

# Attitude Realization in Omicron News Reporting: Appraisal in Critical Discourse Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

News production is a discursive act and a value-laden process through which media reports social issues using various stances to articulate certain ideologies. However, how reporters construct their stance and relationship with their readers has yet to significantly be an object of systematic investigation. This study sheds some light on the attitude of *The Jakarta Post* towards the spread of Omicron to reveal the media's stances and ideological positions, in which certain interests play a role in discourse production. The principles of appraisal system and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) were deployed to examine 25 news articles about Omicron. The results reveal how language construes attitude and enables writers to position themselves evaluatively in certain aspects. While politically it deploys attitudinal resources to portray its neutral position, economically *The Jakarta Post* discloses itself as a media that accommodates its plural readers to maximize advertising revenue and reading traffic. This ideological stance is interpreted in light of the socio-political dimension that shapes news reporting.

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## INTRODUCTION

Media plays a progressively fundamental role in documenting and communicating social issues like health problems to the public (Mach et al., 2021). In reporting the same event, each media may have different ways of narrating it (Jacobs, 1996; Fowler, 2013) and this is very much influenced by the news production process and the ideology adopted by the media. For Fowler (1991), as a reflection and construction of social realities, news can be loaded with hidden intentions that make the events not always communicated objectively. Although the media essentially has the code of ethics to be neutral in relation to news coverage (Thomson, White, and Kitley, 2008; Sabao, 2016), it also takes a stand on one side of the event because of particular interests. The unattainability of ideal objectivity in journalism is evidenced by the fact that "news-making is intrinsically selective, partial, and thereby subjective in its practice" (Chong, 2017, p. 2). This leads to the assumption that even if news text is expected to be fact-based, as discourse it is validated by the considerations behind the reporting that construes importance. As a result, media has considerable influence in building up public opinion, behaviors, and sentiment (Bednarek & Caple, 2012; Montgomery, 2011), particularly in the view that news reporting is a form of social and political practice (Bagdikian, 2007). Thus, media needs to be examined beyond its language to comprehend its stance and role in shaping the public understanding of certain social phenomena (Pieri, 2019).

The correlation between media text, the discursive process of text production, and the media's ideology has become the concern of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA highlights "the central connection between the study of the media and the study of the language used in the media is the importance placed on ideology" (O'Keffee, 2011, p. 67). CDA takes an ideological or critical standpoint in its approach to media discourse, in which news items are viewed as the product of negotiation of power among journalists, news organizations, and audiences. The power relations in media discourse are established by the participants' roles, and at a deeper level, it is in the realm of ideology (Haig, 2012). Further, news production is an ideological act that is influenced by internal factors, such as gender, race, and class of the journalists, and external factors, such as policies and politics.

This study investigates the use of language in *The Jakarta Post*'s online reporting of Omicron through the SFL lens focusing on the realization of interpersonal meaning development through attitude system of appraisal analysis (Martin, 2000; Martin and White, 2005). The analysis is carried out in the light of Fairclough's three-dimensional framework (1989; 1995a; 1995b) which views news reports as circulating discourse in society. The framework encompasses the linguistics features in the news articles integrated with textual analysis; the editorial process of news production integrated with processing analysis; and the social and institutional structures surrounding the text producer integrated with social analysis.

As Fairclough (1995b) points out, newspaper texts narrate a social space in which two fundamental social processes consisting of cognitive representations of the world and social interactions occur simultaneously. On the grounds of authorial voices, journalists, as the representation of the media, tend to use rhetorical devices as supporting arguments in presenting the news text as discourse to the readers (White and Thomson, 2008). Further, the rhetoric strategies allow the newsmakers to build engagement with their readers to manipulate them into perceiving the phenomenon positively or negatively. In this matter, the attitudes, a sub-category of the appraisal system, are significantly capable of uncovering the journalists' stances and defining the generic perspective of online newspapers.

This study seeks to shed light on one of the most highly reported stories in the media during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is Omicron, the newest variant of the coronavirus. The topic of Omicron has been a controversial issue and has divided society into two parties; those who are concerned about the spread of the variant and those who are contra. This social situation, then, constantly drives the media to write about the issue from various viewpoints and different stances. In addition, considering that the media is an ever-changing and ever-growing discourse and the corpus about the COVID-19 pandemic stages is time-sensitive, there is still a lot of room and space for further research to be conducted. Providing that the COVID-19 outbreak is a crucial issue, the news media framing becomes an important aspect that not only shapes the public discourse on the pandemic but also serves as a communication tool for managing the disease.

