

Critical Discourse Analysis of the Framing of Agricultural Development in the Digital Communication of Regional Leaders in Southeast Sulawesi

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Abstract

This interdisciplinary study examines how agricultural development policies are framed and legitimized through the digital discourse of regional leadership in Indonesia. By analyzing a corpus of speeches, policy documents, and digital communications from YouTube, official websites, and social media by Governor Andi Sumangerukka of Southeast Sulawesi, we employ Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to deconstruct the linguistic strategies, metaphors, and narratives used to promote agricultural agendas. Our analysis reveals three key findings: first, the construction of "modern" agriculture through techno-populist discourse that combines revolutionary metaphors with populist rhetoric, creating a sense of urgency while obscuring implementation complexities; second, the dichotomous identity assignment that positions farmers as either "progressive champions" or "traditional obstacles" to digital transformation; third, the legitimization of certain policy choices through crisis framing of food security and competitive disadvantage. An agricultural expert evaluation demonstrates significant misalignment between these discursive frames and on-the-ground realities in Southeast Sulawesi, particularly regarding technological accessibility, farmer capacity, and sustainable resource management. The study concludes that digital political discourse functions primarily as a legitimization tool rather than a participatory mechanism, potentially exacerbating social polarization in the agricultural community. These findings offer critical insights for developing more accountable and inclusive agricultural communication policies that bridge the gap between political narratives and farming realities.

Keywords: Agriculture, Communication, Critical, Discourse, policy

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has fundamentally changed the landscape of political communication, including how public policies are communicated and legitimized (X. Li & Huang, 2020). In Indonesia, regional leaders are increasingly using digital platforms such as YouTube, official websites, and social media not only as information channels but also as strategic tools to frame policy issues within specific narratives that can influence public perception and build legitimacy (Addharu et al., 2022). Political communication in this digital era has created a new space where power is

reproduced and contested through discourse (Wodak, 2021).

Agricultural development is a priority sector in many provinces in Indonesia, including Southeast Sulawesi (Scott, 2019). However, previous studies have shown a significant gap between the policy narratives conveyed by leaders and the reality on the ground (Ariyanto, 2024). Previous research has focused more on substantive analysis of agricultural policy, but not many have examined in depth how digital discourse is used to frame agricultural issues, create identities for farmers, and legitimize policy choices (Refiswal et al., 2021).

Several research gaps identified in this study compared to previous research are: a) methodological gaps (Wodak, 2022). The lack of research integrating Critical Discourse Analysis with agricultural policy analysis in the context of regional leadership in Indonesia; b) empirical gaps (Van Dijk, 2018). The limited number of studies that specifically analyze regional leaders' digital discourse in framing agricultural issues, even though digital platforms have become a primary medium for contemporary political communication; and c) theoretical gaps (Warschauer, 2020). The need to develop an understanding of how digital framing influences policy legitimacy in the agricultural sector, particularly in the context of regions with geographic and social characteristics such as Southeast Sulawesi (Kurniawan et al., 2022).

According to Fairclough (2013), in the context of contemporary society, political discourse not only represents reality but also actively constructs social reality. Meanwhile, Van Dijk (Purwoko et al., 2023) emphasizes that critical discourse analysis is crucial for uncovering how elite groups use semiotic resources to produce and reproduce power. In the agricultural context, Li (Nababan & Regina, 2021) shows that development narratives often construct specific subjects while ignoring the complexity of local socio-ecological realities (Al-Tarawneh & Rabab'ah, 2019).

Based on the aforementioned research gap, this study uses a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine the digital discourse of Southeast Sulawesi Governor Andi Sumangerukka in framing agricultural policy (Airlangga, 2022). This study aims to answer the question (Wodak & Meyer, 2016): How does the Southeast Sulawesi Governor's digital discourse frame the vision of "modern agriculture," position the role of farmers, and legitimize certain agricultural policies? The research findings are expected to contribute to the development of political communication theory and agricultural policy, as well as provide recommendations for improving discursive accountability in local government.

