

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Legitimacy is a fundamental element in the implementation of public policy, as without public acceptance and support, a policy will not be able to run effectively even if it already has a strong legal foundation. Legitimacy is not merely a formal recognition of governmental authority, but also encompasses public trust in the processes, policies, and practices carried out by the government. In the modern democratic era, characterized by information transparency, globalization, and the growing political awareness of citizens, governmental legitimacy increasingly demands more complex mechanisms than simply electoral victory (Sumitro and Yorman, 2024). According to Suchman (1995), the concept of policy legitimacy is the social acceptance of a policy based on the belief that it aligns with the values, norms, and expectations of society (Syamsu, 2025). In a democratic society, legitimacy entails the moral justifiability of power relations (Beetham, 1991), meaning that the authority held by a government must not only be legally recognized, but also accepted and justified in the eyes of its citizens.

The government or public institutions have a role in addressing public issues, promoting societal well-being, and managing available resources by producing decisions in the form of public policies (Arafat, 2023). The goal is to provide overall welfare to society, such as improving quality of life, reducing poverty, enhancing education, protecting the environment, and maintaining social justice. Policies emerge alongside population growth and the increasing complexity of needs, interactions, and demands of life. The relationship between individuals and society cannot be separated from one another. To sustain intellectual progress and the advancement of life, society then establishes rules designed by competent parties, accompanied by a collective agreement so that these rules are complied with,

implemented, and carried out collectively. Once a policy has been formulated, it must first obtain legitimacy or legal ratification before it can be applied to the public. This legitimacy is crucial because policies will affect society broadly, both by providing benefits to certain groups and generating adverse impacts on others.

The Prabowo-Gibran administration is committed to *Asta Cita*, which refers to eight primary objectives that serve as the foundation of the national development strategy. One of its key focuses is the improvement of human resource quality to achieve the vision of *Indonesia Emas 2045*, which ensures access to quality education in order to enhance workforce skills and the capacity for innovation in an era of globalization and technological advancement, with the expectation of increasing economic productivity. To drive the productivity and growth of a nation, the quality of human resources plays a key role, as a more skilled workforce enables technological innovation and resource optimization to be implemented more rapidly and effectively. This is pursued through the enhancement of skills and knowledge via education and training. According to a report by the Center of Economic and Law Studies (CELIOS), Indonesia still faces a number of challenges in strengthening its human resource quality, one of which relates to the Human Development Index (HDI). Based on the latest UNDP report (2024) presented in Graph 1, Indonesia ranks 112th out of 193 countries with a score of 0.713, a position that still lags behind other ASEAN countries such as Viet Nam, Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam.

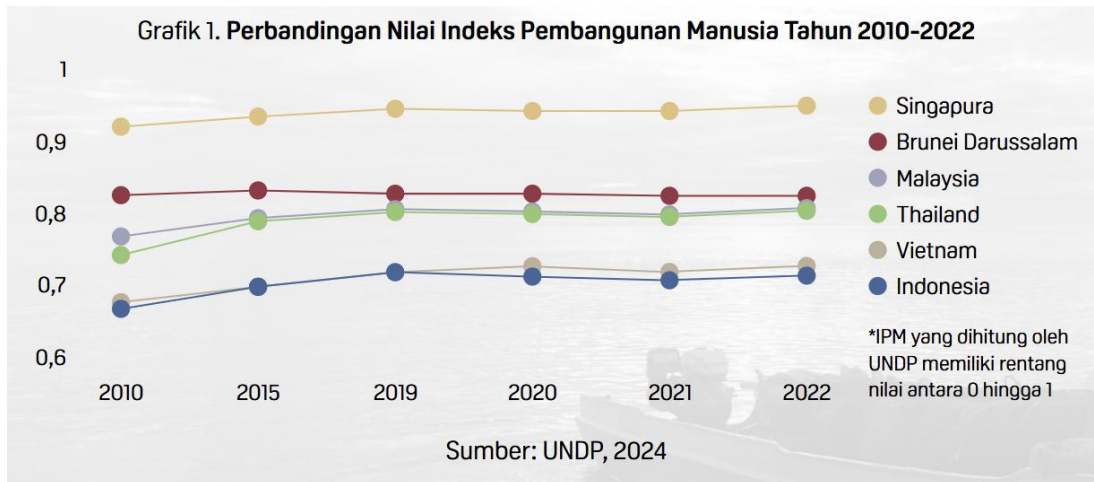


Figure 1.1. Comparative Graph of the Human Development Index (HDI) Values, 2010–2022, based on the UNDP Human Development Report 2024

Meeting national nutritional needs remains a serious concern in Indonesia. Despite notable progress in economic development and overall welfare, the country continues to face a double burden of malnutrition, in which undernutrition and overnutrition coexist across age groups and often within the same communities (Risikesdas, 2018; Kemendikdasmen, 2024). The Central Statistics Agency (BPS, 2024) records the prevalence of inadequate food consumption at 8.53 percent in 2023. The Indonesia Health Survey (SKI, 2023) reports a stunting rate of 15.8 percent among children under five, of whom 23.8 percent were also found to be anaemic, with stunting persisting into adolescence at 17.5 percent among those aged 13–15 years and 20.1 percent among those aged 16–18, alongside overweight and obesity rates of 12.1 percent and 4.1 percent respectively in the younger adolescent group (Kemendikdasmen, 2024). Together these figures establish that the nutritional deficit which the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) was designed to address is both real and structural, and that a policy response of national scale was warranted. The epidemiological profile of malnutrition in Indonesia is not, however, the object of this research. What is examined here is the legitimacy of the budgetary arrangement

adopted to finance that response, rather than the nutritional merits of the response itself

The institutional response came in 2024 with the establishment of the National Nutrition Agency (Badan Gizi Nasional/BGN) through Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 83 of 2024, an agency reporting directly to the President and mandated to address national nutritional needs in pursuit of the Golden Generation 2045 vision. Its principal instrument is the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG), introduced as a flagship commitment of the Prabowo–Gibran administration during the 2024 general election and targeting 82 million beneficiaries, comprising school-age children, students in Islamic boarding schools, children under five, and pregnant women (CELIOS, 2024; Sanjaya, 2025; Keladu et al., 2025). The scale of this target makes MBG one of the largest social programmes in the history of Indonesian public policy. What has proved contested, however, is not the programme’s nutritional design but the fiscal mechanism through which it is financed. Chapter II sets out MBG’s institutional, legal, and budgetary architecture in full.

In the financial memorandum of the 2025 State Budget Draft, the MBG program was set to be financed from the 20% mandatory spending allocation of the national education sector, with the education budget planned at Rp722.6 trillion and roughly Rp71 trillion (around 10% of that) earmarked specifically for MBG. On top of that, the National Nutrition Agency projected daily operational costs for the program at Rp1.2 trillion (CELIOS, 2024). These figures give a sense of just how significant the fiscal burden is, covering everything from food procurement and distribution to field-level monitoring and oversight. What made this particularly alarming for many observers is that MBG, a program that had never previously been part of the education budget, was now drawing from a pot of money that was supposed to go toward improving the quality of education itself.



PRESIDEN
REPUBLIK INDONESIA

LAMPIRAN VI
PERATURAN PRESIDEN REPUBLIK INDONESIA
NOMOR 118 TAHUN 2025
TENTANG
RINCIAN ANGGARAN PENDAPATAN DAN
BELANJA NEGARA TAHUN ANGGARAN 2026

RINCIAN ANGGARAN PENDIDIKAN
TAHUN ANGGARAN 2026

(dalam ribuan rupiah)

NO.	KOMPONEN ANGGARAN PENDIDIKAN	ALOKASI
1.	Anggaran Pendidikan melalui Belanja Pemerintah Pusat	470.462.497.909
1.1	Anggaran Pendidikan pada Kementerian Negara/Lembaga	470.462.497.909
1.1.1	Kementerian Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah	56.682.100.000
1.1.2	Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi, Sains dan Teknologi	61.873.370.000
1.1.3	Kementerian Kebudayaan	1.507.391.821
1.1.4	Kementerian Agama	75.621.201.484
1.1.5	Kementerian Kesehatan	3.934.133.031
1.1.6	Kementerian Perikanan	238.230.496
1.1.7	Kementerian Pertambangan	688.931.332
1.1.8	Kementerian Energi dan Sumber Daya Mineral	168.110.199
1.1.9	Kementerian Perhubungan	1.702.218.518
1.1.10	Kementerian Kelautan	2.511.298.039
1.1.11	Kementerian Betanahan	76.000.000
1.1.12	Kementerian Kelautan dan Perikanan	172.821.807
1.1.13	Kementerian Perindustrian	606.307.164
1.1.14	Kementerian Luar Negeri dan Olahraga	243.812.733
1.1.15	Kementerian Perumahan	490.194.047
1.1.16	Kementerian Ketenagakerjaan	814.000.000
1.1.17	Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia	72.316.673
1.1.18	Kementerian Komunikasi dan Cipta	57.664.448
1.1.19	Kementerian Pekerjaan Umum	23.060.534.539
1.1.20	Kementerian Perdagangan	12.530.000

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RINCIAN ANGGARAN PENDIDIKAN
TAHUN ANGGARAN 2026

(dalam ribuan rupiah)

NO.	KOMPONEN ANGGARAN PENDIDIKAN	ALOKASI
1.1.21	Kementerian Sosial	18.946.876.833
1.1.22	Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional	429.160.818
1.1.23	Badan Ombudsman	223.558.960.490
1.2	Anggaran Pendidikan pada Belanja Non Kementerian/Lembaga	-
2.	Anggaran Pendidikan melalui Transfer ke Daerah	264.624.371.415
2.1	DAU dan DBH yang diperkenankan untuk anggaran pendidikan	128.190.823.087
2.2	Dana Alokasi Khusus	134.333.446.633
2.2.1	DAK Non Fisik	134.333.446.633
2.2.1.1	Bantuan Operasional Satuan Pendidikan	59.208.114.550
2.2.1.2	Tarung Guru ASN Daerah	74.763.332.083
2.2.1.3	Bantuan Operasional Penyelenggaraan Museum dan Taman Budaya	150.000.000
2.2.1.4	Dana Bantuan Pengembangan Program	125.000.000
2.3	Pengembangan Daerah	2.100.101.695
3.	Anggaran Pendidikan Melalui Pembiayaan	34.000.000.000
3.1	Dana Abadi di Bidang Pendidikan	28.000.000.000
3.2	Pembiayaan Pendidikan	6.000.000.000
JUMLAH		769.086.869.324

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td.