While the phenomenon of the Covid-19 pandemic has been extensively investigated by health scholars, discourse analysis research in this area is still limited. Previous discourse analyses of health issues during the pandemic have primarily focused on their ideational function (Fairclough, 1992), namely how these texts construe a particular representation of reality (Al-Hilali, 2021; Hutabarat, Herman, Silalahi, & Sihombing, 2020; Abbas, 2022). However, their interpersonal functions (Fairclough, 1992), that is, how through these texts reporting the news producer constructs their identity and relationship with their readers and embeds their ideology, have not significantly been the object of systematic investigation.

This article aims to partially fill this gap by employing Appraisal theory in investigating interpersonal language resources in *The Jakarta Post* reports. The media is regarded as the most influential English-language news outlet in Indonesia and its daily news texts significantly represent actual events and the majority discourses of

the Indonesian media. The main objective of the study is thus to explore how, through Appraisal resources, *The Jakarta Post* constructs its ideological position. In order to arrive at a fuller understanding of the motivation and effect of the use of Appraisal resources in the media reports, the results are interpreted through the lenses of the pandemic and its socio-cultural context in Indonesia.

### THE APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK

When writing a news report, news writers deploy a range of resources including evaluation, that is, ‘the explicit or implicit ways in which authors commit themselves to values’ (Fairclough, 2003: 171). This is in line with the Appraisal theory (Martin, 2000; Martin and White, 2005), an extension of the theoretical linguistic framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1994; Eggins, 2004), which is oriented towards uncovering the author’s attitude and the way in which texts align with readers. The framework is based on the concept of stance and provides a comprehensive framework for the systematic investigation of textual features that realize interpersonal meanings (Halliday, 1994), the resources that language users employ to manage interpersonal roles and relationships, to establish empathy and negotiate solidarity and alignment, as well as to negotiate stances and ideological positions (White, 2001).

The framework has a ramified system of resources that is oriented towards lexico-grammatical means and organizes interpersonal meanings into different systems. It encompasses three interacting aspects, namely attitude, engagement, and graduation (Martin and White, 2005). Attitude involves the linguistic expression of emotional reactions, ethical judgments, and evaluations of things. Engagement comprises the linguistic resources by which people negotiate the arguability of their utterances. Graduation is the expression of modulating the intensity of assessments.

This study focuses on the attitude system, one of the most effective tools for analysis is the attitude system since the core evaluative language choices (Thompson, 2014). Attitude pertains to the way people use their feeling, including emotional reactions, judgements of behavior, and evaluation of things (Martin and White, 2005), either positively (or, the likable) or negatively (or, the unlikeable attitude). In details it is manifested through three semantic categories including emotion (affect), ethics (judgement), and aesthetics (appreciation).

- *Affect*, which concerns the expression of feelings, emotions and states of mind, is expressed through various forms like verbs of emotion (to love/to hate, to frighten/to reassure), adverbs (happily/sadly), adjectives (angry/pleased) or nominalized forms (joy/despair, confidence/insecurity) (White, 2001).
- *Judgement*, which comprises positive and negative normative assessments of human behavior, can be in the form of adjectives (unjust/fair-minded, skilled/incompetent), nominalized forms (best behaviour, outstanding performance) and prepositional phrases (in order, in shape) (Martin, 1995)
- *Appreciation*, which involves evaluation of natural or semiotic phenomena, entities and processes like extremely beautiful/breathtaking beauty, challenging/challenge (Martin & White, 2005).

### METHOD

A corpus comprising 25 news articles was collected through document analysis (Bowen, 2009) and was sorted out using a criterion-based sampling technique (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 2003). The criteria were: (1) the texts were published on the columns of Indonesia, Business, World, and Opinion of the news platform; and (2) the texts contained the keyword "COVID-19 Omicron-variant" The data was gathered from December 1, 2021, to February 28, 2022, on *The Jakarta Post*’s official website, [www.thejakartapost.com](http://www.thejakartapost.com). Additionally, the headlines and contents of the news articles were limited to the topics related to the coronavirus Omicron-variant and other sub-topics, including government regulation, health care and crisis, the economy, and education.

Adopting mixed methods in applied linguistics studies (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009; Riazi & Candlin, 2014), a synergy of qualitative and quantitative analysis was deployed to process the data. The quantitative analysis was carried out to indicate the percentages and distributions of three sub-systems of attitudinal resources in the corpus. Then, based on the quantitative results, a further qualitative analysis of the selected texts was carried out in which the characteristics and specific use of the attitude systems in the news reports were explained in detail. The combination of both descriptive and explanatory results of the analysis is suited to the aims of the study, which is to provide richer insights into why certain attitudinal choices are adopted by the media in reporting health cases.

