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DIGITAL RESPONSIVENESS LOOP IN THE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE OF INDONESIA'S FREE NUTRITIOUS MEAL PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

This study examines government responsiveness to public opinion on social media in the context of Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meal Programme. As social media increasingly functions as a digital public sphere, citizens' comments, criticisms, and suggestions have become important signals for democratic accountability. However, the extent to which government institutions respond to these signals remains unclear. Using a qualitative case study design, this article combines a secondary sentiment dataset of 4,968 public comments, document analysis of official government communication, and thematic content analysis. The findings show that public sentiment toward the programme is dominated by negative and neutral responses, reflecting concerns over food safety, budget transparency, implementation readiness, and policy targeting. The findings indicate a gap between public sentiment pressure and the visibility of government response mechanisms. Although official complaint channels and public clarifications exist, the publicly available evidence does not yet show a fully dialogic, transparent, and traceable feedback loop. These limitations can be understood in relation to bureaucratic hierarchy, weak operational standards for digital response, limited institutional coordination, and uneven public-sector digital communication capacity. The findings suggest that government responsiveness on social media should not be understood merely as a communication function, but as a core dimension of digital democratic governance that links public sentiment, institutional response, accountability, and policy legitimacy. This article proposes an integrated framework consisting of digital response standards, cross-agency communication systems, public-sector digital competencies, and institutionalized participatory mechanisms.

Keywords: *digital democratic governance; government responsiveness; public sentiment; social media; Free Nutritious Meal Programme*

INTRODUCTION

The development of smart cities and digital government has broadened the orientation of public administration from the provision of technological infrastructure and the pursuit of administrative efficiency toward institutional openness, citizen participation, and government responsiveness. This shift toward smart governance positions technology as a means of strengthening the relationship between government and society. Within this framework, social media enables governments to collect timely feedback, better understand citizens' needs, and foster more interactive forms of public communication (Bertot, et al; Gohar F. Khan 2017; Wiencierz and Lünich 2022) .

Through platforms such as Instagram, X, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube, citizens can share their experiences, voice criticism and aspirations, and express support for or demands regarding government policies. These interactions have transformed social media into a digital public sphere that connects citizens' experiences with policy issues. The presence of official government accounts in this sphere should therefore be supported by clearly defined response mechanisms through which citizens' input receives appropriate attention and follow-up. From the perspective of digital democratic governance, government institutions are expected to recognize publicly expressed concerns, provide relevant explanations, and communicate follow-up actions that citizens can readily trace.

These developments position social media as an important component of digital democratic governance, understood here as the use of digital technologies and institutional mechanisms to support information openness, citizen participation, accountability, and reciprocal communication in government. Yet social media use does not automatically produce democratic communication. Government accounts may actively disseminate program information without necessarily facilitating dialogue or translating citizen input into institutional responses. Idris (2018) found that government agencies in Indonesia continued to use social media primarily for information dissemination and had not fully developed sustained two-way communication. The central issue, then, concerns how governments use their social media presence to respond to citizens' concerns, rather than whether they maintain an online presence.

To clarify the study's analytical focus, digital public sentiment refers to patterns of support, neutrality, criticism, concern, and suggestions expressed in social media comments within the analyzed corpus. These expressions signal the issues attracting attention in digital discourse; they do not constitute a statistically representative measure of opinion across the Indonesian population. Government digital responsiveness, in turn, refers to publicly observable institutional actions through which governments recognize citizens' digital signals, explain policies, and demonstrate traceable follow-up. This definition adapts the framework developed by (Esaiasson et al., 2017), which distinguishes listening (to listen), explaining (to explain), and making adjustments or taking follow-up action (to adapt). The study assesses the visibility of these actions in public communications and documents. It does not directly measure citizens' perceptions of responsiveness, levels of trust, participation, accountability, or policy legitimacy. Potential effects on these dimensions remain theoretical propositions requiring separate empirical testing.

