

The Representation of Digital Transformation in Indonesian Online News Discourse

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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation has become increasingly important in Indonesia, influencing government services, business, education, finance, and other areas of social life. As one of the major sources of public information, online news media play an important role in constructing public understanding of technological change. However, how digital transformation is discursively represented, framed, and given meaning in Indonesian online news remains insufficiently examined. This study aims to analyze the representation of digital transformation, identify dominant narratives and linguistic strategies, and examine the ideological meanings embedded in Indonesian online news discourse. The study employs a qualitative approach using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of text, discursive practice, and social practice. The data consist of Indonesian online news articles published between 2024 and 2026 from selected national media outlets. The analysis examines vocabulary, agency, modality, framing, source selection, intertextuality, and broader social and ideological contexts. The findings indicate that digital transformation is predominantly represented as modernization, technological innovation, economic opportunity, and national development. Government institutions and corporations are frequently positioned as dominant actors and drivers, while citizens are mainly represented as beneficiaries, users, and consumers. Nevertheless, counter-discourses concerning digital inequality, limited access, privacy, cybersecurity, employment disruption, and digital exclusion are also identified. The study concludes that digital transformation is not neutrally represented but discursively constructed through particular linguistic choices, narratives, and power relations.

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1. Introduction

Digital transformation has become an increasingly significant phenomenon in Indonesia, influencing the ways in which government institutions, businesses, educational organizations, healthcare providers, and communities operate and interact (Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011). The rapid development of digital technologies has encouraged Indonesian society to adopt new forms of communication, service delivery, economic activity, and social participation. In the public sector, digital transformation is reflected in the development of electronic government services, digital public administration, and integrated online platforms designed to improve accessibility and efficiency. In the economic sector, the expansion of e-commerce, financial technology (fintech), digital payment systems, and digital entrepreneurship demonstrates how technology has reshaped conventional business practices. Similarly, the implementation of Industry 4.0 has encouraged the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), big data, cloud computing, automation, and interconnected digital systems across various industries. Digital transformation has also become increasingly visible in education through online learning and

digital platforms, in healthcare through telemedicine and digital health services, and in business through data-driven decision-making and automated processes.

However, digital transformation should not be understood merely as a technological process. It is also a social and discursive phenomenon because its meaning is continuously constructed through language and communication. The way digital transformation is discussed can influence how society understands its benefits, challenges, and consequences (Hanna, 2016). It may be represented as a symbol of progress, modernization, innovation, economic opportunity, and national competitiveness. At the same time, it may also be represented as a source of technological disruption, employment uncertainty, digital inequality, privacy concerns, cybersecurity risks, or social exclusion. Therefore, examining digital transformation through discourse is important because media representations can shape public perceptions regarding whether technological change should be welcomed, controlled, or critically evaluated.

Indonesian online news media play an important role in constructing these representations. As digital news platforms have become an important source of information, they contribute to the formation of public knowledge and interpretations of contemporary technological developments. Journalists and media organizations do not simply present technological events objectively; they select particular vocabulary, sources, quotations, metaphors, actors, and perspectives when constructing news narratives. Consequently, the same digital transformation policy or technological development may receive different interpretations depending on the media outlet, news context, and ideological position. Government institutions, technology companies, experts, workers, and ordinary citizens may also be represented differently in news discourse, creating particular understandings of who drives, benefits from, or bears the consequences of digital transformation.

Research on digital transformation has expanded considerably during the last decade, particularly in the fields of information systems, digital media, journalism, communication, and critical discourse studies. Nadkarni and Prügl (2021) conducted a comprehensive review of digital transformation research by examining 58 peer-reviewed studies published between 2001 and 2019. Their study identified technology and actors as two major dimensions of digital transformation and demonstrated that digital transformation involves not only technological adoption but also organizational, managerial, and human factors. They further highlighted several underdeveloped areas, including the role of organizational actors, workplace transformation, and the pace of technological change. This study is relevant because it establishes digital transformation as a multidimensional phenomenon rather than simply a technological process. However, its primary focus was the development of digital transformation research in management and information systems, rather than the representation of digital transformation in media discourse. Therefore, the present study extends this perspective by examining how these transformations are constructed through language in Indonesian online news.

Anderson (2020) examined the changing relationship between journalism, digital media practices, interpretation, and meaning. He argued that the digital transformation of the news industry has encouraged scholars to reconsider established concepts such as framing, agenda-setting, gatekeeping, and media production. His work emphasizes that digital transformation should also be understood in terms of how meanings are produced, circulated, and interpreted within contemporary media ecosystems. This perspective is particularly relevant to the present research because it reinforces the importance of examining not only technological changes in journalism but also the meanings constructed through news discourse.

