They observe that confrontational or accusatory expressions are often replaced with lighter or technical-sounding terms. One illustrative example is the use of *offside* to refer to protocol violations or actions by politicians that exceed their authority. Rather than being framed as deviations or procedural violations with legal or ethical implications, the term *offside* presents such actions as minor missteps within the fluid dynamics of political practice (Jaganegara & Wijana, 2023). Euphemisms of this kind effectively shift public attention away from the substance of the violation toward a more lenient and normalized framing, thereby reinforcing the strategic role of language in mediating political accountability.

#### 4. *Managing Public Perception and Emotions*

In political discourse, euphemism functions as a strategic linguistic device for shaping public perception and regulating collective emotions. Through the use of milder or positively charged expressions, media discourse can reduce criticism, ease public anxiety, and soften the controversial aspects of political events or policies. Such linguistic choices help maintain opinion stability and limit overt resistance toward those in power.

##### **Data (22)**

"... *Badan Gizi juga akan memulai program ini di tempat yang terjangkau dan mudah lebih dulu.*" (TEMPO-9.2-010125)

("... the Nutrition Agency will also begin implementing this program in locations that are accessible and easy to reach.")

The euphemistic function of managing public perception and emotional response is evident in Data (22). In this example, the terms *terjangkau* (accessible) and *mudah* (easy) are used to describe the initial locations of a government nutrition program. While these words appear to indicate logistical practicality, they also serve a discursive function by avoiding explicit reference to disadvantaged or non-priority regions that are not yet included in the program's early phase. Instead of employing more direct expressions such as *wilayah perkotaan* (urban areas), the media adopts neutral and positively connoted substitutions.

In this context, *terjangkau* and *mudah* implicitly suggest regions with well-developed infrastructure without clearly acknowledging the exclusion of remote, mountainous, or underdeveloped zones, including the 3T regions (*tertinggal, terdepan, terluar*). This euphemistic substitution obscures inequalities in access while presenting the policy as orderly and efficient. Through such lexical choices, selective implementation is framed in a softened and non-confrontational manner, guiding public perception toward acceptance and moderating potential emotional responses such as disappointment or criticism.

**Data (23)**

“*Mereka berangkat dari Bundaran UGM dengan long march ke pertigaan Gejayan ...*” (TEMPO-10.3-010125)

“They departed from the UGM Roundabout and conducted a long march to the Gejayan intersection ...”

In Data (23), the term *long march* is used to describe a student protest action carried out on foot. Rather than employing more explicit expressions such as *aksi protes* (protest action) or *aksi demonstrasi jalan kaki* (a street demonstration conducted on foot), which foreground mass resistance and potential confrontation, the media opts for the idiomatic expression *long march*. This term, originating from military and revolutionary discourse, evokes images of discipline, endurance, and historical legitimacy. As a result, the protest is framed not as a disruptive or confrontational event, but as an organized and morally grounded collective action.

Through this euphemistic substitution, the emotional intensity commonly associated with public protests is softened. The focus shifts from possible disorder or opposition to symbolic movement and civic expression. This framing allows the media to report dissent in a way that remains socially acceptable and less politically provocative, particularly when students are portrayed as representatives of public aspirations.

Overall, these euphemistic strategies highlight the central role of language in shaping political reality in ways that are manageable and socially acceptable. This finding aligns with Sultanovich (2024), who argues that euphemism in political discourse serves to facilitate public acceptance of sensitive issues, subtly regulate emotional responses, and sustain political stability. In other words, carefully selected diction enables the media to convey potentially contentious information while preserving social calm and maintaining control over public perception.

### 5. *Facilitating Political Consensus or Reconciliation*

In political discourse, euphemism functions not only to obscure errors or enhance public image, but also to construct narratives that promote consensus, reconciliation, and renewed cooperation among political actors, particularly in post-electoral contexts. Through the softening of past conflicts and ideological differences, previously antagonistic relationships are reframed as harmonious or potentially collaborative. This linguistic strategy is especially salient during political transitions, when stability and continuity are discursively prioritized over confrontation. The following data illustrate how euphemism is used to create an impression of unity and mutual understanding within a dynamic and contested political landscape.