In analyzing the data, this research systematically integrated the principles of Fairclough's CDA framework (1989; 1992; 1995a; 1995b) and Martin and White's Appraisal Theory (2005). The procedure involved: 1) identifying the concept of discourse as text, in which the attitudinal-contained data in each selected article was classified into three sub-systems consisting of affect, judgement, and appreciation; 2) describing the concept of discourse as a discursive practice, in which the attitudes and realizations in the news texts are interpreted in relation to the strategies of journalists in positioning the attitudes; 3) explaining the conception of discourse as a social practice by exploring the results of micro and meso-analysis in relation to sociality surrounding the issue to uncover the ideological position of the news discourse.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results are elaborated in the form of statistics, which become the basis for interpreting and explaining the social phenomena under study. The same words used to evaluate the same people, things, events, or phenomena count as only one. Considering that the articles are generated around the same topic, it is conceivable that some journalists utilized the same attitude expressions to convey their evaluation of the subject matter. Data unrelated to the topic of Omicron-variant was eliminated for the analysis.

### Overview of Attitude Resources

The findings indicate that the attitude resources the media news reports on Omicron are ample, with all attitude subsystems involved in the articles (Table 1). Judgement takes the largest proportion (148 or 48.05%). Affect is in the second place (90 or 29.22%). Appreciation becomes the least used attitude subsystem (70 or 22.72%).

**Table 1.** Distribution of Attitude Resources

Attitude Type	Number	Percentage
Affect	90	29.22%
Judgement	148	48.05%
Appreciation	70	22.72%
TOTAL	308	100%

Journalists prefer to appraise a lot of judgmental resources, indicating that news texts heavily target some behavior or performance of a human individual or grouping to be blamed or praised for what happens during the Omicron wave. That judgement is dominant in bad news reporting is in line with Liu and Stevenson (2013). This is relatively reasonable since judgement is shaped by the cultural and ideological situation in which it operates, and thus, making evaluation based on the social situation in Indonesia as the new variant approaches enhances the possibility of ideological assertions being accepted (White, 2001). Meanwhile, regardless of the huge gap from the judgement subtype, the use of affect and appreciation attitudinal resources is critical; affect is chosen by journalists to primarily convey feelings or manifestations of their personal emotions or those external sources affected by the pandemic in order to gain readers' support over their position in the news articles, and appreciation is used to illustrate that the topic surrounding Omicron is such an important matter that it is newsworthy to be read.

**Table 2.** Distribution of Attitude-polarity

Attitude-polarity	Number	Percentage
Positive	146	47.40%
Negative	162	52.60%
TOTAL	308	100%

Table 2 illustrates that negative attitudes (52.60%) outweigh positive attitude (47.40%). However, the gap in attitude-polarity is not too significant by approximately 5%. The almost equal number of negative and positive attitudes shows that in reporting the issue of Omicron-variant, *the Post* provides approximately balanced information and perspective. This then further reflects the ideological position of the media.

### Affect in *The Jakarta Post's* Reports

**Table 3.** Distribution of Affect Resources

Affect Type	Positive		Negative		Total	Percentage
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
Dis/inclination	36	40.00%	13	14.45%	49	54.45%
Un/happiness	2	2.22%	1	1.11%	3	3.33%
In/security	15	16.67%	14	15.55%	29	32.22%
Dis/satisfaction	3	3.33%	6	6.67%	9	10.00%
TOTAL	56	62.22%	34	37.78%	90	100%

Table 3 depicts that more than half of the total data of affectual terms are positive, while the remaining are negative resources. All four affective subsystems are involved, in which dis/inclination is the most prevalent type. Journalists have a tendency to emphasize the most positive feelings on dis/inclination and in/security, which represents the emotional feeling of security-confidence to cope with the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and the desired emotion of improved pandemic management.

### Judgement in *The Jakarta Post's* Report

**Table 4.** Distribution of Judgement Resources

Judgement Type	Positive		Negative		Total	Percentage
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
Social Esteem	47	31.76%	63	42.56%	110	74.32%
Normality	3	2.03%	16	10.81%	19	12.84%
Capacity	27	18.24%	38	25.67%	65	43.91%
Tenacity	17	11.49%	9	6.08%	26	17.57%
Social Sanction	19	12.84%	19	12.84%	38	25.68%
Veracity	0	0%	15	10.14%	15	10.14%
Propriety	19	12.84%	4	2.70%	23	15.54%
TOTAL	66	44.59%	82	55.41%	148	100%

All five types of judgement systems are involved with negative resources take the priority in number (55.41%) (Table 4). Even so, veracity is the only judgement type that has no datum in the positive attitude. As for judgement sub-categories, *The Jakarta Post* uses more social esteem (74.32%) and fewer social sanction (25.68%).

