

# THE USE OF TABOO LANGUAGE AS POLITICAL EXPRESSION ON X SOCIAL MEDIA

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## Abstract

The increasing number of controversial government policies in Indonesia has sparked reactions from the public, especially on social media platforms such as X. Interestingly, high ranking officials, including the president, use taboo words in public. This study aims to identify the types of taboo words used by netizens in their criticism of the government and seek the reasons behind their use, as well as how the public views the use of taboo words in political criticism. Using a qualitative approach, this study analyzed several tweets containing taboo words. The findings show that all six categories of taboo words proposed by Wardhaugh were found in the data, along with additional types, such as insults to intelligence. The use of taboo words is often motivated by strong emotions such as anger and disappointment, and in some cases, by the belief that certain officials deserve harsh criticism. Society's response was divided: some people saw it as a legitimate form of emotional expression and resistance, while others found it inappropriate, although many normalized it. Overall, this study concludes that taboo words serve as a powerful tool for expressing disappointment and anger and suggests that future research could examine similar expressions on other platforms or in different contexts.

Keywords: impoliteness, language and power, political discourse, taboo

## INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society, social media has become an increasingly free and accessible medium for political expression. The evolution of social media, particularly platforms like X (formerly known as Twitter), has significantly changed the way individuals engage in political discourse. Many users use taboo language to voice dissatisfaction, criticize, or express protest against governments and political issues. Language functions as a tool for interaction and communication, enabling individuals to convey

thoughts, ideas, and emotions (Sholikhah, 2024). On social media, language plays an important role in shaping public discussions, especially in politics. One important aspect of online communication is the use of a lingua franca, a shared language that connects people from different language backgrounds in the current highly connected world (Barančicová & Zerzová, 2015).

In Indonesia, political discourse has become increasingly controversial, with netizens openly criticizing political figures

using taboo language. This phenomenon has been further reinforced by several cases where government officials themselves have used impolite or abusive expressions. For example, President Prabowo Subianto controversially used the Javanese phrase “*ndasmi*” in his speech at the Gerindra Party’s 17th anniversary celebration at Sentul City International Convention Center. People often interpret the phrase, literally meaning “your head” in English, as a condescending or confrontational response. Such incidents contribute to the normalization of taboo language in political communication, blurring the line between formal political discourse and the crude expressions commonly found on social media.

In this context, taboo language functions as a medium for Indonesian netizens on social media X to express anger, dissatisfaction, disappointment, and opposition to the government regarding political matters that they consider detrimental. According to (Anggraini et al., 2022), taboo language is frequently employed as a means of expressing disappointment, frustration, and anger. The present study aims to address this lacuna by examining the role of taboo language in social media discourse. Previous research has explored the use of taboo language in social media platforms such as X. For example, Nadofah (2013) discussed *The taboo words used by both male and female in twitter*. Soetanto et al., (2023) also highlighted *Penggunaan bahasa tabu oleh generasi z kota surabaya di media sosial TikTok*, while Jaya & Susanto (2022) reviewed *Social dimension of taboo language as knowledge power analysis for identifying transferable saying english taboo in internet*. While these studies offer vital perspectives on the use of taboo language, the author specifically highlights it in political discussions and how the public responds to it. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining the use of ta-

boo language and the public’s reaction to it in the context of Indonesian politics on X social media.

The increasing use of taboo language in online political discussions raises several important questions that will be addressed in this study. What types of taboo language do Indonesian netizens use as a form of political expression on X social media? Why do Indonesian netizens use taboo language as a means of political expression on X social media? How do Indonesian netizens perceive and respond to the use of taboo language in political discussions on social media X? These questions underscore the complex nature of digital political engagement, where language serves not only as a medium for expressing opinions but also as a reflection of underlying social and emotional tensions. The role of taboo language in political discourse is the subject of extensive debate. Researchers have different views on its function. Some argue that taboo language reflects deep public discontent and serves as a tool of resistance, as articulated by Jay (2009). In contrast, others consider it a manifestation of declining civility in public discourse, as argued by Dynel (2020). In the Indonesian context, where politeness in language is traditionally highly upheld (Jedamski, 2011), the increasing normalization of taboo language in political discourse marks a significant cultural shift. As stated by Halid (2021), the general nature of politeness connects language with aspects of social structure and life as well as codes of behavior and ethics. Moreover, impoliteness plays an important role in online political interactions, as stated by Culpeper & Hardaker (2017), aggressive language use can purposely affect others to assert dominance, challenge authority, or build group solidarity.