A particularly relevant Indonesian study was conducted by Arifin and Lennerfors (2022), who investigated the representation of ethical issues surrounding voice-assistant technology in Indonesian media using Critical Discourse Analysis. The researchers analyzed

501 articles from seven national Indonesian media outlets published between 2010 and 2020, with particular attention to 45 articles dealing with ethical issues. Their analysis used three dimensions text, discourse practice, and social practice to examine how voice-assistant technology was represented and what power relations shaped those representations. The findings showed that issues such as privacy, security, misuse, gender, false marketing, and ethical concerns were generally presented without strong critical discussion. The researchers also found that Indonesian media coverage was substantially influenced by foreign media and that the positive representation of voice assistants was related to a broader ideology of technological advancement. This study is highly relevant because it demonstrates that CDA can effectively reveal ideological and power dimensions within Indonesian media representations of emerging technologies. Nevertheless, Arifin and Lennerfors focused specifically on voice assistants and their ethical implications rather than digital transformation as a broader social discourse.

In a related area, Nguyen (2021) examined the relationship between mediatisation, datafication, and the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the importance of data literacy in an increasingly data-driven media environment. The study positioned digital transformation within broader processes of datafication and mediatisation, demonstrating that digital technologies influence not only social practices but also how information and social problems are communicated. This perspective supports the argument that digital transformation should be investigated as a social and communicative process rather than exclusively as technological development.

Research on Indonesian media discourse has also demonstrated the usefulness of Fairclough's CDA for identifying ideological representations. Aviandy, Tambunan, and Isma (2021) analyzed Indonesian media framing of the Crimean Peninsula crisis using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis. Their findings demonstrated that mainstream media discourse was not completely neutral and that linguistic, semiotic, and intertextual choices contributed to particular representations of political actors. Although their subject was geopolitical conflict rather than technology, the study is methodologically important for the present research because it demonstrates how Indonesian news discourse can be examined through textual features, intertextuality, and broader ideological structures.

Despite the growing body of research on digital transformation, existing studies have predominantly examined the phenomenon from technological, economic, organizational, educational, or policy perspectives (Kraus et al., 2021). Comparatively less attention has been given to how digital transformation itself is discursively constructed within Indonesian online news media. This gap is important because media discourse does not merely describe social reality but can actively construct particular meanings, identities, relationships, and power relations. Therefore, the present study focuses on how digital transformation is represented in Indonesian online news discourse and what meanings are produced through these representations.

Accordingly, this study addresses three research questions: (1) How is digital transformation represented in Indonesian online news discourse? (2) What dominant themes, linguistic patterns, and narratives are used to construct digital transformation? and (3) What ideological perspectives and social implications are reflected in these representations? The study aims to identify representations of digital transformation, analyze the dominant themes and linguistic strategies used to construct it, and examine the ideological perspectives and social meanings embedded within the discourse.

To achieve these objectives, the study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which examines discourse through three interconnected dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice. The textual dimension focuses on vocabulary, grammar, modality, metaphors, and other linguistic

features. The discursive-practice dimension examines how news texts are produced, circulated, and interpreted, including source selection and intertextuality. Finally, the social-practice dimension connects media discourse with broader issues of ideology, power, modernization, inequality, and technological change. Through this framework, the study seeks to demonstrate that representations of digital transformation in Indonesian online news are not merely descriptions of technological developments but are also constructions of social meaning shaped by particular linguistic choices, perspectives, and power relations.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how digital transformation is represented in Indonesian online news discourse (Santoso et al., 2020). A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study focuses on interpreting meanings, linguistic choices, narratives, and ideological perspectives rather than measuring the frequency of particular variables statistically. More specifically, the research applies Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, which views discourse as a form of social practice and examines the relationship between language, discourse production, and broader social structures. Through this approach, the study investigates not only what Indonesian online news reports about digital transformation but also how particular representations are constructed and what social meanings and power relations are embedded within them.

The data consist of Indonesian online news articles discussing digital transformation (Suryono et al., 2021). To obtain diverse but manageable representations, the study focuses on selected national online news media. The proposed media sources are Kompas.com, Detik.com, Tempo.co, and CNN Indonesia. These four outlets are selected because they provide extensive coverage of national issues and regularly publish reports concerning technology, digitalization, government policy, the digital economy, artificial intelligence, and social change. Limiting the research to four media outlets allows the researcher to conduct a sufficiently detailed discourse analysis while still enabling comparison among different media organizations. The unit of analysis is an individual news article, including its headline, lead, main text, quotations, and relevant textual elements that contribute to the construction of digital transformation.

The data are collected through purposive sampling. Articles are selected according to predetermined inclusion criteria to ensure that the data are directly relevant to the research objectives (Stern et al., 2014). First, the articles must have been published between 2024 and 2026, allowing the study to capture recent representations of digital transformation in Indonesia. Second, the articles must be written in Indonesian and published by one of the selected online news outlets. Third, the articles must contain the terms "transformasi digital," "digital transformation," or closely related concepts such as digitalization, artificial intelligence, digital economy, digital government, automation, and digital innovation. Fourth, digital transformation must constitute a central issue of the article rather than being mentioned only incidentally. Finally, the articles must contain sufficient textual material for discourse analysis. Based on these criteria, approximately 60 articles can be selected as the primary corpus, with approximately 15 articles obtained from each selected media outlet. This corpus provides sufficient material for identifying recurring representations while allowing detailed qualitative interpretation.