The implementation of Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meal Program (Makan Bergizi Gratis, MBG) provides a relevant setting for examining digital responsiveness. MBG is a national priority program intended to meet nutritional needs, particularly among students and other designated target groups, while supporting human capital development. The government also positions the program as a means of strengthening the grassroots economy through business participation and the use of locally sourced food (Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025e). Implementation involves the National Nutrition Agency (Badan Gizi Nasional, BGN), relevant ministries and agencies, local governments, educational institutions, service delivery units, and implementing partners. The program's extensive reach and the involvement of multiple actors make coordination, food safety, service quality, transparency, accurate beneficiary targeting, and complaint mechanisms important aspects of its governance. Presidential Regulation No. 115 of 2025 subsequently established a framework for program delivery, monitoring, supervision, control, evaluation, reporting, financing, and procurement. Because the regulation was issued after implementation and the initial public discussion of MBG had begun, this study treats it as a subsequent development in the program's governance context, rather than as a basis for assessing all government responses during the early phase of digital discussion.

As a national program with wide-ranging implications, MBG has also generated extensive social media discussion. The secondary dataset used in this study comprises 4,968 comments concerning MBG: 2,486 negative comments (50.04%), 2,212 neutral comments (44.52%), and 270 positive comments (5.43%). Negative comments primarily expressed concerns about food safety and quality, alleged implementation irregularities, budget transparency, the readiness of kitchen infrastructure, and beneficiary targeting. Neutral comments frequently called for evaluation, greater transparency, stronger oversight, improved distribution, and priority for vulnerable groups. Positive comments expressed support for meeting children's nutritional needs and highlighted the potential for local job creation. This distribution indicates digital issue pressure that must be examined alongside government communications and follow-up actions. However, the predominance of negative sentiment does not in itself demonstrate government unresponsiveness, declining public trust, or program failure. Assessing responsiveness requires additional evidence of issue acknowledgment, response speed, substantive and empathetic explanations, information transparency, and policy or implementation follow-up that can be traced in the public record.

Previous research provides an important foundation, although several strands of scholarship have developed separately. Studies of government social media emphasize its potential to expand transparency, stakeholder interaction, feedback collection, and the monitoring of citizen satisfaction (Eyisi et al., 2021; Pirannejad & Ingrams, 2023; Zafarullah & Ferdous, 2021) . Research on digital governance highlights the principles, methods, institutional architectures, and assessment frameworks that guide government transformation alongside technologi (Yannis Charalabidis et al., 2022). Social media sentiment analysis can rapidly identify issues requiring policy attention, but its findings do not independently establish government action or changes in public trust (Xi Tang & Kex Zena Fillip, 2025). In the MBG context, Tatik Yuniarti and Bramadya Andriza (2026) found that government communications on the Instagram account @pco.ri, subsequently renamed @bakom.ri, used positive narratives, visual depictions of program benefits, and educational content to address controversy.

Responses to negative comments nevertheless remained limited, as account administrators tended to provide standardized replies, avoid debate, or leave some criticism unanswered. These findings point to the need to move beyond communication strategy analysis toward an assessment that connects issues raised online with observable institutional responses.

This synthesis identifies three research gaps. First, studies of government social media have focused primarily on platform use, posting patterns, or levels of interaction, leaving the connection between digital issue signals and visible institutional follow-up insufficiently examined. Second, sentiment studies generally focus on classifying expressions as positive, neutral, or negative without comparing the substantive themes of comments with government responses to those same themes. Third, research on responsiveness has made limited efforts to integrate listening, explaining, and adapting with indicators of response quality, including speed, substance, empathy, transparency, and policy follow-up. This study addresses these gaps by developing the Digital Responsiveness Loop Model. The model adopts the three actions identified by (Esaiasson et al., 2017), adapts them to assess publicly observable government actions in digital settings, and adds issue recognition, five indicators of response quality, and a policy-learning feedback mechanism. It serves as a diagnostic and theory-building framework rather than a validated causal model.

Building on these problems and research gaps, the study addresses three questions. First, how is digital public sentiment toward the Free Nutritious Meal Program expressed in the social media dataset, and which issues dominate the discourse? Second, how are these issues addressed in publicly available government communications and documents through listening, explaining, and adapting? Third, what does the correspondence, or lack of correspondence, between digital issue pressure and visible government responses imply for the analytical development of digital democratic governance? The third question is interpretive and does not seek to measure changes in trust, participation, accountability, or legitimacy directly.