**Data (24)**

“*PDIP tidak akan ke mana-mana ...*” (DET-10.2-170125)  
 (“*PDIP will not go anywhere ...*”)

In data (48), the phrase *tidak akan ke mana-mana* (will not go anywhere) is used by a PDIP figure to describe the party’s political stance following Prabowo’s victory in the 2024 presidential election. Although the expression appears casual and informal, it carries substantial political implications. Rather than explicitly stating that PDIP will assume an oppositional role or distance itself from the ruling

coalition, this euphemistic formulation suggests sustained engagement and openness to future political cooperation.

By avoiding more explicit expressions such as *bertahan di luar pemerintahan* (remaining outside the government) or *menolak bergabung* (refusing to join the ruling coalition), the phrase minimizes perceptions of political division and signals strategic flexibility. As a result, it helps sustain a discourse of stability and inclusiveness in the post-election period. In this sense, the euphemism functions as a discursive bridge, allowing political actors to maintain ambiguity while promoting an image of accommodation and potential unity.

#### **Data (25)**

“... hubungan dua orang yang dulunya rival Pilgub Jakarta 2017 menjadi *hangat*.”  
(TEMPO-14.5-020125)

(“... the relationship between two figures who were once rivals in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election has become warm.”)

In data (25), the adjective *hangat* (warm) is used to describe the relationship between two political figures who were once fierce rivals in the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, Anies Baswedan and Basuki Tjahaja Purnama. This lexical choice functions as a euphemism that facilitates the discourse of reconciliation. Instead of employing more explicit and politically loaded expressions such as *rekonsiliasi* (reconciliation), *berdamai* (peace-making), or *berkoalisi* (coalition-building), the media adopts a metaphor of temperature to convey emotional and social proximity.

By characterizing their relationship as *hangat*, the report implies that past antagonisms have softened and that openness to cooperation has emerged, without explicitly signaling a formal political realignment. This euphemistic framing reduces the emotional intensity associated with earlier political conflict and encourages readers to perceive the changing dynamic in a more positive and less confrontational way. Rather than highlighting strategic compromise or alliance formation, the wording humanizes the interaction and presents rapprochement as a natural interpersonal development rather than a calculated political maneuver.

Within the broader context of Indonesian politics, where personal history, emotional narratives, and intense rivalry often shape political relations, euphemistic expressions are strategically used to promote images of harmony, stability, and shared national interest. Such narratives are particularly important in post-competition phases, when political cohesion is discursively prioritized. This finding aligns with Nazarenko and Kozel (2024), who argue that euphemism in political media discourse subtly modulates public responses by portraying relationships between formerly antagonistic elites in a more positive and harmonious light. Through these linguistic strategies, media discourse helps normalize reconciliation and construct a collective political future grounded in cooperation rather than conflict.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

This study finds that euphemism in Indonesian online political media discourse functions not only to soften language but also to actively construct meaning and shape public understanding of power, policy, and political actors. Activity and condition references dominate, indicating that the media primarily frame political actions and conditions in ways that are socially and emotionally acceptable. Euphemism is frequently used to obscure controversial actions and neutralize conflict-laden socio-political conditions, shifting public attention away from core issues toward more emotionally manageable representations.

The use of euphemism varies according to social status. State officials are linguistically protected through softened descriptions of policies and actions, politicians use specific lexical choices to build political image, and ordinary citizens are portrayed sympathetically through emphasis on their social conditions. This pattern demonstrates that euphemistic strategies are not applied uniformly, but are shaped by who is being represented in political discourse.

The five identified functions of euphemism demonstrate that media discourse does not merely filter sensitive meanings, but also directs public opinion, constructs political image, avoids accountability, and maintains political stability. Dominant functions such as mitigating negative meanings and managing public perception indicate that the media are not neutral actors, but actively participate in meaning construction through controlled lexical choices. In this way, euphemism operates as a subtle mechanism for legitimizing power and regulating what is considered acceptable, credible, and reasonable in the public sphere.

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