Sesuai dengan aturannya
KEMENTERIAN SEKRETARIAT NEGARA
REPUBLIK INDONESIA
Perundang-undangan dan
Keputusan Menteri
Sofarman Djanani

PRABOWO SUBIANTO



SK No 275664 A

Figure 1.2. Breakdown of the Ministry of Education Budget Allocation for 2026
(Source: Presidential Regulation Number 118 of 2025 concerning the Details of the
State Revenue and Expenditure Budget for the 2026 Fiscal Year, p. 45)

Those concerns were ultimately confirmed when the 2026 State Budget was formalized. On Tuesday, September 23, 2025, the Draft Law on the 2026 State Budget was officially passed by the House of Representatives in a Plenary Session. The 2026 budget was designed around an expansive yet directed fiscal policy, with a deficit target of 2.68% of GDP, state revenue of Rp3,153.6 trillion, state expenditure of Rp3,842.7 trillion, and budget financing of Rp689.1 trillion. Carrying the theme of "Food, Energy, and Economic Sovereignty," the budget outlined several spending priorities including food security, energy resilience, education, healthcare, rural development, cooperatives and MSMEs, defence, investment acceleration, social protection, and the Free Nutritious Meal Program.

What drew the most public attention, however, was the revelation that out of a total education budget of Rp769 trillion, as much as Rp223.55 trillion was allocated to fund the MBG program. This was further confirmed by Sri Esti Wijayati, Deputy Chairperson of Commission X of the House of Representatives from the PDI-P faction, who, as reported by Kompas.com on February 25, 2026, stated that based on the 2026 State Budget Law and Presidential Regulation Number 118 of 2025, MBG funding is indeed classified under the education budget. Her statement effectively put to rest the previously circulating narrative that MBG funding was not drawn from the education budget. The confirmation triggered a broad wave of public reaction, particularly across digital spaces, where people began openly questioning the priorities and direction of national education policy under the Prabowo-Gibran administration.

The inclusion of the MBG program's operational funding within the education budget allocation in the 2026 State Budget (APBN) has sparked widespread public debate, as it raises fundamental questions about the government's priorities in balancing nutritional welfare programs against the constitutional mandate to protect the quality of national education. Based on Law Number 17 of 2025 concerning the 2026 APBN, the education budget allocation reached approximately Rp769.1 trillion, of which around Rp223 trillion was allocated to the National Nutrition Agency (BGN) as the implementing body of the MBG program (Kompas, 2026). Critics argue that by categorizing MBG funding as part of the education budget, the proportion of funding available for core educational activities (including teacher welfare, infrastructure development, and learning quality improvement) is effectively reduced, potentially undermining the constitutional mandate stipulated in Article 31 paragraph (4) of the 1945 Constitution, which requires the state to allocate a minimum of 20 percent of the national budget for education (Media Indonesia, 2026). This budgetary arrangement, while legally grounded in the 2026 APBN Law, has thus become the

focal point of a broader public debate about the direction and accountability of government policy.

The policy has generated deeply divided public responses, ranging from strong support among those who view the MBG program as a concrete pro-people initiative, to significant opposition from academics, students, teachers, and civil society organizations who argue that the arrangement undermines the constitutional guarantee of adequate education funding. On one hand, proponents of the policy contend that the MBG program addresses a critical nutritional gap among school-age children and vulnerable groups, and that categorizing it under the education budget is justified given its direct connection to the learning environment and student welfare. On the other hand, opposition has been expressed through multiple channels, from academic criticism and public demonstrations to a formal judicial review petition filed at the Constitutional Court by Yayasan Taman Belajar Nusantara and several citizens, who challenged the constitutionality of including MBG funding within the education budget allocation (Media Indonesia, 2026). .

These public responses have not only manifested in physical spaces such as protests and formal hearings, but have also flowed extensively across X (formerly Twitter), a platform that, in the context of Habermas's (1989) concept of the public sphere, functions as a digital arena where citizens freely articulate their opinions, exercise critical discourse, and collectively form public consensus on matters of governance. Habermas (1989) defines the public sphere as a realm of social life in which public opinion can be formed through open and rational discourse among citizens. In the digital era, scholars such as Dahlberg (2001) and Papacharissi (2002) have extended this concept to online platforms, arguing that the internet, and social media in particular, possesses the key characteristics of a Habermasian public sphere, including accessibility, openness to participation, and the capacity for rational-critical debate. The sentiments expressed by users on X (formerly Twitter) regarding the MBG education budget policy are thus not merely casual online commentary; they

constitute a form of public discourse that carries normative weight as an expression of public consensus in the democratic sense.

Beyond its general function as a microblogging platform, X (formerly Twitter) occupies a particularly central position in the landscape of Indonesian political and policy discourse. The platform's text-based, publicly searchable format, in which posts of up to 280 characters are immediately accessible to any internet user without the need for a dedicated account, has made it the primary digital arena through which Indonesian citizens, academics, journalists, civil society organisations, and public officials publicly articulate, contest, and respond to government policies in real time. Indonesian users are among the most politically active on the platform globally (We Are Social & Meltwater, 2025), and the capacity of X discourse to directly influence the agenda of political actors, as evidenced by government officials and members of parliament publicly responding to and engaging with criticism circulating on the platform, further substantiates its function as a genuine arena of democratic deliberation in the Indonesian context. Significantly, in the specific case of the education budget rationalization controversy, the confirmation by legislators that MBG funding was classified under the education budget triggered, as reported by Kompas.com (2026), a broad and immediate wave of public commentary on the platform, with government officials and members of parliament subsequently responding to and engaging with the public discourse that emerged. This pattern of institutional acknowledgment of social media discourse as a meaningful signal of public response provides empirical grounding for the position that X (formerly Twitter) has entered the recognized conventions of Indonesian democratic society as a legitimate space for the expression of public opinion, and, in Beetham's (1991, p. 19) terms, for actions expressive of consent or its withdrawal that are recognized as meaningful within the conventions of that society.

The volume and diversity of the public reactions described above raise a question of measurement: how can discourse of this scale be captured and

characterised systematically rather than impressionistically? Sentiment analysis provides one answer. As a computational method for classifying the evaluative orientation expressed in large bodies of text into positive, negative, and neutral categories, it offers an empirically grounded basis on which the level of public consensus may be assessed as a dimension of policy legitimacy. Its conceptual foundations, the reasoning underlying the selection of a particular classification approach, and its documented limitations are elaborated in Section 1.8.4.2.

Although scholarly interest in sentiment analysis of public policy in Indonesia has increased considerably in recent years, the majority of existing studies have been conducted within the disciplines of computer science and communication studies, with notably limited engagement from a Government Science perspective (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013). More specifically, studies that explicitly establish a connection between public sentiment data derived from social media and the theoretical framework of policy legitimacy, particularly Beetham's (1991) three-dimensional legitimacy model, remain considerably underrepresented in the Indonesian academic literature. While a number of sentiment analysis studies examining the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) have recently been published, existing research has largely concentrated on the program itself in terms of public reception and implementation outcomes, without specifically addressing its budgetary dimension, namely, the allocation of MBG operational funding within the national education budget as stipulated in the 2026 State Budget (APBN) under Law Number 17 of 2025 (Kompas, 2026). This specific budgetary arrangement, which has generated substantial public controversy and prompted a formal constitutional challenge before the Constitutional Court (Media Indonesia, 2026), has yet to be examined through the analytical lens of public sentiment analysis within a policy legitimacy framework. It is within this identified research gap that the present study positions itself, offering a theoretically grounded, Government Science-oriented analysis of public sentiment as

a measurable indicator of public consensus toward this contested budgetary policy in contemporary Indonesia (Beetham, 1991; Habermas, 1989; Liu, 2015).

1.2 Problem Formulation

Based on the problems context outlined in the background above, the research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. What is the distribution, thematic composition, and temporal trajectory of public sentiment on X (formerly Twitter) toward the allocation of the education budget for the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in the 2026 State Budget (APBN) ?
2. How does public sentiment on social media X (formerly Twitter) reflect the level of public consensus as one of the dimensions of legitimacy of the education budget rationalization policy in the 2026 State Budget (APBN) for the Free Nutritious Meal Program ?

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To analyse the distribution, thematic composition, and temporal trajectory of public sentiment on X (formerly Twitter) toward the allocation of the education budget for the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in the 2026 State Budget (APBN) and
2. To examine how public sentiment on social media X (formerly Twitter) reflects the level of public consensus as one of the dimensions of legitimacy of the education budget rationalization policy in the 2026 State Budget (APBN) for the Free Nutritious Meal Program.