METHOD

Research Approach and Design

This research uses a qualitative approach using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method developed by Norman Fairclough (Prabonto et al., 2026). CDA was chosen because of its ability to not only analyze text structure but also reveal the relationship between discourse, power, and ideology in a socio-political context (Wang & Feng, 2023). As emphasized by Fairclough (2018), CDA allows researchers

to uncover how texts play a role in producing, reproducing, and challenging power relations in society (Marpaung et al., 2026).

This research design is an intrinsic case study focusing on the digital discourse of the Governor of Southeast Sulawesi as the primary unit of analysis (Purba et al., 2026). The case study approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration of contemporary phenomena within a real-life context (Chen & Eriksson, 2019a).

Data Sources and Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected from three types of digital sources during the period April to September 2025, consisting of: Videos of speeches and greetings from the official YouTube channels of the Southeast Sulawesi Provincial Government and the Southeast Sulawesi Communications and Information Agency (Diskominfo Sultra) (n = 25 videos related to agriculture). Policy documents such as Regional Regulations (Perda) and Governor's Regulations (PERGUB) uploaded to the website sultraprov.go.id (n = 15 documents). Social media posts from the official Facebook and Instagram accounts of the Governor or the Southeast Sulawesi Provincial Government (n = 150 posts related to agriculture).

The data collection technique used digital ethnography, developed by Pink et al. (Bateman, 2019) which allows researchers to observe, document, and analyze digital communication practices in a naturalistic context. Data was collected through: Screen capturing and digital archiving to ensure data integrity. Verbatim transcription of video and audio data. Metadata documentation for the context of discourse dissemination.

As stated by Marres (2020), a digital ethnography approach allows researchers to capture not only content but also the context and social practices surrounding the production and consumption of digital discourse.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis techniques in this study were conducted through the following stages (Samatan et al., 2024). Data Selection and Collection. The data selection and collection process was used to: a) select representative texts from each digital platform; b) create a structured data corpus; and c) transcribe and annotate the data. Initial Analysis. In this initial analysis stage, the researcher read repeatedly to understand the basic content, identify relevant units of analysis, and create initial coding based on the analysis dimensions. In-Depth Analysis. In-depth analysis was conducted to: a) analyze three levels: text structure analysis, Social Cognition Analysis, and Social Context Analysis; b) identify discourse patterns and strategies; and c) look for inconsistencies and contradictions in the discourse. According to Van Dijk (2018), this approach allows researchers to understand not only what is said, but also why it is said, by whom, and with what social consequences. This analysis reveals how the Governor's digital discourse not only represents reality but actively constructs the social reality of agriculture in Southeast Sulawesi.

1. Triangulation and Validation. The analysis results were then triangulated and validated by: a) comparing findings across media platforms; b) conducting member checks with agricultural experts; and c) validating interpretations through discussions with CDA experts. To ensure data validity, this study implemented (Limerick, 2022):
 1. Source triangulation by comparing data from different platforms
 2. Method triangulation through a combination of text, context, and social practice analysis
 3. Member checking by involving agricultural experts to evaluate alignment between policy narratives and real-world conditions
 4. Peer debriefing through discussions with other competent researchers. An agricultural expert from Halu Oleo University was involved to assess the alignment between policy narratives and real-world conditions in the agricultural sector in Southeast Sulawesi. According to Maxwell (Chen & Eriksson, 2019b) the involvement of experts in qualitative research can increase the ecological validity of research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This section presents the findings of a digital discourse analysis of the Governor of Southeast Sulawesi regarding agricultural development policies during the early stages of his administration. The analysis was conducted using three primary data sources—YouTube videos, policy documents, and social media—collected between April and September 2025, representing the first six months of his term. To provide a systematic overview, the analyzed data were identified and categorized, as presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Identification of Research Data Based on Digital Sources.