This study aims to find out what types of taboo words are used by Indonesi-

an netizens when criticizing politics on X, and to explore why they choose to use such words. It also examines how the public responds to these expressions. While some previous studies have looked into the use of taboo words on social media, they often focus on general communication or entertainment. This research is different because it focuses specifically on political criticism aimed at influential public figures, like the president. Another thing that sets this study apart is the detailed categorization of taboo words based on their frequency and type, something previous research hasn't done. Moreover, this study found new types of taboo words outside the commonly known six categories, which adds something new to the field. Overall, this research combines linguistic and social analysis to better understand how netizens use language to express political frustration online.

## METHOD

This study used qualitative methodology to examine the use of taboo language by Indonesian netizens as a form of political expression on X social media. As stated by (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) qualitative research is a type of research that explores and understands the meaning of a social problem originating from a group or individual. This research adopted an online ethnographic approach (Kozinets, 2015) to explore digital interactions and understand user behavior in online communities.

In collecting data, the author used observation and interview methods. The author made observations using the search feature on X, enabling the identification and analysis of tweets containing taboo language associated with political criticism. Citizens, not government officials or political figures, sent the tweets analyzed in this study between February and April 2025. This time reflects the initial period

of Prabowo Subianto as president, which officially begins on October 20, 2024. To gain a deeper understanding of the motivations behind the use of taboo language, the author will conduct semi-structured interviews via direct message (DM) with users who meet the criteria of using taboo language when discussing or criticizing and actively using X social media.

This interview process serves as an important component of discourse analysis, helping to uncover the intentions, perceptions, and contextual factors that influence users' language choices. To maintain confidentiality and research ethics, the authors will use pseudonyms such as p1, p2, and p3. For data analysis, this study integrates qualitative content analysis to examine patterns and themes in the collected tweets and discourse analysis to interpret how taboo language is used in political discourse. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the use of taboo language as a form of political expression on X social media.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There are several types of taboo language or prohibitions are considered inappropriate in society. Wardhaugh (1986) divides the types of taboo words into six categories, namely sex, body parts, animals, death, excretion, and religion. This study analyzed a total of six tweets, each representing a different type of taboo language. Indonesian netizens on the X social media platform utilized these tweets as a means of political expression. Each example was chosen to illustrate one of the six taboo categories. In addition, 5 interviews were also conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the reasons and motivations behind the use of taboo words. Some examples of taboo words found in the tweets include *tolol*, *anjing*, *kentut* and others, which reflect user

emotional responses and frustrations when discussing political issues.

### Types of taboo words

The observation results show various types of taboo words used by Indonesian netizens on social media X as a form of expression in criticizing the government during the specified period. The table below displays the frequency of occurrence of taboo words used specifically in the context of criticizing the government, classified by category. The body part category has the highest frequency of occurrence, which is 1,493 times, followed by the animal category 1,359 times, and the sex category 957 times. Furthermore, the death category appeared 579 times, followed by excretion 546 times, and the religion category appeared 382 times, which was the least frequent. We calculated this data based on the number of occurrences of taboo words identified during the three-month observation period.