1.4 Research Benefit

1.4.1 Theoretical Significance

This research is expected to contribute to the development of knowledge in the field of Government Science, particularly in the study of public policy legitimacy in the digital era. By integrating Beetham's (1991) legitimacy theory, Lippmann's (1922) public opinion theory, Habermas's (1989) digital public sphere concept, and Dryzek's (2000) discursive legitimacy framework with computational sentiment analysis methods, this research offers a new approach to measuring public consensus as one of the dimensions of policy legitimacy through social media data, especially X (formerly Twitter). Furthermore, this research is expected to enrich the academic literature on the use of computational methods in Government Science research in Indonesia.

1.4.2 Practical Significance

1. For the Government and Policymakers This research is expected to provide empirical insights into how the public perceives and responds to the education budget rationalization policy for the Free Nutritious Meal Program. The findings can serve as a reference for the government in evaluating the responsiveness of the policy and designing better communication strategies to build public support and acceptance of government policies.
2. For the General Public This research is expected to raise public awareness that opinions and expressions on social media are not merely personal statements, but can serve as a measurable indicator of public consensus toward government policies. This underscores the importance of active and constructive public participation in the democratic process.
3. For Academics and Future Researchers This research is expected to serve as a reference and foundation for future studies that wish to explore the

intersection of sentiment analysis, social media, and public policy from a Government Science perspective. It is also hoped that this research can inspire the development of more comprehensive computational research methods within the social sciences in Indonesia.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This research requires a theoretical foundation that serves as a conceptual guideline in explaining the problem under study. Such a foundation is referred to as a theoretical framework. This research is grounded in the fundamental assumption that public policy requires not only formal legality, but also public acceptance and support in order to be effectively implemented. In this context, Beetham's (1991) legitimacy theory serves as the primary theoretical foundation of this research.

The theoretical framework of this research is constructed through four complementary layers that together form a coherent analytical architecture. Beetham's (1991) legitimacy theory serves as the primary normative framework, establishing the three dimensions through which policy legitimacy is assessed, with public consensus as the specific dimension this research seeks to measure. Lippmann's (1922) public opinion theory explains the cognitive mechanism through which public sentiment is formed, justifying the use of X discourse as a valid proxy for public opinion. Habermas's (1989) public sphere theory establishes the discursive arena in which that opinion is expressed, providing the theoretical basis for treating X as a legitimate source of public opinion data. Finally, Dryzek's (2000) discursive legitimacy theory specifies the mechanism through which the prevailing pattern of public discourse, rather than individual opinions alone, constitutes and signals the legitimacy or delegitimation of governance. Together, these four frameworks enable a theoretically grounded and multi-layered interpretation of sentiment analysis findings within the context of policy legitimacy assessment.

1.5.1 Legitimacy Theory

Legitimacy is one of the central concepts in political theory that has been discussed by many scholars across different fields. One of the most well-known frameworks for understanding legitimacy comes from David Beetham, a British political sociologist, who laid out a comprehensive theory of legitimacy in his book *The Legitimation of Power* (1991). Beetham argued that legitimacy is a much more complex and multi-dimensional concept. For Beetham, legitimacy is not just about what people believe, but also about whether power is exercised in a way that can be morally justified, whether it follows established rules, and whether the people who are governed actively show their consent to that power.

In Beetham's formulation, this means that for any governing authority to be considered truly legitimate, its power must not only be legally established through recognised rules and procedures, but also morally accepted by those it governs, a requirement that extends substantially beyond the mere possession of formal authority. Stated differently, legitimacy is not simply a function of the capacity to rule, but of the normative right to rule as recognised by those who are governed.

Beetham's theory of legitimacy is built around three interconnected dimensions that together determine whether power can be considered truly legitimate:

- a. The first dimension is legality, which means that power must be exercised according to established rules and laws that are already recognized within a society.
- b. The second dimension is justification, which means that those rules and laws must be based on values and beliefs that are shared by both those who hold power and those who are governed by it.

- c. The third dimension is consent, which means that the people must actively demonstrate, through their actions, that they agree with and accept the authority that governs them. Beetham argued that all three dimensions are necessary. If any one of them is missing, the legitimacy of power becomes questionable.

Among these three dimensions, the third dimension, consent, is perhaps the most important and the most visible, because it involves direct participation from the public. What is important for legitimacy, according to Beetham, is not just that people privately agree with those in power, but that they express their consent through actions that are recognized as meaningful within the conventions of their society. These actions can take many different forms, such as concluding an agreement or contract with a superior party, swearing an oath of allegiance, joining in public acclamation, or participating in elections and plebiscites. Each of these actions serves as evidence that the people recognize and accept the authority exercised over them.

This notion of expressed consent holds particular relevance in the context of democratic societies, where citizens are expected to actively engage in public life and hold their governments accountable. When a government enacts a policy decision that directly affects the lives of its citizens, the public's response to that decision can be understood as a manifestation of expressed consent; or, conversely, the withdrawal of it. In the case of Indonesia's rationalization of the education budget in the 2026 State Budget (APBN) to finance the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG), the diverse range of public reactions; whether in the form of support, criticism, or open deliberation on digital platforms such as X (formerly Twitter); can be interpreted as a reflection of the degree to which the public considers this policy to be legitimate. It is on this basis that examining public opinion through the theoretical lens of Beetham's (1991) legitimacy framework

becomes analytically significant, as it offers a structured means of understanding how citizens perceive, evaluate, and respond to government decisions within a democratic system.

Beetham's framework thus establishes the normative question at the heart of this research: has the education budget rationalization policy for MBG achieved the expressed consent of those it governs? Answering this question, however, requires two further theoretical steps. First, it is necessary to understand the nature of public opinion itself, specifically how it is formed, what it represents, and why it constitutes a valid indicator of consent in Beetham's sense. Second, it is necessary to identify the arena in which such opinion is formed and expressed in contemporary democratic society. These two questions are addressed, respectively, by the public opinion theory of Walter Lippmann (1922) and the public sphere theory of Jürgen Habermas (1989), which together constitute the conceptual infrastructure supporting the application of Beetham's legitimacy framework to social media data.

1.5.2 Public Opinion Theory

Public opinion, as a central phenomenon in this research, is fundamentally shaped by subjective perception rather than direct contact with reality. Walter Lippmann (1922) argues that human beings do not respond to the actual environment around them, but rather to a pseudo-environment, a simplified and internally constructed representation of the external world. Lippmann (1922) contends that the real environment is altogether too vast, too complex, and too transient for direct acquaintance, compelling individuals to reconstruct it into a simpler mental model in order to navigate political and social life. Consequently, what citizens express as public opinion is not a direct reflection of policy reality, but rather a mentally constructed picture of that reality, shaped by selective exposure, prior beliefs, and the mediated information to which individuals are exposed.

A key mechanism through which pseudo-environments are constructed, according to Lippmann, is the use of stereotypes, employed not in the pejorative sociological sense, but as cognitive shortcuts through which individuals interpret and order the complexity of the world around them. Lippmann (1922) explains that human perception is inevitably filtered through preconceptions and stored mental images that shape how new information is received and processed. In the context of public policy, this means that citizens' responses to a policy such as the rationalization of the education budget are mediated by pre-existing mental frameworks, including their prior understanding of education, government spending, and social welfare, rather than by direct and independent analysis of the policy's technical merits.

Lippmann (1922) defines public opinion as the pictures inside the heads of human beings concerning public affairs, specifically, the pictures of themselves, of others, and of their needs, purposes, and relationships. These pictures, when held collectively and acted upon by groups of individuals, constitute what Lippmann (1922) refers to as Public Opinion in the broader political sense. This definition is particularly relevant to the present research, as discourse on X (formerly Twitter) functions as a visible and real-time aggregation of such mental pictures. The sentiment expressed by X (formerly Twitter) users toward the education budget rationalization policy can therefore be understood as a manifestation of the pseudo-environment they have collectively constructed around this policy, reflecting shared political perception rather than objective policy evaluation.

Critically for this research, Lippmann's framework also provides the theoretical basis for treating discourse on X (formerly Twitter) as a valid form of expressed consent in Beetham's (1991) sense. Beetham (1991, p. 19) himself acknowledges that what counts as a meaningful expression of consent

is a culturally specific matter, determined by the conventions of a given society, rather than definable in absolute terms. In a democratic society shaped by digitally mediated communication, public opinion as described by Lippmann, collectively formed, publicly expressed, and politically consequential, has become one of the primary conventional channels through which citizens signal their acceptance of or opposition to governmental decisions. The expression of political sentiment on X (formerly Twitter) therefore constitutes, in Lippmann's terms, a manifestation of public opinion that carries democratic weight, and in Beetham's (1991) terms, an action expressive of consent or its withdrawal that is recognized as meaningful within the prevailing conventions of Indonesian democratic society.

The relevance of Lippmann's framework to this study is twofold. First, it establishes that public sentiment, as measured through lexicon-based sentiment analysis, captures public perception of the policy, which Lippmann (1922) argues is the only form in which policy reality is politically meaningful. Second, it provides a theoretical justification for why perceived sentiment carries implications for policy legitimacy: if public opinion is built on pseudo-environments, then legitimacy, particularly the consensus dimension identified by Beetham (1991), is necessarily a product of perception rather than objective assessment. This is particularly relevant to the present research, as the sentiments expressed on X (formerly Twitter), however mediated their formation, constitute the publicly expressed opinions through which citizens signal their evaluation of government policy, which is precisely what this research seeks to measure and interpret. Having established the nature and political significance of public opinion through Lippmann's framework, the subsequent theoretical concern pertains to the space in which such opinion is collectively formed and expressed in the digital era, a question addressed by Habermas's (1989) theory of the public sphere.