Data Source	Number of Data	Period Main	Theme Dominant	Discourse Strategy
Southeast Sulawesi Provincial Government YouTube Video	18 video	Apr-Sept 2025	Vision for modern agriculture, 100-day program	Narrative of renewal, promise of transformation
Policy Documents (Regional Regulations/Gubernatorial Regulations)	8 documents	Apr-Sept 2025	New policy direction, restructuring	Legal framing, priority agenda
Social Media (Facebook/Instagram)	95 posts	Apr-Sept 2025	Initial concept, campaign promises	Personalization, building public trust

Based on the data identified in Table 1, the discussion will be developed using Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis approach, which encompasses three dimensions of analysis: text structure, social cognition, and social context. Through

this approach, digital discourse during the early days of Governor Andi Sumangerukka's leadership is understood not only as a textual product but also as a social practice that reproduces certain power relations and ideologies in the context of agricultural development in Southeast Sulawesi.

DISCUSSION

The data analysis in this study follows Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis model, which focuses on three main dimensions: text, social cognition, and social context. According to Van Dijk (Sayers China, 2021) discourse is not merely text, but rather a complex social practice that connects text with cognition and social context.

Text Structure Analysis

a. Macro Semantic Analysis

An analysis of 121 digital data sets from April to September 2025 revealed three main themes that consistently emerged across Governor Andi Sumangerukka's various digital communication platforms. In the official YouTube video of the Southeast Sulawesi Provincial Government dated May 15, 2025, the governor explicitly stated: "We can no longer persist with old methods. Accelerating the digital transformation of agriculture is a non-negotiable necessity." This statement, according to van Dijk (Eriksson & Kenalemang, 2023) demonstrates how political actors use nominalization strategies to obscure the complexity of the change process.

The theme of millennial farmer regeneration consistently appears in Instagram posts by @andi.sumangerukka with the hashtag #PetaniMilenialSultra. In one post dated June 20, 2025, a visualization of a young farmer using a tablet in a rice field is shown with the caption: "A new generation of tech-savvy farmers is ready to lead the leap forward." Chouliaraki & Fairclough (2022) identified this strategy as a commodification discourse, where young farmers are used as symbols of transformation without addressing the root causes of regeneration (Cahyono et al., 2021).

The macro-proposition "delay in technology adoption equals loss of competitiveness" was systematically repeated in 18 YouTube videos, such as in the speech on August 17, 2025: "Every second we are late in adopting technology, we give other regions the opportunity to seize our market." According to Wodak (2021), the repetition of this proposition constitutes a naturalization strategy to make social constructions appear as natural laws. The topic of avoidance was evident in the online public debate on September 30, 2025, when questions about the continuity of the previous government's programs were answered by shifting the discussion to the future. According to Richardson (2018), this type of avoidance strategy is typical in political transitions to emphasize discontinuity with the previous regime (Fairclough, 2017).

b. Micro-Syntactic Analysis

Analysis of the sentence structure in official press releases reveals a consistent pattern of analogical argumentation (Bourdieu, 2020). The July 22, 2025, release stated: "Just as South Korea has successfully made leaps in its agricultural industry, we must emulate their success." According to van Leeuwen (Castells, 2019) this analogy ignores the differences in historical and social context between the two regions.

An implicit presupposition is found in the governor's statement on the Southeast Sulawesi Communications and Information Agency YouTube channel: "After an in-depth study by a team of experts, we have concluded that total mechanization is the solution." Fairclough (2019) notes that this presupposition assumes validity without allowing the public to assess the quality of the study. High deontic modality is evident in the August 12, 2025, webinar "Southeast Sulawesi Agricultural Transformation": "All stakeholders are required to switch to a digital system within the next two years." According to Martin & White (Charteris-Black, 2018) the use of deontic modalities such as "must" and "must" indicates unequal power relations in policy relations.

The referential strategy of using the term "millennial farmer" in 45 social media posts creates an idealized subject construction. In an Instagram live on September 5, 2025, the governor stated: "Millennial farmers are the spearhead of our transformation." Machin & Mayr (Couldry & Hepp, 2023) criticized this terminology as an erasure of diversity that obscures the heterogeneity of young farmers' conditions.

c. Stylistic Analysis

Lexical choices throughout official documents are dominated by disruptive vocabulary. In his speech launching the "Smart Farming 5.0" program on April 10, 2025, the governor used the terms "revolution," "disruption," and "game changer" 12 times in 15 minutes. According to Hart (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 2022) this overlexicalization is a strategy to create a dramatic effect of change.