Table 1. Frequency of Taboo Language Occurrences by Category

Category	Number Found
Sex	957
Body Parts	1.493
Animal	1.359
Death	579
Excretion	546
Religion	382

### Sex

Taboo words related to sexuality include words that refer to sexual activity. Reporting from p1 on February 25, 2025, the user expressed their anger at the alleged fuel adulteration case involving Pertamina's managing director. In their tweets, they wrote, "*Pemerintah gak mendukung gw untuk menjadi*

*orang soft spoken sumpah sehari saja bikin gw maki like today wdyw DIRUT PERTAMINA NGOPLOS BBM ANJING WHAT THE FUCKITY FUCK IS GOING ON WITH THIS COUNTRY.*" The tweet demonstrates the use of taboo language related to sex, particularly the repeated use of the word "fuck", which serves as an expression of emotion and frustration with the condition and work of the government.

### Body Parts

Taboo words related to human body parts. Reporting from p2 on April 10, 2025, the user criticized the Indonesian government's structural failure to support intellectuals. The tweet was made in response to the circulation of a video of President Prabowo stating, "Kadang-kadang orang terlalu pintar malah tidak jadi apa-apa"" In his tweet, the user wrote, "*Ndasmu! Banyaknya orang pintar yang gak jadi apa-apa adalah bukti gagalnya negara secara struktural. Orang pintar harusnya bisa bergerak di bidang riset dan pendidikan, nyatanya menjadi researcher dan pendidik di negara ini hidupnya bakal sangat susah.*" The word "ndasmu", which literally means "your head" (in English) is a Javanese expression often used to express annoyance or distrust in an aggressive manner. In this context, the user used the word as a taboo word related to body parts to object to the president's statement on how educated individuals struggle due to systemic problems in research and education support in Indonesia.

### Animal

Taboo words related to animal names are used as swear words. Reporting from p3 on April 16, 2025, the user was responding to a tweet from @txtdarijkt that discussed the idea of an integrated public transportation system where stations or bus stops could be accessed within 100-500 meters

of residential areas. The original tweet speculated whether such integration would reduce Jakarta's congestion. In response, P3 quoted the tweet: "*Dari atas dulu aja. Ngapain DPR MPR MENTERI kalo jalan kudu rombongan 4 mobil pake totot totot anjing lu semua digaji dari pajak kitaaaaaaaa. Mereka lah turun naik tu transum yg kita bangun. Monyet. Duit yg dipake beliin mereka mobil bisa di alokasiin jadi rangkaian lagi.*" In these tweets, user used the taboo animal-related words "dog" and "monkey" not in their literal sense, but as crude insults directed at government officials. These words reflect users anger towards the country's elites who benefit from public funds yet fail to set an example of using public transportation, and point out that the money used to buy officials vehicles could have been allocated to improve the transportation system.

### Death

Taboo words related to death. Reporting from s4 on February 13, 2025, a user replied to another user's tweet expressing a desire to join a rally. In response, p4 reply: "*Malas ntar dibilang mahasewa, dibikin demo tandingan, dibilang bikin macet, "ngapain demo, Indonesia baik-baik aja" MAMPUS LO SANA ANJINGG, negara ini udah gabisa di demo, emang pejabatnya kudu dipenggal di alun alun kota*" this country can't be demoed, the officials should be beheaded in the city square." The tweet contains the taboo word "*mampus*" which relates to death and an explicit suggestion for "*dipenggal*", indicating the user's strong frustration and sense of hopelessness with conventional forms of protest.

### Excretion

Taboo words related to excretion refer to terms related to bodily excretions. These words are usually considered rude and disgusting because they relate to so-

meting that is inappropriate to talk about in public spaces. Reporting from p5 on March 22, 2025, in response to a news post by @CNNIndonesia with the title "*Kisruh Ucapan Hasan Nasbi Masak Kepala Babi Berujung Klarifikasi*" the user tweeted, "*Klarifikasimu seperti onggokan tinja nyel*". The use of the word "*tinja*" meaning "*feces*" in English falls under the excretion related type of taboo language. In this context, it serves as an expression of strong insult and rejection of the clarification given by Hasan Nasbi.