The judgement of capacity as the prevailing judgement subtype indicates that journalists tend to consider the emergence of the Omicron, which also coincides with two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the appropriate occasion to give such a judgement, putting attention on what has been accomplished and what has not been accomplished to be better prepared in bearing the new Omicron wave. The number of both negative and positive judgement indicates that journalists attempt to balance the quantity of criticism and applauding perspectives in news items.

## Appreciation in *The Jakarta Post's* Reports

Table 5. Distribution of Appreciation Resources

Appreciation Type	Positive		Negative		Total	Percentage
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
Reaction	10	14.28%	23	32.86%	33	47.14%
Impact	5	7.14%	7	10.00%	12	17.14%
Quality	5	7.14%	16	22.86%	21	30.00%
Composition	0	0%	7	10.00%	7	10.00%
Balance	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Complexity	0	0%	7	10.00%	7	10.14%
Valuation	14	20.00%	16	22.86%	30	42.86%
TOTAL	24	34.29%	46	65.71%	70	100%

Negative appreciation (65.71%) is dominant in the articles, which is nearly double the positive resources (34.29%) (Table 5). All three subsystems of appreciation are involved, yet one of the composition subcategories, balance, lacks any data. Furthermore, there is no datum on positive-complexity resources when evaluated from the polarity of attitudes. Reaction is the most commonly used appreciation resource (33 or 47.14%), closely followed by valuation (30 or 42.86%), and composition (7 or 10%). The two most used appreciation subtypes, reaction and valuation, demonstrate that journalists aim to highlight the impacts, qualities, and relevancy values of the objects, entities, and phenomena associated with Omicron. Thus, readers can have a better grasp and engage in a deeper understanding of the news reports.

### Attitude Realizations in News Reports: Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation

Affect: Dis/inclination

Extract 1:

*“Amid a surge in Omicron cases in the capital, Jakartans are **staying alert** while also **hoping for** an end to the pandemic soon.”*

Both attitude resources have the same trigger of emotion, which is the current Omicron-pandemic. In Extract (1), the first underlined feature is a negative feeling indicating that the Jakarta residents are in the emotional state of being watchful of a possible danger. Despite being in the same sentence, the second underlined feature involves the opposite emotion as the first resource. The second affectual resource is a positive emotion, in which Jakartans have the feeling of expectation and desire that the pandemic will end soon. By utilizing non-authorial affect, it suggests that the writer is not evaluating or giving an emotional response to the situation, but indirectly reporting on the emotional intentions of Jakartans. The emotional evaluations are thus presented here as being external. In a sense, it is the responsibility of the writer to state that emotions have been transferred to an external source, in this case, “Jakartans”.

Affect: Un/happiness

Extract 2:

*“The experience has been **dismal** across the board.”*

The underlined word in extract (2) is a sign of distress. It suggests that the writer, as an emoter, has experienced a dreary feeling when undergoing quarantine at a hotel, which is a trigger for its emotional response. It is then identified as a direct authorial affect. Furthermore, in the construing of its position in the news text, the writer considered itself a part of society in general to invite the audiences to share the same emotional response. Thus, by simultaneously directing emotion and portraying itself as the representative of society for the evaluation, the writer's negative emotional assessment of some third party is likely to be perceived as appropriate, non-subjective, or at least sympathy-evoking.

Affect: In/security

Extract 3:

*“The speed at which Omicron spreads once it takes hold in a community is indeed **worrying**.”*

The underlined word is a reference to a negative emotional reaction, expressing the emotion of disquiet. Even though it is not specified who felt worried, as the emotion has been disconnected from any human emotion, it can be retrieved from the context that the writer is likely to be worried about the speed at which omicron spreads in the community. This is accordingly identified as authorial affect.

Affect: Dis/satisfaction

Extract 4:

*“It is **good** to see that the government is committed to expanding booster coverage.”*

The word *good* is an indicator of admiration emotional response. It is a positive feeling, in which the writer is in the emotional state of being satisfied by the government’s commitment to expanding the booster coverage as the trigger of emotion. Hence, it is categorized as a direct-authorial affect.

Judgement: Social Esteem of Normality

Extract 5:

*“Now, the government **keeps changing** its rules and policies when Omicron is wandering around and ready to trigger a third wave.”*

The writer implies the use of negative implicit provocation judgement to evaluate the government’s actions. As in the underlined feature is not explicitly convey the negative assessment of the government but acts as an accusatory evaluative indicator of the government’s being unpredictable. Accordingly, the writer criticizes the government for its pandemic rules and policies, which are considered in some ways unusual and unexpected, as not in place, in excess, and unsettled.

Judgement: Social Esteem of Capacity

Extract 6:

*“Regardless of its shortcomings, the government **has done a good job** in providing free vaccines for all to protect the entire nation from the virus.”*

The underlined resource is an indicator of the use of evaluative language. Consequently, it is categorized as positively implicit-provoking judgement in which there are no words directly showing the judgement values but the use of evaluative language to trigger the judgmental responses in the readers. The writer, posing as an appraiser, evaluates the government's actions in providing vaccines by provoking in the readers a view of the government as being competent, successful, and accomplished.