1.5.3 Public Sphere Theory

Jürgen Habermas, in his foundational essay 'The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article' (1974), defines the public sphere as a realm of social life in which public opinion can be formed through open and rational discourse among citizens. This concept was further elaborated in his seminal work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), in which Habermas traces the historical emergence, development, and decline of the bourgeois public sphere as the institutional space in which rational-critical debate among private citizens served as the normative basis for democratic legitimacy. However, the value of the public sphere lies in its ability to facilitate uninhibited and diverse discussion of public affairs, thus typifying democratic traditions (Papacharissi; Chadwick & Howard, 2009).

The public sphere should not be conflated with public space. While public space, such as a town square, a café, or even a digital platform, provides a physical or virtual setting in which the public sphere may take shape, its mere existence does not guarantee the formation of a substantive public sphere. The two concepts are analytically related, yet conceptually distinct. It is equally important to distinguish the public sphere from other related concepts, such as "the public" as a collective body of people, "public affairs" as issues of societal concern, and "public opinion" as the aggregated views of a community. Habermas (1989) argues that genuine public opinion can only emerge within a public that is capable of critical and rational deliberation. This is what distinguishes public opinion, in the Habermasian sense, from a mere aggregation of personal views, from opinions on public issues shared without genuine deliberation, or from gatherings of individuals that occur without meaningful discursive engagement. What truly defines the public sphere, according to Habermas, is therefore not the act of assembling or

speaking out in itself, but the capacity to engage in rational-critical discourse oriented toward the common good. Perhaps the most analytically useful approach to the public sphere in the contemporary context is to treat it as a normative ideal, a conceptual model for how citizens ought to participate and interact in public life, which is precisely the sense in which Habermas originally employed the concept (Papacharissi; Chadwick & Howard, 2009). Understood in this way, online media, including the internet and social media platforms, carry the potential to serve as what scholars have termed a "virtual public sphere," or at the very least, to reinvigorate a public sphere that has been significantly weakened in the modern era.

This proposition has attracted considerable scholarly attention, with researchers exploring how online media can function as a forum for political discussion, support more deliberative and participatory forms of democracy, and ultimately re-engage citizens in public affairs. In this regard, the rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok represents a significant development in the evolution of the public sphere. These platforms have substantially lowered the barriers for ordinary citizens to voice their opinions, disseminate information, and engage with matters of public concern, all of which align, at least in principle, with the normative ideals of the public sphere as articulated by Habermas (1989). Whether social media genuinely fulfils the role of a public sphere in the manner Habermas envisioned, however, remains an open and contested question, and one that this study seeks to engage with further.

In the Handbook of Internet Politics, Papacharissi (2009), as cited in Chadwick and Howard (2009), argues that while the internet and surrounding digital technologies provide a public space, they do not necessarily constitute a public sphere. Papacharissi draws attention to the issue of information

access, contending that greater access to information enabled by online media does not automatically translate into increased political participation, enhanced civic engagement, or greater trust in political processes. The potential of the internet as a public sphere, therefore, remains accessible only to a select segment of the population with the means and capacity to engage with it, thereby sustaining what several scholars have characterized as an illusion of an open and inclusive public sphere (Pavlik, 1994; Sassi, 2005; Williams & Pavlik, 1994; Williams, 1994; Chadwick & Howard, 2009).

In the contemporary era, individuals have grown increasingly accustomed to engaging with public life through online media. The rapid proliferation of social media platforms has fundamentally transformed the landscape of public communication, creating new spaces in which citizens engage with political issues, express opinions, and participate in public discourse at an unprecedented scale. Among these platforms, X (formerly Twitter) has emerged as one of the most prominent arenas for political discussion and policy-related discourse, particularly in the Indonesian context. As a text-based platform that allows users to publicly express opinions, respond to political events in real time, and engage in open debate, X (formerly Twitter) embodies several of the defining characteristics that Habermas (1989) associated with the public sphere, most notably its openness to participation, its facilitation of diverse and uninhibited discussion, and its orientation toward matters of public concern.

Dahlberg (2001) extends Habermas's concept to the digital realm, arguing that online spaces have the potential to revitalize democratic deliberation by providing citizens with accessible platforms for rational-critical discourse. Dahlberg identifies several criteria that a digital space must meet in order to genuinely function as a public sphere, including the exchange of reasoned

arguments, reflexivity, ideal role-taking, sincerity, discursive inclusion and equality, and autonomy from state and economic power. While it is acknowledged that not all social media activity meets these criteria in full, as Papacharissi (2002) and others have cautioned, X (formerly Twitter) nonetheless provides a space in which citizens can and do engage in substantive public debate about government policies, including the education budget rationalization policy for the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) that forms the subject of this research. The public expressions of support, criticism, and opinion that users publish on X (formerly Twitter) regarding this policy can therefore be understood as a form of public discourse that, while imperfect, remains consistent with the normative spirit of the Habermasian public sphere, that is, a discursive space in which public opinion on matters of governance is collectively formed and expressed.

Furthermore, in the Indonesian context, X (formerly Twitter) occupies a particularly significant position as a platform for political discourse. The platform has consistently served as a primary arena for public debate on government policies, social issues, and political events, with Indonesian users ranking among the most active in the world in terms of political engagement on the platform (We Are Social & Meltwater, 2025). This characteristic makes X (formerly Twitter) an especially relevant and appropriate space for examining public opinion toward a contested government policy, one that has generated widespread debate across multiple segments of Indonesian society, from academics and civil society organizations to ordinary citizens and government officials. It is precisely for these reasons that Habermas's (1989) public sphere theory, as extended to the digital context by Dahlberg (2001) and Papacharissi, as cited in Chadwick and Howard (2009), is adopted as a foundational component of this research's theoretical framework. Specifically, it provides the theoretical justification for treating X (formerly Twitter) as a

legitimate source of public opinion data, serves as the conceptual bridge connecting public sentiment findings to Beetham's (1991) notion of public consensus as a dimension of policy legitimacy, and speaks directly to the contested and discursive nature of the policy phenomenon under study. Nevertheless, while Habermas's framework establishes X (formerly Twitter) as a legitimate arena for public opinion formation, it does not in itself specify the mechanism through which the discursive character of public opinion relates to the question of policy legitimacy. This analytical gap is addressed by Beetham's (1991) legitimacy framework, which provides the theoretical bridge connecting the content of public discourse in the digital public sphere to the normative assessment of policy legitimacy as the central evaluative concern of this research.

1.5.4 Discursive Legitimacy Theory

While Beetham (1991) provides a multi-dimensional framework for understanding policy legitimacy through legality, justification, and consent, Dryzek (2000) offers a complementary perspective that focuses specifically on the discursive dimension of legitimacy within the public sphere. In his work *Legitimacy and Economy in Deliberative Democracy*, Dryzek (2000) argues that democratic legitimacy should not be understood merely as the aggregated consent of individuals, but rather as the degree to which collective decisions correspond to the prevailing constellation of discourses, that is, the competing shared narratives, values, and interpretive frameworks that circulate within a democratic public sphere. This conception, which Dryzek (2000) terms discursive legitimacy, fundamentally reorients the question of legitimacy away from a procedural aggregation of individual consent and toward a substantive assessment of the extent to which public decisions reflect the prevailing balance of public discourse.

Central to Dryzek's framework is the concept of discourse, which he defines as a shared way of comprehending the world that is embedded in language, featuring particular assumptions, judgments, contentions, and dispositions (Dryzek, 2000). In any given policy domain, multiple competing discourses coexist simultaneously, each offering a distinct interpretive lens through which citizens make sense of government actions. Dryzek (2000) argues that public opinion should therefore be understood not as a simple aggregate of individual preferences, but as the provisional outcome of the contestation of discourses in the public sphere as transmitted to the state. This framing is particularly relevant to the context of this research, where public reactions on X (formerly Twitter) to the education budget rationalization policy for the Free Nutritious Meal Program represent precisely this kind of discursive contestation, a public arena in which competing interpretive frameworks, ranging from support for nutritional welfare to concern for constitutional education mandates, are actively negotiated and expressed.

Dryzek's conception of discursive legitimacy is deeply indebted to Habermas's (1989) theory of the public sphere, yet it extends and operationalizes it in a more analytically tractable direction. Where Habermas identifies the public sphere as the normative space in which public opinion is formed through rational-critical discourse, Dryzek provides a mechanism for assessing the content of that opinion by examining the relative weight of competing discourses therein. In Dryzek's (2000) framework, a collective decision achieves discursive legitimacy to the degree that it is consistent with the constellation of discourses present in the public sphere, and to the extent that this constellation is itself subject to dispersed and competent political control. Applied to the digital public sphere as theorized by Dahlberg (2001), this means that public discourse on social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) constitutes a legitimate empirical basis for assessing the

discursive legitimacy of government policy, a premise that further strengthens the theoretical foundation of this research.

In the context of this research, Dryzek's (2000) concept of discursive legitimacy serves as a theoretical lens for interpreting the outputs of sentiment analysis as indicators of discursive public opinion. While Beetham's (1991) third dimension of legitimacy, consent, emphasizes that the public must actively express its agreement or disagreement with governing authority, Dryzek's (2000) framework specifies that this expression takes a discursive form: it is manifested not merely through individual opinions, but through the broader pattern of narratives and evaluative frameworks that circulate in public debate. The distribution of positive, negative, and neutral sentiment among X (formerly Twitter) users regarding the education budget rationalization policy thus reflects not only individual reactions, but also the relative weight of competing discourses on this issue within Indonesia's digital public sphere. To the extent that negative sentiment predominates, this signals a discursive imbalance, that is, a disjuncture between government policy and the prevailing public discourse, which, following Dryzek (2000), can be interpreted as evidence of weakened discursive legitimacy.