The data analysis follows Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, consisting of textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice (Ramanathan & Tan, 2015). At the textual level, the analysis examines vocabulary, transitivity, modality, metaphors, active and passive constructions, pronoun use, evaluative expressions, and quotations. These linguistic features are analyzed to identify how digital transformation is described and how different

social actors are positioned. For example, verbs such as *mendorong*, *mempercepat*, *mengembangkan*, and *mewujudkan* may construct digital transformation as an active process of development, while expressions emphasizing threats, disruption, or inequality may construct it as a problematic social phenomenon.

At the level of discursive practice, the study examines how news discourse is produced and circulated. Particular attention is given to the selection and representation of sources, quotation patterns, framing strategies, intertextuality, and the relationship between news reports and statements from government officials, business leaders, technology experts, academics, and citizens. This level helps identify whose voices receive authority in discussions of digital transformation and whose perspectives may receive less attention.

At the level of social practice, the analysis connects representations in news texts with broader Indonesian social contexts. The study examines how digital transformation discourse relates to issues of technological modernization, government policy, economic development, national competitiveness, digital inequality, employment, and power relations. This level is essential for understanding how seemingly neutral descriptions of technology may reproduce particular ideological assumptions about development and modernization.

The interpretation is organized into several analytical categories that emerge from the corpus (Hanks, 2004). These include digital transformation as progress, economic opportunity, government modernization, technological disruption, social necessity, inequality or risk, and national competitiveness. These categories are not treated as predetermined conclusions but as analytical themes that are identified and refined through repeated examination of the data. The researcher compares the representations across the selected media outlets to determine dominant and alternative narratives.

Finally, the credibility of the analysis is strengthened through systematic data selection, repeated textual examination, comparison across media sources, and transparent application of Fairclough's analytical dimensions. The researcher also maintains an analytical coding framework to ensure consistency in identifying linguistic features, representations, actors, themes, and ideological meanings. Through this methodological procedure, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive account of how Indonesian online news discourse constructs the meaning of digital transformation and how these constructions reflect broader social, political, and economic realities in contemporary Indonesia.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Dominant Representation of Digital Transformation

The analysis of Indonesian online news discourse indicates that digital transformation is predominantly represented as a pathway toward modernization, economic development, technological advancement, and national competitiveness. Across the selected news articles, digital transformation is rarely presented as a purely technical process involving the adoption of digital technologies. Instead, it is constructed as a broader process of social and institutional change that is expected to improve efficiency, strengthen economic productivity, modernize public services, and increase Indonesia's capacity to compete in the global digital economy. This dominant representation is particularly visible in the ways journalists describe digital transformation through positive and developmental vocabulary, including terms associated with innovation, acceleration, efficiency, transformation, competitiveness, growth, and progress. Such lexical choices contribute to the construction of digital transformation as an inevitable and desirable direction for Indonesian society.

At the textual level, the use of development-oriented vocabulary plays an important role in establishing this representation (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). Digital transformation is frequently associated with processes such as accelerating, strengthening, developing, optimizing, and improving. These verbs construct digital transformation as an active process

that produces measurable benefits rather than as a neutral technological change. When government institutions or business organizations are represented as actors that “accelerate” or “drive” digital transformation, they are positioned as active agents responsible for national technological development. Conversely, citizens, consumers, and communities are often positioned as recipients or beneficiaries of the transformation. This linguistic pattern creates an asymmetrical representation of agency in which institutions and organizations are presented as the primary drivers of digital change.

The representation of digital transformation as modernization is also evident in the association between digital technologies and improvements in institutional performance (Wang et al., 2020). Online news discourse frequently connects digitalization with efficiency, transparency, accessibility, and innovation. Digital government initiatives, for example, may be framed as evidence of institutional modernization, while digital services in education, healthcare, and business are presented as solutions to conventional limitations. Through this discourse, technology becomes a symbol of modernity. The implication is that institutions that successfully adopt digital technologies are represented as progressive, adaptive, and future-oriented, whereas institutions that fail to digitalize may implicitly appear less prepared to respond to contemporary challenges.

Another significant representation is digital transformation as an instrument of economic growth and national competitiveness. News discourse frequently links digital transformation with the expansion of the digital economy, e-commerce, fintech, artificial intelligence, digital entrepreneurship, and technological investment. In this context, digital transformation is not merely an organizational necessity but a national economic strategy. The recurring association between digitalization and productivity, investment, innovation, and competitiveness constructs technology as a mechanism through which Indonesia can strengthen its position in the regional and global economy. This representation reflects an economic-development discourse in which technological adoption is evaluated primarily according to its capacity to generate efficiency, economic value, and competitive advantage.

The construction of digital transformation as national progress is further strengthened through the representation of government actors. Government officials and ministries frequently appear as authoritative sources when digital transformation is discussed. Their statements often emphasize targets, programs, strategies, investments, and future achievements. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this source selection is significant because the repeated inclusion of institutional voices can legitimize a particular interpretation of digital transformation. Government-led digitalization may consequently be constructed as evidence of effective governance and national development. The media therefore do more than report government programs; through quotation, selection, and framing, they can contribute to legitimizing particular policy narratives.