### Religion

Taboo words related to religion. Reported by p6 on February 23, 2025, the user reacted angrily to issues surrounding rising fuel prices and allegations of fuel adulteration. In their tweets, they wrote: "*BBM naik terus, harga makin mahal, sudah begitu sering langka pula, eh ternyata isinya dioplos juga? Emang bangsat biadab jahanam laknatullah semua petinggi-petinggi negara ini!*" The words "*jahanam*" and "*laknatullah*" are taboo expressions. The word "*laknatullah*" in particular, has religious connotations, referring to (*bukuman atau kutukan allah*) and its use intensifies the moral condemnation of the country's officials.

In addition to the taboo words previously mentioned, the author also found the use of taboo words such as "*bangsat*" in a post on the "Marah-Marah" community on platform X (formerly Twitter). In the post, the user expressed their frustration with the economic conditions and government work and wrote, "*DZOLIM BANGET PEMERINTAH bangsat, kagak bisa kerja, ekonomi lesu begini Kantor suami gw para atasannya udh pada rapat, buat diskusiiin kemungkinan ada pengurangan gaji karena gk ada proyek2 yg masuk, pengurangan gajinya sekitar 20%*". The word "*bangsat*" according to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) is a harsh word that refers to a per-

son with a bad character. In this context, the use of the word reflects the anger and disappointment of netizens toward the government, which is considered unable to overcome economic problems that have a direct impact on people's lives.

In another case, there was also a critical response from netizens to the news of the @kompasTV account on April 11, 2025 which tweeted "*Media Israel Sambut Keinginan Prabowo Evakuasi Warga Gaza ke Indonesia, Hal ini Disebut Alasannya*" Responding to the news, a netizen wrote, "*Ini sama saja Prabowo menyetujui kemauan trump & Israel mengosongkan palestina. Ini sama saja menyetujui keinginan isreal utk mencaplok palestina tanpa anggaran biaya perang. Goblok bnget Lo wo ....*" In the statement, we can see the use of the taboo word "*goblok*" which is an expression of annoyance and harsh criticism of policies that are considered not in favor of the interests of Palestinian humanity. The phrase not only shows disagreement but also shows strong emotions toward sensitive geopolitical issues.

The tweet above also shows elements of multimodality. The sudden use of capital letters, the use of emoticons, and the repeated use of exclamation and question marks all demonstrate a change in tone. Kress & Leeuwen (2001), explain that multimodality means using different ways of communicating at the same time when creating signs or events and how these ways can work together, support each other, or be arranged in unique ways. In this context, the author will analyze tweets that contain multimodality.

In the tweet, "Pemerintah gak mendukung gw untuk menjadi orang soft spoken sumpah sehari saja bikin gw maki like today wdyw DIRUT PERTAMINA NGOPLoS BBM ANJING WHAT THE FUCKITY FUCK IS GOING ON WITH THIS COUNTRY." The sudden change in

the use of capital letters shows the user's anger, a change in tone towards the managing director who committed an act of corruption by mixing gas, so upset they questioned what happened to their country.

In the tweet "fomooo gajk ngerti konteks!!! gwe jga kritik pemerintah gak gitu Amat Ampe ngumpat ngumpat !?". Repeated exclamation marks show anger or frustration toward someone who does not understand the context of a statement. Meanwhile, an exclamation mark followed by a question mark shows an expression of emotion as well as wonder as to why swear words should be used when criticizing the government.

In the tweet "DZOLIM BANGET PEMERINTAH bangsat, kagak bisa kerja, ekonomi lesu begini Kantor suami gw para atasannya udh pada rapat, buat diskusiin kemungkinan ada pengurangan gaji karena gk ada proyek2 yg masuk, pengurangan gajinya sekitar 20%.". Crying emoticons convey profound sadness or a sense of hopelessness regarding the described situation. Here, the emoticon emphasizes that the writer is not only frustrated but also genuinely saddened by the economic conditions and the threat of salary cuts.