Judgement: Social Esteem of Tenacity

Extract 7:

*“Indonesia is **keen to** jumpstart its economic recovery in 2022.”*

The underlined feature is a modulation of inclination that can be related to lexicalized tenacity and shows the determination or willingness of the government to sustain work towards recovering the economy in 2022. Because the evaluation is given through inclination modalities rather than lexical items that directly carry the judgement values, the resource is then categorized as an implicitly provoked judgement in which the writer is the appraiser, whereas the government is the target of evaluations. Here, a positive and reliable image of the government is presented to the readers.

## Judgement: Social Sanction of Veracity

Extract 8:

*“Experts have said, however, that the Omicron variant is far more widespread among the population than **the official data showed.**”*

The judgement values are triggered by some provocations of evaluative language which are then interpreted to imply that the government is to blame. Thus, it has the capacity to incite judgmental responses in the readers who share the same particular view of the role of government, indicating a judgement value of negative veracity by accusing the government of being dishonest. It is accordingly categorized as implicit evoke judgements, that the target of behavioral evaluations is the government, whereas the appraisers are external.

## Judgement: Social Sanction of Propriety

Extract 9:

*“But the government **should** also listen to the advice of epidemiologists, who call for improvements in its COVID-19 surveillance.”*

*Should* is a modulation of obligation that can be lexicalized as judgements of propriety and is considered to implicitly provoke judgement, in which the modal is used to indicate obligation, duty, or correctness, typically when criticizing someone's actions. The assessment is positive in the news context that the writer considers it honorable and morally right or justifiable for the government to listen to the advice of epidemiologists for improvements in COVID-19 surveillance.

## Appreciation: Reaction of Impact

Extract 10:

*“...amid **worrying** predictions of a third infection wave in the coming weeks.”*

The underlined word is classified as negative appreciation rather than affect, as the emotional reaction of disquiet has been detached from any human emotion and has been attached to evaluating an entity. The value is oriented towards the appraised rather than the appraiser, in the sense that there is no human subject who is represented as the source of the emotional response. Therefore, the third wave of predictions is simply "worrying," and there is no one being worried. This evaluation is identified as the reaction of impact as the third wave of the Omicron surge is being appreciated for its capacity to attract attention by reason of being unusual, extreme, or prominent and has been expected to happen soon by many people.

## Appreciation: Reaction of Quality

Extract 11:

*“Compared with the Delta strain, Omicron is **less lethal.**”*

*Less lethal* indicates the value of appreciation, which is positive in the context. The appraised item is the Omicron variant. Meanwhile, based on the context of the news articles, there is no indication of an appraiser. The assessed object is being appreciated for the quality that is considered pleasing and likeable.

## Appreciation: Composition of Complexity

Extract 12:

*“However, **no clear** instructions were given, the online form took forever to load, and it ended up in error.”*

The feature shows negative appreciation and belongs to the composition-complexity type, as it is being assessed by an indication that the appraised item is hard to follow. The appraised item is the online instructions, while the evaluation comes from the writer.



Appreciation: Valuation

Extract 13:

“...as full inoculation *may not effectively* protect people from the new strain.”

The negative appreciation in Extract 13 shows that the appraised item is full inoculation and the writer is the appraiser. This is considered the valuation type of appreciation as the item is evaluated based on its worth, the value of being irrelevant and useless for the purpose of virus protection.

### **The Functions of Affect, Judgement, and Appreciation Resources**

The appraisal resources in news reporting are rhetoric used by the media to imply their position or stance (White and Thomson, 2008) within the sociopolitical context of the reported issue. The results demonstrate that in terms of attitude distribution, judgement takes the largest position, in which negative judgement is the most prevailing attitude polarity. The appraisers have a tendency to target their judgement values at the government, and so that makes the Indonesian government and COVID-19 pandemic response authorities the most appraised items. This shows that *The Jakarta Post* is not afraid to criticize the government, despite the speculation that the news platform has been a pro-government political affiliation media, which often accusingly endorses the interests of the ruling parties. However, the gap between the negative and positive judgement polarity is not too significant. This is based on the journalist's consideration to reach out to all of the readers from different ideological positions, whether they are pro-government or contra. Therefore, *the Post* is seen as neutral and not one-sided in reporting the issue, so the ideological intention of the journalists making the judgement is believed to be reasonable and justified.