At the same time, the dominant positive representation does not mean that Indonesian online news discourse completely ignores the negative consequences of digital transformation (Tapsell, 2017). Some reports introduce alternative representations involving digital inequality, cybersecurity, privacy, employment disruption, and unequal access to technology. However, these critical perspectives may appear as secondary or counter-discourses within the broader narrative of technological progress. Digital transformation can therefore be understood as a contested discourse in which optimistic narratives coexist with concerns about its social consequences.

From Fairclough’s perspective, this finding demonstrates the relationship between textual choices, discursive practices, and social practices. At the textual level, positive lexical choices construct digital transformation as desirable progress. At the level of discursive practice, the selection of government officials, business representatives, technology experts, and other authoritative sources helps determine which interpretations receive legitimacy. At

the level of social practice, these representations reflect broader Indonesian discourses of modernization, economic development, technological competitiveness, and national development.

3.2 Digital Transformation as Modernization

The analysis indicates that Indonesian online news discourse frequently constructs digital transformation as a process of modernization through which conventional systems, institutions, and social practices are transformed into more technologically advanced, efficient, and innovative forms. In this representation, digitalization is not merely presented as the introduction of new technological tools but as a necessary transition from traditional methods toward contemporary systems. News reports commonly associate digital transformation with technological advancement, efficiency, innovation, and improved public services. Consequently, digital transformation becomes closely connected to broader ideas of national progress and institutional modernization.

At the textual level, this representation can be identified through the use of positive and development-oriented vocabulary such as “modernisasi,” “digitalisasi,” “inovasi,” “efisiensi,” “integrasi,” “percepatan,” “transformasi,” “layanan digital,” and “peningkatan kualitas layanan.” These lexical choices construct digital technology as a solution to the limitations of conventional systems. Digital platforms, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, big data, electronic government systems, and digital payment technologies are frequently associated with faster processes, greater accessibility, improved accuracy, and more effective service delivery. Through these linguistic constructions, technological advancement is represented as an indicator of institutional and societal progress.

One important finding concerns who is portrayed as the agent of modernization (Wagner, 2002). Government institutions frequently occupy a central position as active agents responsible for initiating and implementing digital transformation. Government ministries, local governments, and public institutions are commonly represented through action-oriented verbs such as encourage, accelerate, develop, integrate, and improve. Such linguistic choices assign agency to institutional actors and construct the government as a driver of technological modernization. At the same time, technology companies and private-sector organizations are often represented as important partners that provide technological infrastructure, platforms, expertise, and innovation.

This distribution of agency is significant from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective. When government institutions and technology companies are repeatedly represented as the principal agents of digital transformation, they acquire greater discursive authority in defining what modernization should mean and how it should be implemented. Citizens, workers, students, patients, and consumers, by contrast, are more frequently represented as users or beneficiaries of digital transformation. This creates a particular social relationship in the discourse: institutions are positioned as the producers and drivers of modernization, while society is positioned primarily as the recipient of its benefits.

The technologies emphasized in this modernization discourse also contribute to the construction of particular meanings. Artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing, digital platforms, electronic government systems, fintech, and automation are frequently associated with the future of Indonesian society (Jameaba, 2020). These technologies are not simply described according to their technical characteristics; they are connected to broader concepts such as efficiency, innovation, competitiveness, and improved services. Artificial intelligence, for example, can be represented as a tool for increasing productivity and improving decision-making, while digital government platforms may be represented as mechanisms for making public services faster and more accessible. The technology therefore becomes a symbolic representation of institutional progress.

The discourse also strongly connects digital transformation with efficiency. Conventional administrative procedures are implicitly constructed as slower, less integrated, or less effective, whereas digital systems are associated with speed, accuracy, accessibility, and automation. This creates a binary between the “traditional” and the “digital,” in which the digital is generally positioned as the preferred and more advanced alternative. Such a binary is important because it can make technological adoption appear naturally desirable. The discourse does not always explicitly argue that traditional systems should disappear; instead, the repeated association of digitalization with efficiency and innovation indirectly establishes digital transformation as the superior model.

Digital transformation is similarly represented as a mechanism for improving public services (Sulistya et al., 2019). Digital government platforms, online administrative services, electronic health services, and digital education systems can be presented as ways of bringing services closer to citizens. In this representation, technology is constructed as an instrument for increasing accessibility, reducing administrative complexity, and improving service quality. Public-sector digitalization therefore becomes connected to the broader discourse of good governance and institutional reform.

The question of whether digitalization is presented as inevitable is particularly important. The discourse tends to construct digital transformation as an unavoidable response to technological and social change. Expressions emphasizing the need to “keep up with the times,” “adapt to technological developments,” “accelerate digitalization,” or “prepare for the digital era” can create a sense that organizations and society must digitalize in order to remain relevant. From a CDA perspective, this is an example of how discourse can naturalize a particular social process. Digital transformation becomes represented not as one possible policy choice among several alternatives but as a necessary pathway toward the future.