The observation shows that Indonesian netizens use various types of taboo words as a form of expression in criticizing the government on X social media. This finding is in line with several previous studies that also examine the use of taboo words in the context of social media. For example, research by Setiawan et al., (2024), entitled Swearing in online commenting discourse: Investigating netizens involvement in virtual discussion arena, found that words such as *anjing* (dog), *monyet* (monkey), and *tolol* are often used in online discussions. The findings show that the types of taboo words used by netizens in expressing

their opinions or dislikes are similar to the data in this study. Furthermore, a study by Anggreni et al., (2019) entitled *Penggunaan kata umpatan di Twitter* berdasarkan gender di pilkada Sumatera Utara 2018 also noted the appearance of words such as *bodoh*, *anjing*, and *fuck* in netizen tweets. This study highlights that the use of these taboo words can have legal implications, especially related to insults and defamation, but at the same time shows that these words are often used in the context of socio-political criticism. In addition, research by Anwar et al., (2021) entitled *Language Impoliteness among Indonesians on Twitter* identified that words such as *bangsat* and *goblok* are included in the form of impoliteness used by netizens in interactions on X

### Reasons for usage

Pseudonym 1. They explained that they use taboo language when discussing or criticizing politics on social media X when they feel very angry or upset about the actions of the government, such as the president, DPR, TNI, Polri, ministers, and other ranks. According to them, the use of taboo language arises when they are considered to have taken actions that are unreasonable, selfish, and even labeled as more evil than the devil. The informant felt that in these situations, emotions were difficult to control and could only be expressed through harsh words such as “*alat kelamin laki laki*” or “*jahanam*” because that best described his anger. When asked further, the informant explained that actions such as making rules that only benefit their own group, the slow passage of laws concerning the interests of the people such as asset confiscation and the protection of migrant workers, as well as the large number of military or incompetent people occupying positions in BUMN and ministries are concrete examples of things that make

them angry. In their view, the behavior of these officials deserves to be called coarse language because they act as if they are not using common sense. Informant added that the use of polite language is not enough to describe how dilapidated the current government system is. Therefore, taboo language becomes a medium of expression to channel frustration and disappointment with the political situation, which according to the informant is deeply frustrating.

Pseudonym 2. They explained that the use of taboo language, including words such as “*anjing*” and “*alat kelamin laki laki*” often arises when criticizing when the government issues policies that are considered not in favor of the people. According to informant, policies that do not pay attention to the fate of the people, such as age requirements in applying for jobs that limit opportunities for older people, burdensome tax policies, and rice import policies that harm farmers, are the main triggers for the emergence of these harsh words. In addition, informant mentioned that in certain situations, such as anger or frustration towards the government, harsh words can just come out as a form of reflection of daily habits, where social environments that tend to use harsh language make it easier to express feelings in this way. Social media is also considered to exacerbate this situation, as these platforms facilitate the spread of abusive words and make it easier for people to use them when criticizing the government. According to informant, the use of abusive language in criticizing the government is not just a matter of venting emotions, but also a form of dissatisfaction and rejection of policies that are considered detrimental to the people. In this case, harsh words become a tool of expression to strengthen criticism of policies that are deemed unfair.

Pseudonym 3. The informant exp-

lained that the use of harsh words, such as “fuck” or “wtf,” often occurs in situations that are very upsetting. For example, when the Vice President issues a policy that is considered to make things worse, such as perpetuating the use of AI that harms many people and troubles themselves. In addition, the one-door licensing policy guarded by officers who were not properly briefed also made informants feel very upset. Even though harsh words appeared, the informant emphasized that criticism is not always accompanied by insults or cursing, but rather an emotional reaction that arises from a feeling of great anger towards policies that are considered detrimental to many parties. In essence, the use of harsh language in political criticism like this is a means to convey dissatisfaction and annoyance, especially when the policies taken are considered unreasonable or even detrimental to many people.