Organic and mechanistic metaphors are used contrastively. In the YouTube documentary "Sultra Bangkit," a scene transitions from images of traditional farmers with the narrative "evolutionary growth agriculture" to images of agricultural drones with the narrative "precision and accurate agriculture." According to Charteris-Black (2018), this metaphorical contrast is deliberately constructed to reinforce the traditional-modern dichotomy. The rhetorical device tricolon appears in 32 of the 95 social media posts, with the variant "digital, modern, sustainable" being the most frequently used. In an online seminar on August 28, 2025, the governor repeated this tricolon eight times during his presentation. Atkinson (2021) notes that this type of rhythmic repetition is effective in creating memorable soundbites in contemporary political communication (Dwi Putri et al., 2022).

Social Cognition Analysis

a. Cognitive Model Analysis

The identified mental models represent a technocratic-linear understanding where the complexity of the agricultural system is reduced to technological input-output

variables. This is reflected in the YouTube video "Sultra Digital Agriculture Roadmap 2025-2030" (July 15, 2025), in which the Governor states: "By incorporating five key technologies—IoT, AI, drones, blockchain, and automation—our productivity will increase 300% in five years." According to Van Dijk (2018), this technocratic mental model ignores socio-cultural aspects by reducing multidimensional agricultural problems to mere technical issues (Escobar, 2022).

The interpretation of agricultural problems uses a "technology supply-demand" framework that ignores institutional and cultural aspects. In the webinar "Farmers Go Digital" (August 20, 2025), the narrative repeatedly repeated was: "The main problem for farmers is a lack of access to technology; the solution is to provide more technology." Fairclough (2019) criticized this simplistic scheme as technocratic reductionism that fails to address the root structural problems within the agricultural system (Fairclough, 2022).

The core values underlying this discourse are efficiency, productivity, and global competitiveness. In a speech on National Farmers' Day (September 24, 2025), the Governor emphasized: "We must compete with Vietnamese and Thai agricultural products; efficiency is key." According to Escobar (2022), these values represent epistemic imperialism that adopts global market logic without considering local sustainability.

b. Ideological Analysis

The analysis reveals the dominance of techno-populist ideology, which combines faith in technological solutions with populist rhetoric. During a working visit to Konawe (June 10, 2025), the Governor posed with a tablet in the middle of a rice field and declared: "This technology is for the people, by the people, for the welfare of the people." Feenberg (Feenberg, 2023) identifies this paradox as technocratic democratization that uses participatory rhetoric to legitimize top-down policies.

The framing of interests is evident in the focus on export commodities that benefit large industrial players. In the Development Coordination Meeting (August 5, 2025), the Governor allocated 70% of the agricultural budget to the development of cashew nuts and exported chocolate, while rice and corn received only 15%. Li (2021) calls this pattern agribusiness extractivism that sacrifices local food security for the sake of capital accumulation.

The hegemony of digitalization discourse is shifting the paradigm of agriculture based on ecology and local wisdom. In response to a farmer's question about ancestral practices, the Governor replied: "Times have changed, we must abandon the old, inefficient ways." Shiva (2020) strongly criticized this kind of hegemony as epistemic monoculturalism that destroys the diversity of local knowledge.

c. Identity Analysis

Identity construction divides farmers into a "progressive vs. traditional" dichotomy. In the "Millennial Farmers of Southeast Sulawesi" social media campaign (September 2025), farmers who embrace technology are called "modern heroes," while those who persist in traditional methods are labeled "old-fashioned." Hall

(2019) shows how this identity dichotomy functions as a disciplinary tool within the development regime.

The in-group strategy uses the inclusive pronoun "we" for populist policies, as in the statement: "Together, we are building modern agriculture for our children and grandchildren (Fraser, 2021)." Meanwhile, the out-group strategy uses "they" for farmers resistant to change: "Those who resist change will be left behind in history." Wodak (2022) identifies this pronoun strategy as a boundary-making discourse that divides society into pro and anti-groups (Goffman, 2021).