However, this inevitability discourse can obscure important questions concerning access, inequality, readiness, privacy, employment, and technological dependency. If digitalization is consistently framed as modernization and progress, resistance or hesitation may be interpreted as a failure to adapt rather than as a legitimate response to potential risks. Therefore, the modernization narrative has an ideological dimension: it privileges technological advancement as a desirable social direction while potentially marginalizing alternative perspectives.

3.3 Digital Transformation as Economic Opportunity

One of the most prominent representations concerns the digital economy. Digital transformation is commonly associated with the expansion of online business models, digital platforms, electronic transactions, fintech services, and technology-based entrepreneurship. Terms such as *ekonomi digital*, *pertumbuhan*, *peluang usaha*, *inovasi bisnis*, *ekosistem digital*, and *daya saing* contribute to a positive economic framing. These lexical choices position digitalization as an opportunity rather than merely a response to technological change. The digital economy is therefore represented as a new economic space in which Indonesian businesses can expand their markets, reach consumers more efficiently, and develop new forms of products and services.

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) occupy an important position within this discourse. Digital transformation can be represented as providing MSMEs with opportunities to overcome geographical and market limitations through e-commerce, social media marketing, digital payment systems, and online marketplaces (Bagale et al., 2021). In this representation, digital platforms function as mechanisms for increasing market access and business visibility. MSMEs are consequently constructed as potential beneficiaries of digitalization because technological adoption enables them to participate in a broader economic ecosystem. However, this representation can also implicitly place responsibility on MSMEs to become digitally capable and adapt to changing market conditions. Businesses that

fail to adopt digital technologies may consequently be represented as less competitive or less prepared for the future.

The discourse surrounding fintech further reinforces the representation of digital transformation as economic opportunity. Financial technology is frequently associated with accessibility, convenience, financial inclusion, digital payments, and the expansion of financial services (Pazarbasioglu et al., 2020). Through fintech, digital transformation is represented as a mechanism for connecting individuals and businesses with financial systems more efficiently. The representation is particularly significant in the Indonesian context because fintech can be associated with the broader objective of expanding participation in the formal digital economy. Nevertheless, a critical reading also requires attention to issues such as financial literacy, data privacy, cybersecurity, and potential consumer vulnerability, which may receive less prominence than the economic benefits of fintech.

Similarly, e-commerce is constructed as an important pathway through which digital transformation creates new commercial opportunities. Online marketplaces and digital platforms are represented as enabling businesses to reach consumers beyond their immediate geographical locations. The language of expansion, market access, consumer reach, transaction efficiency, and business growth creates a narrative in which digitalization reduces conventional barriers to economic participation (Kamal & Islam, 2022). In this context, consumers are represented not only as users of technology but also as participants in an increasingly digital marketplace.

Another important dimension is investment. News discourse may represent digital transformation as an attractive area for domestic and international investment, particularly in sectors involving technology infrastructure, data centers, fintech, artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and digital platforms. Government institutions are frequently positioned as facilitators of this investment through policies, regulations, infrastructure development, and digital-economy strategies. This creates a representation in which successful digital transformation becomes evidence of Indonesia's attractiveness as a technology and investment destination.

Digital transformation is also strongly connected to productivity and economic efficiency (Zhang et al., 2022). Digital technologies are represented as tools for automating routine activities, reducing operational costs, accelerating decision-making, and improving business performance. The repeated association between digitalization and productivity constructs technology as an economic resource rather than simply an operational tool. Businesses that successfully adopt digital technologies are positioned as more adaptive and competitive, while digital transformation itself becomes a measure of organizational readiness in the contemporary economy.

The representation of employment is more complex. On the positive side, digital transformation can be presented as creating new employment opportunities through technology-based businesses, digital entrepreneurship, platform work, software development, and other emerging occupations. This creates a narrative of digital transformation as a generator of new economic possibilities. However, digitalization and automation may also create concerns regarding job displacement, changing skill requirements, and employment insecurity. When these risks receive less attention than the creation of new opportunities, the discourse tends to privilege an optimistic interpretation of technological change.

The question of who benefits from digital transformation is therefore particularly important (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2022). Businesses are frequently positioned as direct beneficiaries because digitalization can expand markets, reduce costs, increase productivity, and encourage innovation. Government institutions are also represented as beneficiaries because digital economic growth can contribute to tax revenue, investment, employment, and national competitiveness. At the same time, citizens are generally represented as consumers,

workers, entrepreneurs, or beneficiaries of improved economic opportunities. This distribution of roles reveals a predominantly market-oriented discourse in which the value of digital transformation is frequently evaluated according to economic productivity and growth.

From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this economic framing has an ideological dimension. When digital transformation is consistently associated with growth, investment, productivity, and competitiveness, economic development becomes one of the dominant criteria through which technological change is evaluated. Alternative questions such as who may be excluded from the digital economy, whether all MSMEs possess equal digital capabilities, or how automation affects vulnerable workers can become secondary. Thus, the discourse does not simply describe economic consequences; it contributes to constructing a particular understanding of what successful digital transformation should achieve.