In sum, Dryzek's (2000) theory of discursive legitimacy enriches this research's theoretical framework by providing a discourse-centered account of how public opinion functions as a measure of policy legitimacy. Together, Beetham's (1991) multi-dimensional legitimacy model and Dryzek's (2000) discursive legitimacy framework offer complementary analytical lenses: the former specifies the normative dimensions of legitimate power, including the consent dimension that this research operationalizes through sentiment analysis, while the latter grounds the reading of public sentiment data within a

broader understanding of how discursive contestation in the public sphere constitutes and signals legitimate or delegitimized governance.

1.6 Previous Research

Author(s) and Title	Method	Key Findings	Similarity	Difference
Maharani, Gustriansyah & Irfani (2025). <i>Analysis of Public Sentiment Towards the Free Nutritious Meal Program in Schools Based on Tweets Using the K-Nearest Neighbors Method.</i>	K-Nearest Neighbors (K-NN) classification with TF-IDF feature extraction; 3,007 tweets collected via Instant Data Scraper; 80:20 train-test split; optimal K=3.	Negative sentiment dominant. K-NN model achieved 82% overall accuracy; negative recall 1.00, F1-score 0.93. Public concerns centred on budget allocation and uneven food distribution.	Both analyse MBG sentiment on X using three-class classification (positive, negative, neutral) with TF-IDF and standard text preprocessing (tokenisation, stopword removal, stemming).	Maharani et al. focus on child nutrition and stunting prevention using K-NN. This study examines the education budget allocation mechanism, uses lexicon-based classification (InSet) in RStudio, and interprets findings through Beetham's (1991) legitimacy framework.
Putranta, Rahayudi & Purnomo (2023). <i>Analisis Sentimen Masyarakat terhadap Kebijakan Penghapusan Subsidi BBM pada Media Sosial Twitter Menggunakan Algoritma Naive Bayes Classifier dengan Ekstraksi Fitur N-Gram</i>	Bernoulli Naive Bayes with N-Gram TF-IDF; data collected via Tweepy Library and Twitter API; sklearn implementation.	Negative sentiment at 52%, positive at 48%. Public perceived subsidy removal as increasing fuel prices and the economic burden on ordinary citizens.	Both use sentiment analysis on Twitter data to examine public response to a contested national government policy, with three-class classification.	Putranta et al. examine fuel subsidy removal using Naive Bayes and N-Gram TF-IDF. This study focuses on education budget allocation for MBG and integrates Beetham's (1991) legitimacy theory to interpret sentiment as an indicator of public consensus.

Author(s) and Title	Method	Key Findings	Similarity	Difference
<i>TF-IDF.</i>				
Sucahyo, Kurniati & Harvit (2022). <i>Analisis Sentimen Masyarakat Terhadap UU Cipta Kerja pada Media Sosial Twitter.</i>	Naive Bayes algorithm; data crawled from Twitter using 160 keywords over the period April–June 2021.	Negative sentiment dominant at 75.77%, positive at 22.79%, neutral at 1.44%.	Both use keyword-based crawling on Twitter with a defined time period and analyse public sentiment toward a national-scope policy.	Sucahyo et al. examine the Omnibus Law on Job Creation (UU Cipta Kerja) using Naive Bayes without a theoretical framework for policy legitimacy. This study focuses on education budget allocation for MBG and situates findings within Beetham's (1991) legitimacy framework.

Author(s) and Title	Method	Key Findings	Similarity	Difference
Tadu & Hariadi (2025). <i>Sentiment Analysis of the 2025 Budget Cut Policy using the SVM Method.</i>	Support Vector Machine (SVM) with TF-IDF; data crawled via Google Colaboratory; lexicon-based labelling; 70:30 train-test split; 1,000 tweets.	Negative sentiment dominant at 42.54%. SVM achieved 60% overall accuracy; performance on neutral and positive categories was suboptimal.	Both analyse Indonesian public sentiment on X toward a budget policy under the Prabowo administration, using data crawling via Google Colaboratory and three-class classification.	Tadu & Hariadi focus broadly on the 2025 general budget cut policy using SVM. This study specifically examines the education budget allocation for MBG, uses lexicon-based classification (InSet) in RStudio, and incorporates Beetham's (1991) legitimacy theory and Habermas's (1989) digital public sphere concept.

Source: compiled by the author

1.7 Operational Concept

1.7.1 Overview

Operationalization of concept is the progress of translating abstract theoretical concept into concrete, measurable indicators that can be empirically observed and analysed within a research study (Creswell, 2014). In other word, operationalization serves as the bridge between theory and empirical measurement, it answers the fundamental methodological question of, “*how exactly will this abstract concept be measured in practice ?*” without a clear operationalization, theoretical concepts remain too abstract to be tested or verified through data collection and analysis.

This research involves two main concepts that require operationalization, first, public sentiment and second, public consensus as a dimension of policy legitimacy. Each concept is drawn from a distinct theoretical framework and is operationalized through specific dimension, indicators and measurement procedures that are consistent with the analytical method employed in this research, namely, lexicon-based sentiment analysis using the InSet Lexicon on X (formerly Twitter) data.

1.7.2 Concept 1 Public Sentiment

1.7.2.1 Definition

Public sentiment, as operationalized in this research, refers to the subjective opinions, attitudes and emotional expressions that X (formerly Twitter) users publicly direct toward the educations budget rationalizations policy for the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in the 2026 State Budget (APBN). According to Liu (2015), sentiment analysis is defined as the computational process of identifying and extracting subjective information from textual data, encompassing opinions evaluations and emotional stances that individuals express toward specific entities, events or

policies. In the context of this research, public sentiment represents the aggregated directions and intensity of these subjective expressions as they emerge organically from user generated content published on the X platform within the defined research period. Public sentiment constitutes the primary empirical variable of this research, providing the measurable data from which theoretical conclusions about public consensus and policy legitimacy are subsequently drawn.

1.7.2.2 Dimensions and Indicators

Public sentiment is operationalized through three dimensions, each representing a mutually exclusive category of expressed public opinion. The classification of each tweet into one of these three dimensions is determined by cumulative polarity score produced through lexicon matching against the InSet Lexicon, an Indonesian-language sentiment lexicon developed specifically for micro-blog data, in which each word is assigned a polarity weight ranging from -5 to +5 (Koto and Rahmaningtyas, 2017).

a. Dimension 1 (Positive Sentiment)

Positive sentiment is defined as the expression of support, approval, agreement, or appreciation toward the education budget rationalization policy for MBG. This dimension captures tweets in which the user explicitly or implicitly endorses the policy, evaluates it favorably, or expresses optimism regarding its outcomes and implications. Lexical indicators associated with positive sentiment in the Indonesian language include, but are not limited to, words such as "*setuju*" (agree), "*bagus*" (good), "*mendukung*" (support), "*bermanfaat*" (beneficial), "*baik*" (good), and "*tepat*" (appropriate).

Measurement: a tweet is classified under positive sentiment when its cumulative polarity score. The calculation is by aggregating the

weight values of all words matched against the InSet Lexicon, exceeds zero (score > 0) (Koto and Rahmaningtyas, 2017).

b. Dimension 2 (Negative Sentiment)

Negative sentiment is defined as the expression of opposition, criticism, dissatisfaction, or disapproval toward the education budget rationalization policy for MBG. This dimension captures tweets in which the user explicitly or implicitly rejects the policy, evaluates it unfavourably, or expresses concern, frustration, or opposition regarding its implications for public welfare and education quality. Lexical indicators associated with negative sentiment include words such as "tolak" (reject), "buruk" (bad), "merugikan" (harmful), "tidak setuju" (disagree), "gagal" (fail), and "kecewa" (disappointed).

Measurement: a tweet is classified under negative sentiment when its cumulative polarity score falls below zero (score < 0), indicating that the aggregate weight of negatively charged words in the tweet exceeds that of positively charged words (Koto and Rahmaningtyas, 2017).

c. Dimension 3 (Neutral Sentiment)

Neutral sentiment is defined as the absence of a discernible evaluative stance toward the policy in a given tweet. This dimension captures tweets that are purely informational or descriptive in nature, or tweets in which no words are matched against the InSet Lexicon. The inclusion of neutral sentiment as a distinct dimension is methodologically important, as it acknowledges that not all public discourse surrounding a policy is evaluative in character; some users may share factual information, report news, or pose questions without expressing a clear opinion.

Measurement: A tweet is classified under neutral sentiment when its cumulative polarity score equals zero (score = 0), either because no words in the tweet are registered in the InSet Lexicon, or because the positive and negative polarity scores cancel each other out (Koto & Rahmaningtyas, 2017).

1.7.3 Concept 2 Public Consensus as a Dimension of Policy Legitimacy

1.7.3.1 Definition

Policy legitimacy, as theorized by Beetham (1991), is a multi-dimensional construct comprising three analytically distinct dimensions, legality, normative justifiability, and consent or public consensus. This research focuses exclusively on the third dimension, public consensus, which Beetham (1991) defines as the expressed acceptance or rejection of a policy or exercise of power by those who are subject to it. Public consensus in Beetham's framework, is not a passive or latent condition; rather it is actively constituted through public expressions of support or opposition, civic participation and forms of collective discourse through which citizens signal their acceptance or withdrawal of consent from governmental decisions.

In this research, public consensus is operationalized not through conventional survey instruments or structured interviews, but through the aggregated sentiment of X users, a methodological approach grounded in Habermas's (1989) concept of the public sphere. Habermas (1989) defines the public sphere as a domain of social life in which public opinion is formed through open, rational, and critical discourse among citizens, and in which the outcomes of such discourse carry normative relevance for the exercise of political power. As subsequently extended to the digital context by Dahlberg (2001) and Papacharissi (2002), social media platforms, and X

(formerly Twitter) in particular, have been argued to exhibit the defining characteristics of a Habermasian public sphere, encompassing accessibility, openness to broad civic participation, and the capacity for rational-critical deliberation on matters of public concern. The sentiments expressed by X (formerly Twitter) users regarding the education budget rationalization policy for the MBG program therefore constitute a theoretically legitimate and empirically tractable manifestation of public consensus, rendering them a methodologically appropriate proxy measure for the consensus dimension as conceptualized by Beetham (1991).