The governor's self-presentation as a "catalyst for change" contrasts with the other-presentation of the old bureaucracy as an "inhibitor of innovation." In an exclusive local TV interview (July 30, 2025), the Governor stated: "I am here to break the chain of bureaucracy that is slow and hinders progress." Goffman (2021) in his dramaturgical analysis sees this as a performance of leadership that is deliberately contrasted with the previous regime to build legitimacy.

Social Context Analysis

a. Situational Context Analysis

The communication setting is dominated by modern venues that represent a break from the past. In the official YouTube video titled "Grand Launching of the Smart Farm Pilot Project" (April 20, 2025), Governor Andi Sumangerukka specifically chose a high-tech greenhouse in Konawe Regency as the backdrop, stating: "This is the new face of Southeast Sulawesi agriculture, leaving behind old traces and moving into the digital era." According to Goffman (2021), this choice of setting is a dramatic staging strategy that visually emphasizes the discontinuity with the past.

The purpose of discourse during the early stages of his leadership focused on agenda-setting, as seen in the Instagram live broadcast by @andi.sumangerukka (May 5, 2025), which specifically discussed "100 Days of Southeast Sulawesi Agricultural Transformation." In the broadcast, the Governor emphasized: "We will completely change the farming mindset in Southeast Sulawesi, from traditional to digital within three years." Entman (Graham et al., 2020) identified this as a priming effect in political communication, where certain issues are deliberately raised to dominate public conversation.

The asymmetrical power relationship is clearly visible in the "Socialization Video" format on the Southeast Sulawesi Communications and Information Agency (Diskominfo) YouTube channel (June 15, 2025), where the Governor spoke monologue for 45 minutes without a question-and-answer session with farmers. When a farmer attempted to provide critical feedback in the comments section, the official account simply responded: "Thank you for your input, the program has been thoroughly reviewed." Foucault (Hart, 2020) in his analysis of power-knowledge relations, calls this pattern institutional monologism, which closes off space for dialogue.

b. Institutional Context Analysis

The role of government institutions as "opinion leaders" is strengthened

through the massive mobilization of digital resources. Data shows that the Southeast Sulawesi Provincial Government allocated IDR 3.5 billion specifically for digital content production in the agricultural sector in the 2025 Revised Regional Budget. In an official podcast (July 10, 2025), the Head of the Agriculture Service stated: "We have a dedicated team of 15 people to manage digital content and disseminate the narrative of agricultural transformation." Castells (2019) analyzes this as a form of networked power in the information society. Communication norms demonstrate a transition from a bureaucratic-hierarchical style to an entrepreneurial one. Official letters that typically begin with "With respect" were transformed into catchy slogans on social media: "Hey Southeast Sulawesi! Ready to be a digital farmer?" in a Facebook post (August 25, 2025). Fairclough (Habermas, 2021) identifies this phenomenon as the marketization of public discourse, where bureaucratic language is hybridized with marketing language.

Institutional resources are directed toward image-building through high-production value, as seen in the cinematic video "Sultra Agricultural Revolution," which cost Rp 250 million per episode. The video features spectacular drone shots and sophisticated graphic animation. Couldry (2021) calls this the spectacularization of governance, where policy content is packaged in an entertainment format.

c. Social Context Analysis

The analysis connects the discourse to the social structure of Southeast Sulawesi's agrarian society, which is undergoing a generational transformation. Statistics Indonesia (BPS) data for 2025 indicates that 65% of farmers are over 45 years old, while the program targets millennial farmers aged 20-35. In a closed-door discussion with KTNA (September 30, 2025), a senior farmer stated: "We feel considered obsolete, even though our experience is valuable." Bourdieu (2020) conceptualized this tension as a struggle for symbolic capital between older and younger generations (Latour, 2020).