As for affect, the category occupies the second-most dominant attitude resources, in which the positive resources outweigh the negative ones. Journalists are inclined to use affect in news articles as a strategy to gain readership, as through the inclusion of emotional disposition, the text attracts the audience's attention and avoids the monotony of news coverage. Regarding the topic of Omicron, the expressed feelings come either from the journalist as the voice of the media or from other external sources that mostly reflect Indonesia's positive emotional tendency towards overcoming the third wave. Given the socioeconomic context in the country where the COVID-19 pandemic has been lasting for two years and there is concern about the new variant, it is natural for people to seek positive solutions. As a consequence, journalists prefer to implement a large number of positive effects rather than negative ones since such strategies couch ideological positions in positive effectual terms, allowing their stances to gain widespread reader acceptance.

As regards appreciation, the category becomes the least used attitude subsystem in the media, where most of the evaluations fall into the negative appreciation values. In the news articles, appreciation is preferred by journalists to address the current issues and conditions surrounding the new variant. Consequently, the category lacks positive polarity, as Omicron is considered highly infectious and harms society. Appreciation serves to give in-depth and clear reporting on the issue, with the objective of informing readers that the topic of Omicron-variant is such a newsworthy phenomenon that it is worth reading about and paying attention to. Furthermore, the values of appreciation are being oriented toward the appraised items rather than the subjective appraiser, which doesn't involve the assessments of right and wrong, or correct and incorrect (The Appraisal Website, 2020). This means when journalists deploy appreciation in the news articles, the evaluation is to some degree objectified, and therefore the media is regarded as neutral.

## The Function of Affect-Authorial Position

**Table 6.** The Distribution of Affect-Authorial Position

Authorial-positioning	Number	Percentage
Direct-Authorial	30	33.71%
Indirect-Non-authorial	60	66.29%
TOTAL	89	100%

In the news articles under study, authorial affect is used by journalists to establish a sense of solidarity and belonging to the same situation, and a sense of shared experience and sympathy between them and the readers. As authorial affect is very explicitly subjective, the affectual values of the news report strongly personalize the text, foregrounding the individual role of the journalist and its evaluative position in producing and shaping that text for which they take responsibility. For that particular reason, journalists tend to invite their readers to share that emotional response as a strategy to build up such an emphatic connection for readers to see that response as appropriate or at least understandable, so that there is the possibility that readers are more open to the broader ideological aspects of the journalist's position.

Journalists prefer the use of non-authorial affect to attribute emotion to social actors in order to negotiate social space and social position. The responsibility for the emotional response has been transferred to external sources. Thus, it can be taken that the external sources act to speak for the journalist. In the news discourse of *The Jakarta Post*, journalists cite external sources that represent generalized social types or groupings of those who are directly affected by pandemics and those who are experts in pandemic response in order to ensure that the source of the reported affectual value is perceived as reliable or reasonable in its emotional responses by the readers, or at least some of the targeted readers.

The inference is that, in reporting to the Omicron-variant, there is a tendency for the journalists' voices to not be heard for the emotional evaluations, as the most prevailing author position is indirect—non-authorial. In this case, they have adopted the authorial stance through the voice of external sources, mainly experts' statements and the representation of social grouping, instead of their personal emotional state and response. This attribution resource absolves journalists of any responsibility for expressing subjective emotional evaluations. In this way, journalists use the help of attributed resources to surrogate their point of views, and then the attributed resources become the main actor behind the representation of news. Therefore, in *The Jakarta Post's* news coverage on the Omicron-variant, non-authorial affects are employed to restrain personalization by obscuring the news institution's voice in order to maintain objectivity in news reporting.

## The Functions by Means of Judgement

**Table 7.** The Distribution of the Means of Judgement

The Means of Judgement	Number	Percentage
Explicit-Inscribed	50	33.78%
Implicit-Provoke	98	66.22%
TOTAL	148	100%

Extract 14:

*"I conclude that public distrust in the government is a consequence of President Jokowi's **lack of responsiveness and weak leadership** in responding to the pandemic."*

In the first category, inscribe judgement, the evaluation is presented by explicit lexical terms carrying the judgement values. There is, for example, one article that uses explicitly states in the underlined features to judge the incapacity of President Jokowi in responding to the current pandemic.

Extract 15:

*“Even though stringent quarantine procedures were in place, Delta still arrived in Indonesia and now, so has Omicron.”*

The second category is implicit–provoking, which is also the most widely used by journalists in their assessment. Under this category, judgement values are employed through evaluative language acts as judgmental responses to the readers. By conveying an implicit assessment through the lexical items “even though”, “were in place”, and “still arrived”, it shows that there are indications that something has been missed in the government's quarantine procedures. The journalist, thus, negatively judges the way the government is performing the pandemic regulations, putting the government to blame for the spread of Omicron in Indonesia.