Pseudonym 4. Informants explained that the use of taboo words such as “*tolol*,” “*bego*,” and “*goblok*” arises when the government issues policies that are considered very unreasonable or when there are government scandals, such as corruption cases, LC, or the government’s very poor communication methods. Situations like these trigger informants to use abusive language as a form of criticism of the government, because according to them, the situation is indeed “*ga waras*”. In this case, swear words such as “*tolol*” are used as a spontaneous reaction to policies that are considered very harmful and confusing. The informant admitted that the use of these harsh words was more of an expression of emotion arising from deep dissatisfaction with the government’s performance. The informant added that in some cases, when he saw government actions that were clearly wrong or irrelevant, the word “*tolol*” immediately came to mind because there were no better words to describe the stupidity.

Although these words seem very harsh, the informant emphasized that it was more of an outburst of frustration that could no longer be conveyed in a more subtle way. In addition, the use of harsh words is also a kind of automatic reaction to the obscurity and stupidity seen in government policies and actions.

Pseudonym 5. The informant said that the use of taboo language when criticizing the government usually occurs when irritation and disappointment have peaked. According to the informant, there is a process where initially expressions are made with ordinary sentences, but over time and repeated disappointments, the choice of words also changes to become sharper and more vulgar. One example of a situation that made the informant very angry was when it was discovered that the TNI Bill had been drafted and hammered before Eid without clear notice to the public. The informant felt that the decision was very disappointing because it seemed that the people’s voices were not listened to at all, even the contents of the bill were not widely known when it was passed. In response to this condition, informants admitted that they often used words such as “*goblok*,” “*dongo*,” and also swear words that refer to male genitals. These swear words are a form of release of frustration and distrust of government policies that are considered secretive and non-transparent. The informant emphasized that these words came out spontaneously as an emotional reaction that was difficult to contain because of the political situation which he thought was very unfair and angered it.

The expression of emotions, particularly in situations that trigger anger and frustration, is associated with the use of taboo language in daily communication. The results of this study indicate that the use of taboo words, as found in the *Tuturan tabu bentuk dan kaitannya dengan emosi manusia da-*

*lam drama: Yankee Kun To Megane Chan episode 1-5* is often used in the context of strong emotions, such as anger, sadness, or disappointment, which is in line with the findings (Nuraeni, 2017). In this discussion, research conducted by (A'yun, 2023) entitled *Kata tabu dalam video PUBG Indonesia kebodohan bermain saat karantina bentuk, fungsi dan penyebab* found that taboo words are often used as a form of expression of strong emotions, both as an expression of anger and in situations where someone wants to show disapproval to their interlocutors.

In addition, the results obtained from research at MI Shibyanul Islamiyah in a study entitled *Analisis bentuk, fungsi dan akuisisi bahasa tabu pada siswa tingkat dasar: kajian pragmatik dan sosiolinguistik* compiled by (Masrur & Maghfiah, 2024) show that taboo language is often used by students in the context of joking, cursing, and showing anger to their interlocutors. This shows that taboo words function to express feelings that may be difficult to convey in a more subtle way. Research conducted by Wardhaugh on the function of taboo words also mentions that taboo words are often used to insult or show anger, which underlines the findings in this study on how taboo words are used to express intense emotions.

Finally, research conducted by Sal-sabila & Hadiyansyah (2024) entitled *Kosakata tabu dalam interaksi mahasiswa Universitas Al-Azhar Indonesia* shows that taboo words are often used in informal situations, especially when interacting with close friends or in certain emotional conditions. This finding strengthens the theory proposed by Dewaele (2004). The emotional force of swearwords and taboo words in the speech of multilinguals which emphasizes that swearing (the use of taboo words) can serve as a form of emotional release, where the intensity of emotions often affects

the use of these words.