3.4 Government and Institutional Representation

The analysis of Indonesian online news discourse shows that government institutions are predominantly represented as central actors in driving, facilitating, regulating, and solving problems associated with digital transformation. Government representation is particularly important because the discourse surrounding digital transformation is closely connected to national development, public-service reform, digital infrastructure, economic competitiveness, and technological innovation. Through the selection of government sources, institutional statements, and action-oriented vocabulary, online news discourse constructs the government as an authoritative actor with the capacity and responsibility to determine the direction of Indonesia's digital future.

At the textual level, government agency is strongly reflected through the use of active verbs such as “mendorong,” “mempercepat,” “mengembangkan,” “menguatkan,” “menargetkan,” “mewujudkan,” “meningkatkan,” “membangun,” and “mengintegrasikan.” These verbs are significant because they position government institutions as active subjects rather than passive observers of technological change. For example, when a news report states that the government mendorong transformasi digital, the government is constructed as the actor initiating or encouraging the transformation. Similarly, the expression mempercepat transformasi digital suggests that digitalization is already underway and that the government has the responsibility to ensure that the process progresses more rapidly.

The representation of government as a driver of digital transformation is particularly dominant (Dunleavy, 2006). Government ministries and public institutions are frequently associated with national digital strategies, infrastructure development, digital public services, artificial intelligence initiatives, data management, and digital-economy programs. Through these representations, government institutions acquire a central role in defining national priorities. The government is not simply presented as responding to technological developments but as actively shaping the country's digital agenda. The frequent use of action-oriented verbs strengthens this representation by emphasizing government initiatives, targets, programs, and achievements.

The government is also constructed as a facilitator of digital transformation. In this representation, government institutions create the conditions necessary for businesses, communities, and citizens to participate in the digital economy. News discourse may emphasize the development of digital infrastructure, improvement of internet connectivity, support for MSMEs, digital-literacy programs, public-private partnerships, and technological innovation (Union, 2020). Expressions such as mengembangkan ekosistem digital, menguatkan infrastruktur digital, and mendorong kolaborasi position the government as an institution that enables other actors to participate in digital transformation. Businesses and technology companies are consequently represented as partners rather than independent actors operating outside government influence.

Another important representation is the government as a regulator. Digital transformation creates new challenges concerning data protection, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, digital transactions, fintech, platform economies, and online consumer protection (Giudici, 2018). In these contexts, government institutions are represented as responsible for creating regulations and ensuring that technological development takes place within an appropriate legal and ethical framework. The use of terms related to *regulasi*, *pengawasan*, *perlindungan data*, *keamanan digital*, and *kepatuhan* constructs government as an authority responsible for controlling potential risks associated with digitalization.

The representation of government as a problem solver is also evident. Digital transformation is sometimes associated with problems such as limited infrastructure, unequal digital access, low digital literacy, cybersecurity threats, and institutional fragmentation. News discourse may therefore represent government programs as solutions to these challenges. Verbs such as *mengatasi*, *meningkatkan*, *memperkuat*, and *mewujudkan* contribute to a problem-solution structure in which a social or technological problem is presented first and government intervention is subsequently presented as the appropriate response. This structure can strengthen the image of government as capable of responding to the consequences of technological change.

The verb “*menargetkan*” is particularly significant because it introduces a future-oriented representation of government. When the government is described as *menargetkan* a particular level of digital adoption, connectivity, investment, or public-service transformation, the discourse constructs digital transformation as a measurable national objective. Similarly, “*mewujudkan*” implies the existence of a desired future condition that can be achieved through government action. Such vocabulary creates a narrative of strategic planning and progress, positioning government institutions as responsible for transforming technological ambitions into concrete outcomes.

The selection of government officials as news sources further reinforces this institutional authority (Schudson, 2002). When ministers, government agencies, or senior officials are frequently quoted, their statements may become the dominant interpretation of digital transformation. Other actors, such as citizens, workers, small businesses, or digitally marginalized communities, may receive comparatively less discursive space. Consequently, the discourse can privilege an institutional perspective in which digital transformation is primarily understood through policies, programs, targets, and achievements.

From Fairclough’s perspective, this representation reflects a relationship between language, institutional discourse, and social power. At the textual level, active verbs assign agency and responsibility to government institutions. At the level of discursive practice, the repeated selection of official government sources gives institutional voices greater authority in defining digital transformation. At the level of social practice, this representation reflects broader ideas about the role of the state in modernization, economic development, technological governance, and public-service reform.

Nevertheless, the strong representation of government as a driver and problem solver can also produce a government-centered narrative. When digital transformation is primarily described through government initiatives and achievements, citizens may be positioned as passive recipients rather than active participants in shaping technological change. This raises an important critical question: whether the media discourse sufficiently represents public concerns regarding privacy, digital exclusion, employment disruption, and unequal access to technology.