1.7.3.2 Indicators

Four indicators are employed in the operationalization of this concept. The first indicator, public support, is defined as the proportion of tweets classified under positive sentiment, interpreted as an empirical indicator of the degree to which the public actively accepts and endorses the policy. Within Beetham's (1991) legitimacy framework, the presence of expressed public support constitutes evidence of active consent, which represents a foundational element of legitimate governance in which the governed signal their agreement with the decisions of those who hold authority. This indicator is measured by calculating the percentage of positively classified tweets relative to the total dataset, whereby a higher proportion of positive sentiment is interpreted as a stronger expression of public consensus in support of the policy.

The second indicator, public rejection, is defined as the proportion of tweets classified under negative sentiment, interpreted as an empirical indicator of active public opposition toward the policy. Within Beetham's (1991) legitimacy framework, a predominance of expressed public rejection constitutes evidence of a consensus deficit, a condition in which the governed withdraw or withhold their consent, thereby undermining the

legitimacy of the policy in question. This indicator is measured by calculating the percentage of negatively classified tweets relative to the total dataset, whereby a higher proportion of negative sentiment is interpreted as reflecting a weaker level of public consensus and a potential indicator of legitimacy deficit.

The third indicator, overall sentiment distribution, is defined as the comparative distribution of positive, negative, and neutral sentiment across the entire dataset, providing an aggregate picture of the direction and balance of public opinion toward the policy as a whole. This indicator enables the researcher to draw holistic conclusions regarding whether public consensus broadly tends toward acceptance, rejection, or ambivalence, and to interpret the implications of such distribution for the legitimacy of the policy within Beetham's (1991) theoretical framework. This indicator is measured through the ratio of positive, negative, and neutral tweets, each expressed as a percentage of the total dataset.

The fourth indicator, volume of public participation, is defined as the total number of tweets collected within the defined research period that engage with the education budget rationalization policy for the MBG program. Drawing on Habermas's (1989) concept of the public sphere, the volume of discourse surrounding a policy issue reflects the extent to which that issue has entered and activated the public sphere, whereby a higher volume of discourse indicates greater public engagement, attention, and concern regarding the policy in question. This indicator functions as a contextual measure that situates the sentiment findings within the broader landscape of public discourse, providing a basis for assessing the relative salience of the issue among the online public. This indicator is measured by the total number of tweets successfully collected through the data crawling or scraping process within the defined research period. Taken together, these four indicators

provide a comprehensive and theoretically grounded empirical basis for assessing the level of public consensus toward the education budget rationalization policy for the MBG program within the framework of Beetham's (1991) legitimacy theory.

1.7.3.3 The Relationship Between The Two Concepts

The two concepts operationalized in this section are analytically distinct yet theoretically interdependent, connected through a deliberate and structured chain of reasoning. Public sentiment (Concept 1) functions as the primary empirical measurement instrument of this research, providing the quantifiable data from which analytical conclusions are subsequently drawn. Public consensus (Concept 2) constitutes the theoretical construct under assessment, representing the abstract dimension of policy legitimacy that this research seeks to evaluate through empirical means. X (formerly Twitter), positioned as a digital public sphere in accordance with Habermas's (1989) theoretical framework, serves as the arena of measurement, that is, the discursive space in which public sentiment is expressed, observed, and systematically collected.

The analytical logic that connects these two concepts proceeds as follows. Tweets expressing public sentiment toward the MBG education budget rationalization policy are collected from X (formerly Twitter) through a systematic data crawling process, subjected to text preprocessing, and classified into positive, negative, and neutral categories through lexicon-based analysis using the InSet Lexicon (Koto & Rahmaningtyas, 2017). The resulting sentiment classifications are subsequently interpreted as empirical indicators of public consensus, with positive sentiment reflecting expressed public acceptance and negative sentiment reflecting expressed public rejection, within the theoretical framework of Beetham's (1991) policy

legitimacy model. The findings produced through this analytical chain therefore transcend a purely descriptive account of online public behaviour and constitute theoretically grounded assessments of the degree to which the education budget rationalization policy for the Free Nutritious Meal Program has achieved, or failed to achieve, public consensus as a dimension of legitimate governance in contemporary Indonesia.

1.8 Research Method

The methodological design of this research is shaped by two defining characteristics of its analytical task: the computational nature of the data source and the descriptive orientation of the research questions. As a study that seeks to systematically measure and describe the distribution of public sentiment expressed on a social media platform, and to interpret that distribution in relation to a theoretical framework of policy legitimacy, this research requires a methodological approach that is both empirically grounded in quantitative data and analytically oriented toward the structured description of a social phenomenon, rather than the testing of causal hypotheses. These requirements are met by a descriptive quantitative research design, as elaborated below.

This study employs a descriptive quantitative research approach in examining public sentiment on X (formerly Twitter) toward the education budget rationalization policy for the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) in the 2026 State Budget (APBN). Quantitative research is an approach in which data or information is obtained and measured through objectively operationalized instruments, enabling systematic and replicable analysis. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research can be defined as an approach to testing theory by examining the relationships between variables, measured using research instruments, with the resulting data analyzed through statistical procedures. The descriptive orientation of this research is further justified by its research objectives. As Sugiyono (2013) explains, descriptive

research aims to provide an accurate and systematic portrayal of a phenomenon, population, or situation as it exists at a given point in time, without manipulation or intervention on the part of the researcher. In this research, the phenomenon under description is the distribution of public sentiment, encompassing positive, negative, and neutral categories, toward a specific and contemporaneous government policy. The researcher does not intervene in or manipulate the data; rather, the sentiments are captured as they are organically expressed by X (formerly Twitter) users within the defined research period.

In addition to the descriptive quantitative approach, this research is classified as descriptive-computational research, a research type that utilizes computational tools and methods to systematically process and analyse large volumes of unstructured text data in order to produce meaningful and structured findings (Salganik, 2018). The computational dimension of this research is necessary given the nature of the data source; tweets are unstructured, informal, and produced in large volume that cannot be practically analyse through manual reading. The use of computational tools, specifically Google Collaboratory for data crawling and RStudio for text preprocessing, sentiment classification and data visualization, allows the researcher to handle the scale and complexity of the dataset while maintaining analytical rigor.

1.8.1 Research Object and Focus

The object of this research is Indonesian-language tweets published on the X (formerly Twitter) social media platform that discuss the education budget rationalization policy for the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG as outlined in the 2026 State Budget (APBN). The research focuses specifically in identifying and classifying public sentiment expressed in these tweets into three categories, positive, negative and neutral sentiment, as measurable proxy for consensus toward the policy.

The focus of this research on X (formerly Twitter) as the primary data source is grounded in theoretical reasoning rather than purely statistical considerations. Based on Habermas's (1989) concept of the public sphere, X (formerly Twitter) is treated in this research as a digital public sphere, an open space where citizens can freely express their views and engage in discussions about public issues, including government policies. The sentiments that users express within this space represent a form of public discourse that is relevant as an indicator of public consensus. As Beetham (1991) argues, consensus the third dimension of policy legitimacy, is reflected in how the public accepts or rejects a policy. X (formerly Twitter), as a platform where citizens can openly express support, criticism, and opinions toward government policies, therefore serves as a theoretically valid source of data for examining public consensus toward the education budget rationalization policy for the Free Nutritious Meal Program.

While the theoretical justification above establishes X as a legitimate arena of public discourse, it is necessary to state explicitly, at the level of research design rather than only in the interpretation of findings, that the use of X posts as a proxy for public opinion carries specific and unavoidable limitations.

First, the population captured by this study is not the Indonesian public in general, but the narrower population of X users who chose to post about this particular policy issue within the research period; this is a self-selected group, and self-selection is known to systematically favour individuals who are more politically engaged, more digitally literate, and more inclined toward critical or oppositional expression than the population at large.

Second, X's user base in Indonesia is demographically skewed relative to the national population, concentrated among younger, urban, and more

highly educated users (We Are Social & Meltwater, 2025), meaning that the sentiment distribution reported in this study reflects the evaluative orientation of this particular digital public rather than a demographically representative cross-section of Indonesian society.

Third, this study does not implement bot or inauthentic-account detection; consequently, it cannot rule out the possibility that a portion of the observed volume or sentiment intensity originates from automated or coordinated accounts rather than organic individual expression. These limitations do not undermine the theoretical legitimacy of treating X discourse as an indicator of public consensus within Habermas's (1989) framework of the digital public sphere, discussed further in Chapter 3; rather, they define the boundary of what the findings can and cannot claim. Accordingly, throughout this research, sentiment findings derived from X are interpreted as indicative of the orientation of an engaged and vocal segment of the public sphere, and not as a statistically representative measurement of Indonesian public opinion as a whole. Because the term “indicative” carries a specific and deliberately bounded meaning in this research, it requires explicit definition. To describe the sentiment findings as indicative is to make four connected claims, and to decline a fifth.

First, the claim is descriptive rather than inferential. The dataset is not a probability sample drawn from a defined population; it is a retrieval of publicly available, keyword-matching tweets within a specified discourse boundary. No sampling frame exists from which population parameters could be estimated, and consequently no statistical generalisation from the corpus to the Indonesian population is attempted at any point in this study. The proportions reported in Chapter III describe the composition of a body of discourse, not the distribution of opinion within a population (Tufekci, 2014; Schober et al., 2016).