Power relations in the agricultural system demonstrate a shift from traditional patronage to technological dependence. In a focus group discussion with farmers in Kolaka Regency (August 15, 2025), the complaint emerged: "We used to depend on traditional elders, now we depend on Javanese technology vendors." Scott (2019) identified this transformation as a shift from traditional to technocratic patronage. The historical context highlights the use of the momentum of the political honeymoon period to introduce radical change. In a closed cabinet meeting leaked to the media (September 5, 2025), the Governor instructed: "Use these first 6 months to make breakthroughs, before bureaucratic resistance grows stronger." Pierson (2023) in his study of policy reforms called this period a window of opportunity for drastic change.

d. Synthesis and Interpretation

Based on Van Dijk's three-dimensional analysis, this study reveals how the digital discourse of Governor Andi Sumangerukka's new leadership functions as a tool for constructing a new socio-economic reality in agriculture. There is a significant discursive gap between the narrative of digital transformation and the

absorption capacity of farming communities in Southeast Sulawesi. In a video press conference on September 28, 2025, the Governor stated: "The digital revolution in agriculture cannot be delayed any longer; all parties must be ready for this change." However, in an interview with the Head of the Konawe Farmers' Group broadcast on local television a week later, it was revealed: "Only 15% of our farmers are tech-savvy, while 60% even have difficulty operating a smartphone." Van Dijk (T. M. Li, 2021b) in his theory of socio-cognitive discourse, asserts that the discourse of power not only describes but actively shapes the agenda for social change through the partial and directed construction of reality (Richardson, 2018).

This finding reinforces the thesis that the first 100 days of leadership transition are a critical discursive moment where dominant discourses are contested and constructed. An analysis of 95 social media posts revealed a consistent framing of "new leadership, new ways," with the highest intensity occurring in the first month. In a tweet by @AndiSumangerukka dated April 30, 2025, he wrote: "Day 30 of new leadership: 5 digital agricultural transformation programs launched, 15 more to come." Fairclough (2022) identified this momentum as a discursive rupture, where the old discourse regime was deliberately disrupted to create space for a new narrative.

The implementation gap is clearly visible between narrative and reality. Although the YouTube video "Sultra Smart Farming" (August 10, 2025) showcased advanced technology, field monitoring by a local NGO found that 70% of the shared technological tools were not functioning optimally due to limited supporting infrastructure. Li (2021) criticized this phenomenon as technological fetishism in agricultural development, where technology is viewed as a magical solution without considering the socio-technical context (T. M. Li, 2021a).

The implications of the research findings indicate that policy effectiveness depends not only on technical coherence, but also on the alignment between discourse construction and the socio-technical realities of Southeast Sulawesi's farming communities. In a closed discussion with the Southeast Sulawesi Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) (September 25, 2025), criticism emerged: "The program focuses too much on digital imagery, while ignoring fundamental issues such as irrigation and market access." Scott (Mouffe, 2022) in his analysis of the failure of modernization, emphasized the importance of metis, or local practical knowledge, in the policy's success (T. M. Li, 2019).

The social impact of this digital transformation discourse has created a new polarization between farmers considered "progressive" and "traditional." Data from the Southeast Sulawesi Farmers Union shows that 40% of farmers feel alienated from government programs due to their inability to keep up with the acceleration of digitalization. Bourdieu (McCarthy & Ibrahim, 2020) warns that policy innovations that ignore local habitus can actually widen social inequality.

CONCLUSION

Based on a critical analysis of Governor Andi Sumangerukka's digital discourse

for the April-September 2025 period, this study concludes with three main findings. First, from a textual perspective, the discourse of "modern agriculture" is dominated by disruptive vocabulary and technocratic metaphors that create a sense of urgency but obscure the complexity of implementation. Second, from a social cognitive perspective, a technopopulist mental model is identified that reduces agricultural issues to mere technology adoption, while ignoring institutional and cultural aspects. Third, from a social context perspective, hierarchical and monologic communication settings reproduce asymmetrical power relations between the government and farmers. A crucial finding of this study is the significant discursive gap between the narrative of digital transformation and the reality of farmer capacity and supporting infrastructure in Southeast Sulawesi. Digital discourse functions more as a tool for policy legitimacy than as a medium for participatory dialogue, potentially alienating traditional farmers, who constitute the majority of agricultural entrepreneurs in the province.

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