3.5 Representation of Citizens and Society

One dominant representation is citizens as beneficiaries of digital transformation (Milakovich, 2021). News discourse frequently connects digitalization with improved access to public services, education, healthcare, financial services, and government

administration. Citizens are portrayed as people who will receive faster, easier, and more accessible services as institutions adopt digital technologies. Expressions emphasizing kemudahan layanan, akses yang lebih cepat, peningkatan kualitas pelayanan, and efisiensi construct citizens as the intended beneficiaries of technological modernization. In this representation, digital transformation acquires social legitimacy because its ultimate purpose is presented as improving people's quality of life.

Citizens are also frequently represented as users of digital technologies (Isin & Ruppert, 2020). Digital platforms, mobile applications, online government services, e-commerce, digital payment systems, and other technological infrastructures position citizens as active users who must interact with increasingly digital environments. This representation emphasizes accessibility and convenience but can also implicitly establish digital participation as an expectation. Citizens are no longer simply recipients of traditional services; they are expected to possess the ability to navigate applications, online platforms, digital transactions, and technology-mediated communication.

A related representation is citizens as consumers within the digital economy. In news discourse concerning e-commerce, fintech, digital payment systems, and online platforms, citizens are frequently positioned according to their purchasing and consumption activities (Ekpo et al., 2022). They become users of digital marketplaces, customers of financial-technology services, or consumers of digitally delivered products. This representation supports the broader discourse of digital transformation as economic opportunity because citizens become participants in the expansion of digital markets. However, it can also reduce citizens to their economic roles, emphasizing consumption rather than their broader social, cultural, and political experiences.

Citizens are additionally represented as workers who must adapt to technological change. Digital transformation is associated with automation, artificial intelligence, new occupational skills, remote work, and changing employment structures. In positive narratives, workers are represented as individuals who can acquire new digital competencies and benefit from emerging employment opportunities. However, other narratives highlight the possibility of job displacement, changing skill requirements, and employment uncertainty. The worker is therefore constructed simultaneously as an opportunity seeker and as a potentially vulnerable subject affected by technological disruption.

The representation of citizens as digitally capable subjects is particularly significant. News discourse often emphasizes the importance of digital literacy, technological skills, innovation, and adaptability. Citizens are implicitly expected to learn how to use new technologies and adjust to continuously changing digital environments. Expressions such as meningkatkan literasi digital, mengembangkan keterampilan digital, and mempersiapkan masyarakat menghadapi era digital construct digital capability as an important requirement for participation in contemporary society. This discourse can empower citizens by emphasizing their capacity to adapt, but it may also place responsibility for successful digital transformation on individuals rather than institutions.

At the same time, some citizens are represented as vulnerable groups. These may include people with limited digital literacy, individuals living in areas with inadequate internet infrastructure, older people, economically disadvantaged communities, and groups that have limited access to digital devices or services. In such representations, digital transformation is not automatically beneficial for everyone. Instead, technological advancement can create or reinforce existing inequalities. The presence of these counter-discourses is important because it challenges the dominant assumption that digital transformation necessarily produces universal benefits.

The discourse can also construct citizens as passive recipients of technological change. This occurs when news narratives focus heavily on government programs, technological

innovations, and corporate initiatives while providing limited space for citizens' own perspectives. In such cases, citizens appear primarily as the objects of transformation rather than actors who participate in defining its direction. Government institutions mendorong digitalization, companies mengembangkan platforms, and technology providers menawarkan solutions, while citizens are expected to adopt and use them. This linguistic distribution of agency creates an important distinction between those who produce and manage digital transformation and those who are expected to experience and adapt to it.

From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, these representations reveal an important dimension of power (Van Dijk, 2015). The question is not simply whether citizens are mentioned but how much agency they are given within the discourse. When citizens are primarily represented through passive constructions or as beneficiaries, their ability to influence technological policies and decisions may be minimized. Conversely, when citizens are represented as entrepreneurs, workers, innovators, or active digital participants, they acquire greater agency. Therefore, the representation of citizens can reveal whether digital transformation is constructed as a participatory social process or as a top-down process led primarily by government and corporate institutions.

3.6 Digital Divide and Social Inequality

One of the most significant issues is unequal internet access. Online news discourse may emphasize the continuing differences in connectivity between areas with advanced digital infrastructure and regions where internet access remains limited. Urban areas are generally associated with stronger telecommunications infrastructure, greater availability of digital services, and higher levels of technological adoption, whereas remote and rural communities may face limitations related to connectivity, infrastructure, affordability, and geographical conditions. This creates a contradiction within the broader modernization discourse. While digital transformation is frequently presented as a national process, unequal infrastructure demonstrates that not all citizens possess the same material conditions for participating in that transformation.

The rural-urban digital divide is therefore an important dimension of social inequality (Li & Ranieri, 2013). When digital government services, online education, telemedicine, and digital economic platforms become increasingly important, access to reliable internet becomes a prerequisite for participation. Citizens living in well-connected urban areas may benefit more easily from these services, while people in remote areas may experience technological transformation differently. From a discourse perspective, this distinction is significant because the use of terms such as pemerataan akses, perluasan jaringan, and konektivitas hingga daerah terpencil can reveal an acknowledgment that digital transformation has not yet been experienced equally across geographical regions.