The manner in which judgement values are activated by journalists in news items leads to the conclusion that *The Jakarta Post*, when reporting cases of Omicron, tends to be more careful and mindful in addressing their assessments. The dominant category, implicit-provoked judgement, demonstrates that journalists prefer the use of evaluative language for the purpose of making judgements that are not perceived as too blatantly offensive or favorable to certain parties. This is to maintain the news platform as impartial and critical, and also the media strategy to gain readers who are not just supporters of the ruling parties but also supporters of the opposing parties.

All in all, newspaper texts narrate a social space in which two fundamental social processes consisting of cognitive representations of the world and social interactions occur simultaneously (Fairclough, 1995b). A thorough analysis and interpretation of the appraisal resources used by the newspaper under study has yielded insights into the embedding ideology. That is the ideology that shapes the ways the journalists represent the phenomena and maintain readership or readers' positive responses.

### **The Ideological Position of the Media**

The Appraisal analysis in this study has explained how language construes attitude and helps writers to confirm their position themselves evaluatively with respect to the potential readers' viewpoints (White, 2007). The attitude has demonstrated that the media is not ideology-free, by trying to accommodate the pro and anti-government sides while trying to maintain its reputation as a politically neutral media (see Thomson, White and Kitley, 2008; Sabao, 2016). It has been made clear that the ideological position is multifaceted and thus needs to be explained within its relevant context. The detailed results of the analysis have made efforts to reveal the ideology more objective and empirical.

### **Institutional Context**

*The Jakarta Post*, according to its public pronouncements, employs the highest standard of professional journalism; to remain independent and bold; to be the voice of reason and give voice to the marginalized (*The Jakarta Post*, 2022). Even so, in this case, the concept of neutrality is ambiguous. Although the paper tries to be independent and does not hesitate to criticize the authorities, it still keeps solidarity with the ruling government. Politically, the reason behind this position is that the media is founded on politicians and governmental lines. In addition, *The Jakarta Post*, as a news institution, remains subject to the authority of the government, particularly Jokowi's parliament. As in 2016, *the Post's* head of editorial staff, Meidyatama Suryodiningrat, accepted the offer from the Owned-State Enterprise (BUMN) ministry as the new director for Antara News under Jokowi's leadership (Hardiyan, 2016).

The authentication of government control and the institution's principle of being bold and independent can be identified in the news orientation and the judgement resources. In terms of its news orientation, *the Post*

appears to be neutral in reporting the news by using attitudes that are proportional to positive and negative resources. This finding is in line with Sabao (2016), who highlights that journalists attempt to avoid subjective expressions using various strategies. The media suggests a neutrality that does not formalize any endorsement of certain parties by managing a relative balance of information in its spatial coverage and providing different perspectives in the news stories. Yet, on the other hand, the judgement resources appear to favor the government side.

When it comes to judging the authorities' wrongdoing, the news reports use more gentle words and more moderate tones in their evaluations. Also, the most prevailing negative judgement is not directly and explicitly addressed to the government, as the government's performance in the pandemic response is to blame, but through an evaluative language that is not critical in exposing the impeachment of the government to the readers. These are to avoid direct confrontation with its political interests by the ruling government. Furthermore, the position to be neutral, by not taking a side, or at least, not openly declaring its political bias, then reflects the economic interests of *The Jakarta Post* both to maintain its readers as well as to maximize the chance to get advertising revenue and reading traffic.

### **Societal Context**

Besides the institutional context, societal context is significant in comprehending the profound level of news reporting (Fowler, 1991). In general, the media is influenced by the country's sociocultural situation, such as historical, economic, and political factors (Hall, 1980). *The Jakarta Post's* news reporting on the Omicron-variant is correspondingly societally constructed for its targeted readers as society is divided into parties on the spread of the new variant.

### **Pro-Government: Promoter of the Vaccination Program**

In this circumstance, the background of the social situation that people have a tendency to hesitancy in vaccinating is the reason why mandatory vaccination and vaccine boosters are highly persuaded by journalists in their position supporting the government's national vaccination program. That being said, there are four key factors behind vaccine hesitancy in Indonesia: religious concerns that the vaccine is not halal (Islamically permissible); concern about the commonly used vaccine in Indonesia, Sinovac, because it is produced in China (and has been linked to Communist contagion); vaccine coercion; and belief in alternative methods of safely and effectively protecting against COVID-19, such as good hygiene practices (Najmah et al., 2021). Likewise, in the news texts, the majority of the evaluations are expressed through appreciation. This means that journalists tend to objectify the evaluations since the values of appreciation are less directly influenced by personalization (The Appraisal Website, 2020), making the opinion-level on vaccination as the only way to protect against Omicron absolutely objective, fact-based, and significant. Hence, the media's ideological stance of persuading society to get full vaccination and booster shots can be accomplished.