Second, the object of measurement is expressed discourse, not private attitude. What the analysis observes is what citizens chose to publish about this policy in a public arena, which is a different construct from what they privately believe. This distinction is not a weakness of the design but a condition of it, because the theoretical framework requires precisely the former. Beetham (1991, p. 19) locates the consent dimension of legitimacy in publicly visible actions expressive of consent or its withdrawal, not in privately held preferences. Publicly posted evaluative statements about a policy are such actions; unexpressed attitudes, whatever their distribution, are not.

Third, the finding is directional rather than precise. The analytically meaningful result is that critical discourse substantially and consistently outweighs supportive discourse throughout the research period, not that opposition stands at any exact percentage. The interpretation developed in Chapter III is constructed to remain valid under considerable measurement error in the point estimates, and the sensitivity of those estimates to classification error is examined directly in Section 3.1.3.

Fourth, the direction indicated by the X corpus converges with independent evidence generated outside the platform: a judicial review petition filed before the Constitutional Court, contestation of the budget classification within Commission X of the House of Representatives, and sustained critical coverage in national media. These are separate observations of the same underlying phenomenon, and their convergence provides a form of triangulation that a single-source measure could not supply on its own (Olteanu et al., 2019).

What this study therefore does not claim is that a stated proportion of Indonesians opposes the policy. It claims that within the arena in which public

consent to policy is most visibly performed in contemporary Indonesia, the discourse surrounding this policy is dominated, consistently and with measurable intensity, by the withholding of consent. That is the sense in which the findings are described as indicative, and the interpretation throughout Chapters III and IV is confined to it.

1.8.2 Data Collection Technique

Data in this research was collected through web scraping, also referred to as data crawling, an automated data collection technique that systematically extracts publicly available content from social media platforms using specialized software (Sloan & Quan-Haase, 2017). This technique was selected because it allows for the efficient collection of large volumes of naturally occurring public discourse without researcher interference, thereby preserving the authenticity of the sentiment expressed. The crawling process was conducted using the tweet-harvest v2.6.1 library executed through Google Collaboratory (Colab). Tweet-harvest is a Node.js-based tool capable of accessing publicly available X (formerly Twitter) content without requiring a paid API subscription, supporting keyword-based filtering, and allowing temporal parameters to be configured for each data retrieval batch.

Data collection was conducted with the following parameters:

1. Keywords: "anggaran pendidikan dipotong", "dana pendidikan dialihkan MBG", "makan bergizi gratis anggaran pendidikan", "anggaran pendidikan mbg", "anggaran pendidikan dialihkan mbg"
2. Time range: January 2025 – May 2026
3. Filters applied: Indonesian-language tweets only (lang:id), excluding retweets (-filter:retweets), from non-protected accounts

4. Batch retrieval limit: 500 tweets per batch run (TWEET_LIMIT), applied across successive runs covering the full observation window

The adequacy of a corpus of this size requires explicit justification, since the number of observations in a corpus-based design carries a different methodological meaning from the sample size of a survey. Four considerations govern the assessment.

First, the corpus is not a sample drawn to represent a population, but a retrieval of the discourse itself. The unit of analysis is the publicly posted tweet, and the boundary of the study is defined not by a number of respondents but by a set of retrieval parameters: five policy-specific Indonesian-language keywords, the exclusion of retweets and non-Indonesian content, and a seventeen-month observation window running from January 2025 to May 2026. Within that boundary, the aim was to retrieve as much of the qualifying discourse as the tool permitted, rather than to draw a fixed quota from a larger frame. The relevant methodological question is therefore not whether the retrieved tweets are sufficiently numerous in the survey sense, but whether the retrieval parameters captured the discourse they were designed to capture, which is a question of coverage rather than of size.

Second, the retrieval produced empirical evidence that the keyword space was approaching exhaustion. The five keywords were deliberately constructed to overlap: “anggaran pendidikan dipotong”, “dana pendidikan dialihkan MBG”, “makan bergizi gratis anggaran pendidikan”, “anggaran pendidikan mbg”, and “anggaran pendidikan dialihkan mbg” each capture the same policy event through a different lexical formulation, so that discourse phrased in any one of these ways would be retrieved even if it did not use the vocabulary of the others. The consequence of this design is measurable. Of the

2,308 raw entries returned across all batch runs, 271 (11.74 per cent) were exact duplicates of content already retrieved by a preceding query. A duplication rate of this magnitude indicates that successive queries were increasingly returning material already held rather than opening new discourse, which is the operational signature of a retrieval approaching the limits of its keyword space. Had the queries continued to return predominantly novel content, the appropriate inference would have been that the corpus remained incomplete; the observed pattern supports the opposite conclusion.

Third, the corpus is temporally distributed rather than concentrated, which is a further indication of coverage. The 2,037 retained tweets are spread across the full seventeen-month observation window at an average of approximately 120 tweets per month, and every month within the window is represented in the dataset, as Table 3.2 documents. A corpus of this size drawn from a single burst of activity would capture only one moment of the discourse; a corpus of the same size distributed across seventeen months captures the discourse as it developed, including the periods of low activity that establish the baseline against which the peaks are interpreted. The temporal analysis presented in Section 3.2.3 is possible only because of this distribution, and it is the distribution rather than the total that makes that analysis meaningful.

Fourth, the corpus is more than adequate for the analytical task the design actually requires, which is the description of proportions rather than the estimation of population parameters or the fitting of inferential models. Even under the conservative assumption of simple random sampling, an assumption this design does not in fact make, the observed negative proportion of 0.6676 in a corpus of 2,037 observations carries a ninety-five per cent confidence interval of ± 2.05 percentage points, and the observed positive proportion of

0.2852 carries an interval of ± 1.96 percentage points. Doubling the corpus would narrow these intervals to approximately ± 1.45 percentage points, a gain of less than one percentage point in precision that would not alter any conclusion drawn in this study. The statistical precision of the estimates is therefore not the binding constraint on interpretation; coverage and classification accuracy are, and both are addressed directly in Section 1.8.5 and in the limitations of the study.

Two caveats must accompany this justification. The dataset covers only tweets containing the designated keywords; discourse on the same policy expressed in other vocabulary, in images, or in reply threads that do not repeat those keywords is not captured, and the corpus should therefore be read as the keyword-defined discourse rather than as the whole of it. In addition, tweet-harvest retrieves publicly accessible content subject to platform-side constraints, so retrieval completeness within the specified window cannot be independently verified. Neither caveat would be remedied by increasing the number of tweets, which is the substantive reason why corpus size is not the principal threat to validity in this design. All collected tweets were stored in CSV format prior to processing. Following the crawling process, a preliminary data cleaning procedure was conducted to remove duplicate entries, non-Indonesian language tweets, and tweets with fewer than five words, resulting in a cleaned dataset ready for further analysis in Rstudio.

1.8.3 Data analysis technique

Data analysis in this research was conducted through three sequential stages using RStudio software: text preprocessing, sentiment analysis, and data visualization. Each stage is described in detail below:

1.8.3.1 Text Preprocessing

Prior to sentiment analysis, raw tweet data underwent a two-stage text preprocessing pipeline. The first stage was conducted in RStudio using the `stringr` and `dplyr` packages, and comprised: (1) removal of duplicate entries using `distinct()`; (2) case folding (conversion of all text to lowercase); (3) removal of URLs, @mentions, hashtag symbols, non-alphanumeric characters, and excess whitespace using `str_remove_all()` and `str_squish()`. The second stage was conducted in Google Colaboratory using Python and the NLTK library, comprising: (4) additional noise removal via regular expressions (`clean_tweet()` function); (5) Indonesian stopwords removal combining NLTK's built-in Indonesian corpus with a manually curated supplementary list of informal social media tokens, and exclusion of tokens of two characters or fewer (`remove_stopwords()` function);

Removal of Indonesian stopwords, defined as high-frequency function words that carry no meaningful sentiment value such as *'yang', 'untuk', 'pada', 'ke', 'para', 'namun', 'menurut', 'antara', 'dia', 'dua', 'ia', 'seperti', 'jika', 'sehingga', 'kembali', 'dan', 'tidak', 'ini', 'karena', 'oleh', 'tentang', 'dari', 'atau', 'dengan', 'tersebut', 'bahwa', 'di', 'ada', 'adalah', 'akan', 'telah', 'dalam', 'sudah', 'bisa', 'dapat', 'itu', 'juga', 'saat', 'hanya', 'lebih', 'sangat', 'banyak', 'masih', 'aja', 'yg', 'nya', 'ga', 'gak', 'udah', 'udh', 'dgn', 'utk', 'klo', 'kali'*;

The output of this pipeline is a preprocessed corpus of 34,822 word tokens, distributed across three text columns per tweet: `full_text` (original), `tweet_cleaned` (after noise removal), and `tweet_preprocessed` (after stopwords filtering), which served as the input for lexicon matching.

1.8.3.2 Sentiment analysis

Sentiment analysis, also referred to as opinion mining, is the field of study concerned with the computational analysis of opinions, sentiments, evaluations, appraisals, attitudes, and emotions expressed in written text toward entities such as products, services, organisations, individuals, issues, events, topics, and their attributes (Liu, 2015; Liu, 2020). Since the early 2000s it has developed into one of the most active research areas in natural language processing, a growth driven in large part by the expansion of social media, which has made large volumes of publicly expressed opinion available for systematic analysis (Fauzia et al., 2021). Applied to social media data, sentiment analysis permits the measurement of public opinion at scale, converting an unstructured stream of public discourse into quantifiable and interpretable categories (Pak & Paroubek, 2010).