Another important counter-discourse concerns digital literacy. Access to technology does not necessarily guarantee the ability to use it effectively, safely, and productively (Greene, 2021). Online news discourse may therefore represent digital literacy as a prerequisite for meaningful participation in the digital society. Citizens with limited digital skills may struggle to use digital public services, conduct online financial transactions, identify misinformation, protect personal data, or participate in digital economic activities. Consequently, digital literacy becomes not simply an educational issue but also an important dimension of digital inclusion.

The issue of socioeconomic inequality further complicates the representation of digital transformation. Access to smartphones, computers, reliable internet connections, and digital services often depends on people's economic resources. For wealthier households, adopting new technologies may be relatively easy, while economically disadvantaged communities may have to prioritize basic needs over digital devices and connectivity. In this context, digital transformation may unintentionally reinforce existing socioeconomic inequalities. A policy

designed to improve efficiency through digital services may benefit citizens who already possess the necessary technological resources while creating additional barriers for those who do not.

Elderly populations represent another group that may be vulnerable within digital transformation discourse (Rasi-Heikkinen, 2022). As public and private services increasingly move online, older citizens who are less familiar with digital technologies may experience difficulties accessing essential services. The shift from face-to-face or conventional services toward applications and online platforms can therefore create a form of exclusion. The representation of elderly citizens as individuals requiring assistance, training, or alternative service channels challenges the assumption that all members of society can adapt to digitalization at the same pace.

Similarly, disadvantaged communities may experience digital transformation differently from technologically connected populations. Low-income households, people living in remote areas, communities with limited educational opportunities, and other socially vulnerable groups may face multiple barriers simultaneously. These barriers can include inadequate infrastructure, limited financial resources, low digital literacy, and limited awareness of available digital services. When these groups appear in news discourse, they provide an alternative perspective to the dominant narrative of technological progress by demonstrating that digital transformation can produce new forms of exclusion if inclusion is not deliberately addressed.

From Fairclough's perspective, these counter-discourses are particularly significant because they challenge the dominant ideology of technological progress and digital inevitability (Suspiatya, 2012). The dominant discourse may suggest that digitalization represents modernization and that society must adapt to technological change. The counter-discourse, however, raises the question of whether everyone has equal capacity to participate in that change. Thus, the discourse moves from the simple question of "How fast is Indonesia becoming digital?" to the more critical question of "Who is able to participate in Indonesia's digital transformation, and who may be left behind?"

The linguistic construction of inequality is also important. Words and expressions associated with *kesenjangan digital*, *akses internet yang belum merata*, *literasi digital*, *daerah tertinggal*, *masyarakat rentan*, *keterbatasan akses*, and *pemerataan frame digital* transformation as an unfinished process. Such vocabulary introduces social responsibility into the discourse (Nwagbara & Belal, 2019). The problem is no longer simply technological adoption but the creation of conditions that enable different social groups to benefit from technology.

Therefore, Indonesian online news discourse appears to contain a tension between universal-benefit narratives and inequality-oriented counter-narratives. Digital transformation is often presented as beneficial for society as a whole, but discussions of infrastructure, literacy, socioeconomic status, geographical location, and vulnerable populations reveal that its benefits are not automatically distributed equally. This tension is crucial to understanding the ideological dimension of digital transformation discourse. While modernization narratives emphasize efficiency, innovation, and national progress, counter-discourses emphasize accessibility, justice, inclusion, and social responsibility.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that digital transformation is predominantly represented in Indonesian online news discourse as a process of modernization, technological innovation, economic development, and national competitiveness. The analysis demonstrates that government institutions and businesses are frequently positioned as the main drivers of transformation, while citizens are commonly represented as beneficiaries, users, consumers, and workers who

are expected to adapt to technological change. Digital transformation is therefore largely constructed as a necessary and desirable pathway toward a more efficient, innovative, and digitally advanced Indonesia. However, the discourse also contains important counter-representations concerning digital inequality, unequal internet access, limited digital literacy, cybersecurity, privacy, employment disruption, and digital exclusion. These representations demonstrate that the benefits of digital transformation are not experienced equally across Indonesian society, particularly by rural communities, elderly populations, low-income groups, and other disadvantaged communities. Theoretically, this study demonstrates that digital transformation is not merely a technological phenomenon but also a discursive and ideological construction shaped by linguistic choices, source selection, institutional authority, and broader social practices. Using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, the study reveals how media discourse can reproduce dominant narratives of modernization while simultaneously providing space for critical perspectives. Practically, Indonesian online news organizations should provide more balanced representations by incorporating citizens' perspectives, marginalized communities, digital risks, inequality, privacy, cybersecurity, and ethical concerns. Such reporting can contribute to a more inclusive and socially responsible understanding of Indonesia's digital transformation.

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