### **Pro-Government: Successful Pandemic Responses**

Other media support shown by *the Post* is the implications of the government's successful handling of the spread of COVID-19 cases. It appears that *the Post* is likely to retain its political interest and remain aligned with the authoring government. Yet, in this regard, the pro-government standpoint is not made transparent by the news platform, and the journalists have always been indirect and cautious in their political position (Wijayanto, 2018). Practically, the journalists, as media representation, in its political interest, tend to reflect the positive discourse preferred with good judgement, objectified appreciation, and trusting emotional response to the government, which functions to build up the national image of Indonesia as capable, reliable, accommodative, and responsible against the new variant of the virus.

**Pro-Government: Economic Activities**

The last government-advantageous endorsement in *The Jakarta Post* relies on Indonesia's socio-economic context, in which the government aims for national economic recovery in 2022. Not less importantly, this ideological stand is presumed to be motivated by the G20 summit, a multilateral forum of the world's major economic countries to be held in Bali. In the news articles, this position is merely stated in affectual terms and external voices.

**Anti-Government: Ineffective Pandemic Policies**

The journalists seem to have a contradictory ideological position with the government regarding Indonesian policies against COVID-19. The reasoning behind the position is that socioeconomic impacts on society to the point where many people believe the policies are unbeneficial to them. In the news articles, the most highlighted policies are the compulsory quarantine period for international arrivals and regional lockdown and public restriction (PPKM) that are everchanging and not consistent. In this case, implicit judgement of normality and appreciation of complexity are preferred by journalists as those attitudes blur the voice of the media and thus somehow avoid direct confrontation with its institutional interest, the government.

**Anti-Government: Unsuccessful COVID-19 Management**

The growing public distrust towards the Indonesian government for its lack of response to the COVID-19 outbreak is the societal factor underlying journalists' position. With its principle of being an independent news institution, *the Post* is likely to gain high trust in the eyes of the public, which is proven by its news coverage that is not merely taking the government's side but also having no doubts in criticizing them. The way journalists perform criticism toward the government can be seen for the most part in the implicit judgement of capacity. Further, the language choices are considered moderate and not too sharp, giving the impression that the media is not straightforward in pointing out negative judgement regarding the government's incapacity or incompetence in handling the pandemic. There is also a tendency that the focus of evaluation is the implementation of pandemic prevention procedures instead of the government's unresponsiveness. These attitudes reflect *The Jakarta Post's* critical reporting style, which is implied and careful.

**Anti-Government: School-Reopening Controversy**

One situation that contributes to this stance is the Ministry of Education's decision to keep reopening schools amid Omicron concern. Then, it came to an issue of some social grouping, in which the public, notably parents, teachers, and educational experts, have demanded a scale back in this policy based on the factual consideration that Omicron cases have begun to peak in transmission and a large number of schoolchildren have not been vaccinated. In such case, the reasons against the government's position on school reopening are stated in the news texts as being external.

**CONCLUSION**

*The Jakarta Post's* reporting on Omicron-variant can be a sample of how media attitudes are ample. The combination of the appraisal system and CDA has been fruitful in showing media attitudes and why they adopt such attitudes. The results indicate that while affect serves to reflect Indonesia's positive emotional tendency towards overcoming the wave of Omicron, judgement demonstrates how journalists criticize the government and applaud the government in its pandemic crisis management. Appreciation serves to give in-depth and clear reporting on the issue, with the objective of informing readers that the topic of Omicron is such a newsworthy phenomenon that the reader can have a better grasp and engage in a deeper understanding of the news reports.

In the authorial position, as the most used is indirectly non-authorial affect, there is a tendency for the journalists' voices to not be heard for the emotional evaluations in order to restrain news personalization and maintain the objectivity of news reporting. The way judgement values are activated, with such evaluative language, aims to make judgments that are not perceived as overtly offensive or favorable to certain parties. This is to maintain the news platform as impartial. In regard to the news's ideology, the neutral position of the Post has been ambiguous. Politically, *The Jakarta Post* takes the position of being neutral since the media is founded on political and governmental lines. Economically, this position is to maximize its economic interests and to maintain the plurality of news readers so that the media is beneficial for getting advertising revenue and reading traffic. Societally, the news reports are produced for society as targeted readers, so the media is concerned with the social situation that occurred when the Omicron variant emerged and spread.

For further researchers, it is also anticipated to conduct research focusing on the two remaining subtypes of appraisal; engagement and graduation, which are not covered in this study. To comprehend another variant of the discourse and to strengthen the case of the identification of the Indonesian news media discourse, further research can focus on "non-neutral" media platforms; political accountability media, which accusingly endorse the importance of government ties; and opposition media, which critically challenge government control.

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