In this research, sentiment analysis functions as more than a technical instrument. It serves as the operational bridge between the digital public discourse occurring on X (formerly Twitter) and the theoretical framework of policy legitimacy established in Section 1.5, translating expressions of public opinion into a measurable indicator of public consensus toward the education budget rationalisation policy for MBG. The classification it produces is therefore the operational form of the consent dimension of Beetham's (1991) legitimacy framework, and the methodological choices described below are made with that analytical purpose, rather than classification accuracy considered in isolation, as the governing criterion.

The selection of a lexicon-based approach for this research was a deliberate methodological decision made after weighing it against the two alternative families of sentiment classification commonly applied in the

literature: supervised machine learning and deep learning. Supervised approaches, such as the Naïve Bayes and Support Vector Machine algorithms employed in several of the studies reviewed in Section 1.6, depend on a manually labelled training corpus of substantial size to achieve reliable classification accuracy, a requirement that was not feasible within the scope, timeframe, and resources available to an undergraduate research project, particularly given that no existing labelled corpus of Indonesian-language tweets addressing this specific policy discourse was available.

Deep learning approaches carry an even greater data and computational burden, and, more importantly for the purposes of this research, function largely as opaque, non-interpretable classifiers, a characteristic that runs counter to the descriptive and transparent measurement of public sentiment that this study aims to produce. A lexicon-based approach, by contrast, classifies sentiment through a fixed, published, and inspectable dictionary of pre-weighted words, meaning that every classification decision made by the model can be traced back to specific lexical evidence within the text itself, a property that directly supports the transparency and replicability expected of a descriptive quantitative design. This methodological suitability is reinforced by the empirical track record of the specific lexicon selected: the InSet Lexicon was constructed and validated specifically for Indonesian-language microblog text, and has been shown in prior Indonesian sentiment analysis research to achieve classification performance comparable to supervised machine learning methods without requiring labelled training data (Koto & Rahmaningtyas, 2017; Musfiroh et al., 2021). On this basis, the lexicon-based method was judged the most appropriate instrument available for the descriptive, transparent, and reproducible measurement of public sentiment that this research requires.

Sentiment analysis was conducted in RStudio using the lexicon-based method with the InSet Lexicon (Indonesian Sentiment Lexicon) developed by Koto and Rahmaningtyas (2017). The InSet Lexicon contains 3,610 positive words and 6,610 negative words, each assigned a polarity weight ranging from -5 to +5. Each tweet was tokenised into individual words using `unnest_tokens()`, and matched against the InSet Lexicon via `inner_join()`. The polarity weights of all matched words were aggregated into a composite sentiment score per tweet using the formula: $\text{Sentiment Score} = \sum \text{weight}(\text{word}_i)$, for all `word_i` matched in InSet Lexicon. Based on this score, each tweet was classified as: Positive (score > 0), Negative (score < 0), or Neutral (score = 0). Classification was implemented using `case_when()` conditional logic in RStudio.

1.8.3.3 Data Visualization

Following sentiment classification, the results were visualized to facilitate interpretation and presentation of findings. Two types of visualization were produced using RStudio. First, bar charts and pie charts illustrating the distribution and percentage of positive, negative, and neutral sentiment across the entire dataset were generated using the `ggplot2` package (Wickham, 2016). Second, word clouds displaying the most frequently occurring words within each sentiment category were generated using the `wordcloud` package, providing a visual representation of the dominant themes and keywords associated with each sentiment class.

1.8.4 Data Validity

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data used in this research, several data selection criteria were applied during both the crawling and preprocessing stages. Only tweets written in Indonesian were included, ensuring linguistic consistency for lexicon-based analysis. Retweets were

excluded to avoid duplication of sentiment and to ensure that each data point represents an original expression of opinion. Tweets containing fewer than five words after preprocessing were removed as they were deemed insufficiently informative for meaningful sentiment classification. Additionally, data was collected within a clearly defined time period corresponding to the active implementation phase of the MBG policy, ensuring temporal relevance to the research focus. The use of the InSet Lexicon as the primary measurement instrument further supports data validity, as it was specifically constructed and evaluated for Indonesian-language microblog data and has been demonstrated to outperform other available Indonesian sentiment lexicons in comparable studies (Koto & Rahmaningtyas, 2017; Firdaus et al., 2021).

To assess the validity of the sentiment classification, this study employs a manual validation procedure through random sampling and inter-rater reliability (IRR) testing. In the first stage, a random sample of 100 tweets was drawn from the final preprocessed and classified dataset using the `sample_n()` function in RStudio, with a fixed random seed applied (`set.seed(42)`) to ensure reproducibility — meaning the identical sample can be regenerated at any point and will yield consistent results. This random sampling procedure is consistent with established practice in computational text analysis, wherein a randomly selected subset of machine-coded documents is independently evaluated by a human coder to quantify the accuracy of automated classification (Loughran & McDonald, 2024). The sample size of 100 tweets was determined as a commonly applied benchmark in IRR validation studies for lexicon-based sentiment analysis, representing a sufficient and manageable subset for manual evaluation while maintaining statistical meaningfulness.

In the second stage, the 100 sampled tweets were subjected to manual labeling by the researcher, acting as an independent human coder. Each tweet was assigned one of three sentiment categories, namely Positive, Negative, or Neutral, based on a careful and holistic reading of its full textual content. The manual coding was conducted using a blind coding procedure, meaning the researcher evaluated each tweet independently without reference to the automated labels previously generated by the InSet Lexicon. This methodological safeguard was applied to minimize confirmation bias and to ensure that the human judgment was formed purely on the basis of the tweet's communicative content and context (McHugh, 2012). In cases where the sentiment of a tweet was ambiguous or contextually complex, for instance in tweets containing irony or sarcasm, the researcher prioritized the overall communicative intent of the text over the presence of individual sentiment-bearing words.

In the third stage, the degree of agreement between the automated lexicon-based classification and the researcher's manual human judgment was measured using Cohen's Kappa (κ), a statistical measure of inter-rater reliability specifically designed for categorical data. Cohen's Kappa was selected as the preferred validity metric because it provides a more conservative and scientifically rigorous estimate of actual classification consistency than simple percentage agreement. Unlike raw percentage agreement, which can be inflated by the likelihood of raters coincidentally assigning the same label, Cohen's Kappa explicitly accounts for the probability of agreement occurring by chance alone, thereby isolating the genuine level of systematic correspondence between the two sets of classifications (Cohen, 1960; McHugh, 2012). This property makes Cohen's Kappa particularly appropriate for three-category classification tasks such as

the Positive–Negative–Neutral scheme employed in this study, where chance agreement is non-trivial.

The formula for Cohen's Kappa is as follows:

$$\kappa = (Po - Pe) / (1 - Pe)$$

where Po is the observed proportion of agreement between the automated classification and the manual human judgment across all 100 sampled tweets, and Pe is the expected proportion of agreement attributable to chance alone, calculated on the basis of the marginal frequencies of each classification category. The value of κ ranges from 0 (agreement no better than chance) to 1.0 (perfect agreement), with negative values indicating systematic disagreement (Cohen, 1960). The Kappa coefficient was computed in RStudio using the `kappa2()` function from the `irr` package (Gamer et al., 2019), applied to a paired comparison of the automated labels (Label Lexicon) and the manually assigned labels (Label Manual) across the 100-tweet validation sample.

The resulting Kappa value is interpreted using the benchmark classification scale proposed by Landis and Koch (1977), which constitutes the most widely cited and methodologically established framework for interpreting Cohen's Kappa in social and behavioral research. The scale classifies the degree of inter-rater agreement into six categories, as presented in Table 1.1 below:

Kappa Value (κ)	Interpretation	Implication for Research Validity
< 0.00	No Agreement	Unacceptable — result unreliable

0.00 – 0.20	Slight Agreement	Unacceptable — very low correspondence
0.21 – 0.40	Fair Agreement	Poor — limited analytical reliability
0.41 – 0.60	Moderate Agreement	Acceptable — result cautiously interpretable
0.61 – 0.80	Substantial Agreement	Good — result considered valid ✓
0.81 – 1.00	Almost Perfect Agreement	Excellent — result highly valid ✓

Table 1.1. Cohen's Kappa Coefficient Interpretation Scale (Landis & Koch, 1977).

The resulting Kappa value is interpreted descriptively against the six-category benchmark scale proposed by Landis and Koch (1977), rather than against a single fixed pass/fail cut-off. This approach is adopted deliberately: Cohen's Kappa is treated in this study as one component of a broader validity assessment rather than as the sole determinant of whether the automated classification can be analytically trusted. A comparatively low Kappa value does not, by itself, invalidate the sentiment classification if the pattern of disagreement between the automated and manual assessments can be systematically explained on linguistic grounds, and if the dominant, substantive finding, namely the direction and relative magnitude of the sentiment distribution, remains consistent across both the automated and the manually coded assessments. The Kappa value obtained in this study, its position on the Landis and Koch scale, a structural analysis of the disagreement pattern between the automated and manual classifications, and the implications of this result for the validity and limitations of the study's findings, are reported in full in Section 3.1.3.

It is acknowledged at the outset that lexicon-based sentiment analysis is subject to documented limitations in contexts where figurative and contextually dependent language use is prevalent. Loughran and McDonald (2024) identify sarcasm, irony, and negation as the most common sources of misclassification in lexicon-based approaches, as these forms of expression invert or modify the literal polarity of individual words in ways that word-level scoring systems are systematically unable to detect. This limitation is particularly salient for politically charged social media discourse, the domain to which this study belongs, wherein sarcasm and irony constitute common rhetorical strategies through which citizens express critical dissent toward government policy (Lunando & Purwarianti, 2013; Sykora et al., 2020). The extent to which this limitation affects the validity of the classification results in this specific study is empirically quantified through the Kappa testing procedure described above and discussed in the findings chapter.