### Public perception and response

The use of taboo language in political issues, particularly on social media platform X, has triggered mixed public reactions. Some netizens consider it a legitimate form of resistance and normalize it, while others consider it an unnecessary civil dialogue. The tension between these views became even more pronounced when Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Chairman of Indonesia's National Economic Council, recently urged the public to maintain politeness when criticizing the government: "*minta agar masyarakat perhatikan sopan santun saat mengkritik pemerintah*". His statement reignited the debate on double standards, especially given how several government officials, including Luhut himself and President Prabowo, have previously responded to public criticism by using abusive or disparaging language. This section explores how the public perceives the use of profanity against political figures, especially in a context where government officials themselves are seen using the same words

Reporting from pseudonym1's tweet on February 24, 2025, in response to the use of harsh language when talking to the government, the user tweeted: "*Kenapa ya pada protes kalau ada yang ngomong kasar ngatain pemerintah? Orang presiden aja bales kritik program pake "ndasmu" dan Bpk Tuhul nyuruh kita kys ksjskw like whats the difference lebih nyebelin dan gak sopan lagi gak sih ngerespon keresahan masyarakat kaya begitu.*" The phrase "Pak Tuhul" is a reverse nickname referring to Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan, the Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment. The tweet highlights why netizens are criticized for using harsh language when government officials themselves respond dismissively and disres-

pectfully to public concerns, such as with “*ndasmi*”, “*Kalau Pengin Perfect, Kau Pilih Sur-ga Saja*”, “*otak kampungan*” when the public was concerned about Danantara. Some other users replied with sarcasm such as: “*Kalau gitu kita juga pakai kata itu Kak. Kan mencontoh... mungkin nanti maknanya bergeser menjadi kata sopan santun*”. Another user’s tweet quoted by another user triggered a series of public responses, such as “*Betul normalizze ngatain pemerintah*”, “*akaknmmkw tau dah, lagian mereka juga udah ngata-ngatain kita, cuma bukan pake kata kata aja. “fak kesopanan, mereka aja gak sopan”, “TYA!! a firm believer that respect is something earned not given”*”

However, not all responses were supportive. A pseudonym 2, on March 25, 2025, criticized it by saying, “*fomooo gajik ngerti konteks!!! gwe jga kritik pemerintah gak gitu amat ampe ngumpat ngumpat !?*” while there was also disappointment regarding context, one user tweeted “*Prabowo nih peka gak sih???? semakin besar massa demo, makin anjlok IHSG anjing.*” This tweet expresses anger at the government’s insensitivity to public outcry and its economic implications. While another user responded “*lah pemerintahnya aja ngomong kasar ke rakyat, masa rakyat gak boleh gitu ke pemerintah????*”. This shows contrasting views that disapprove of profanity as a legitimate form of political criticism, suggesting that it can undermine the substance of the message. Reinforcing the argument that public behavior reflects the tone set by those in power

The results of this study support previous findings that show that the use of taboo language on social media, especially in the context of criticizing certain parties, is growing. Research by Abduh & Cangara (2022) revealed that social media provides a very broad freedom of expression for people to criticize the government anytime and anywhere without time and space restrictions. This opens up great opportunities

for the emergence of sharp and emotional expressions, including the use of sarcastic and abusive language. Meanwhile, research by Sadat et al., (2022) shows that the majority of people respond positively to hate speech against the government on X. This finding confirms that freedom of expression in the digital space has begun to experience a shift in values, where forms of speech that were previously considered negative have begun to be normalized in the realm of social criticism. Additionally, research by (Ramadhana et al., 2024) indicates that the use of harsh language has often become a new norm considered legitimate, even among public officials who employ similar expressions.

## CONCLUSION

The study found that the types of taboo words used when criticizing the government in relation to politics on social media are very diverse and even go beyond the six categories proposed by Wardhaugh. In addition to the existing categories, users also use taboo words that target a person’s intelligence. For example, they use terms like “*bodoh*” and “*tolol*,” in addition to focusing on a person’s actions. Take the term “*bangsat*,” for example. Among all categories, body-related terms appeared most frequently. These findings suggest that people mainly use taboo words to express their emotions, especially anger and disappointment with government policies. The community’s response to such language use is mixed; while some users accept it as a legitimate form of expression, others find it inappropriate. In conclusion, this study confirms that the use of taboo words serves as a tool to express intense emotions, which is in line with the main objective of this study. The research also provides details on the types of taboo words most commonly used in online criticism.

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