Accordingly, this study aims to map sentiment patterns and dominant issues concerning MBG, assess the visibility and quality of government responses in the public record, and develop a Digital Responsiveness Loop Model that clearly distinguishes digital issue pressure, issue recognition, listening, explanation, adaptation, and policy-learning feedback. Empirically, the study brings together the sentiment corpus and the government-response corpus through comparison at the thematic level. Theoretically, it offers an evidence-based framework for assessing whether digital response processes remain limited to channel provision and general clarification or extend to traceable follow-up action.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Responsiveness and Decision Acceptance

Esaiasson et al., (2017) examine whether responsive conduct can encourage citizens to accept policy decisions they dislike. Their framework distinguishes to listen, meaning actions that keep representatives informed about citizens' wishes and views; to explain, meaning actions that offer credible reasons for policy decisions; and to adapt, meaning changes that move a decision toward majority opinion. Responsiveness therefore includes procedural attention to citizens and is not exhausted by agreement between policy and individual preferences. The framework distinguishes responsive actions, perceived responsiveness, and decision acceptance (Esaiasson et al., 2017)

The proposed mechanism operates through citizens' judgments that their views have been considered. In the original study, decision acceptance includes an attitudinal willingness to accept the decision and trust in the decision-making authority. Its survey experiment and case study show why actual conduct and perceived responsiveness must be kept separate: perceptions can be shaped by whether a decision favors a person's preferences. The experimental findings also indicate that listening and explaining can be more effective than following majority opinion once outcome favorability is taken into account. These findings do not establish that every official response produces acceptance, or that favorable policy sentiment proves that the decision-making process was responsive (Esaiasson et al., 2017).

Adapting Responsiveness to Digital Governance

Applying this distinction to digital democratic governance requires attention to both communication and institutional action. The present study connects citizens' online expressions with public justification and the traceability of government follow-up. The government-social-media literature provides a bridge to this setting. Zhang et al., (2025) links the interpretation of digital interactions to organizational goals, transparency, participation, and collaboration. In this study, that perspective supports examining whether communication addresses a specific issue and how it relates to the institution's responsibilities, rather than treating posting frequency or follower counts as sufficient evidence of responsiveness.

Sjoberg et al., (2017) also provide evidence of the relationship between institutional responsiveness and digital engagement through their study of the Fix My Street platform in the United Kingdom. The resolution of a problem reported during a citizen’s first experience with the platform was associated with the likelihood of submitting subsequent reports. Their study provides a basis for examining follow-up that is recognizable to the person who submitted the report. However, these findings are not used to infer increased participation in the MBG case, because the present study does not track the same users’ behavior over time.

In the digital environment, to listen is adapted to refer to institutional actions through which users’ views and concerns are received, recognized, and referred to the relevant authorities. Public comments provide analytical input, whereas evidence that the government is listening requires documented government action, such as acknowledging a specific issue, registering a complaint, or referring a problem to the responsible unit. The existence of official accounts or complaint channels indicates that communication infrastructure is available. Evidence of its use must be examined before concluding that a particular concern has been recognized. Accordingly, thematic mapping by researchers remains distinct from issue recognition by the government.

To explain is adapted to refer to explanations or clarifications that substantively address the issues raised by users. This action involves explaining the reasons for decisions, the information on which they are based, implementation constraints, and available courses of action. In the MBG context, the analysis may examine explanations concerning food safety, beneficiary targeting, transparency, or implementation readiness. Assessment is based on the relevance of the content to the issue raised. General messages promoting the program do not provide sufficient evidence that a specific issue has been explained. Empathy is assessed through acknowledgment of citizens' experiences and concerns, while transparency is assessed through the disclosure of reasons and verifiable information.

To adapt is extended to encompass adjustments to policy or program implementation that relate to citizens' concerns and problems that have been examined. This extension broadens the original formulation of adjustment toward majority preferences to include corrective program action in response to verifiable problems. The social media comment corpus does not provide a basis for determining the preferences of the majority of the Indonesian population. High comment frequencies are therefore treated as signals of attention within the corpus, while the need for adaptation must be assessed in light of the substance of the problem, affected groups, and available evidence. In the MBG case, forms of adaptation to be examined may include changes to distribution procedures, improvements in oversight, or adjustments to beneficiary verification mechanisms.

Evidence of adaptation requires information about the changes made, the actors responsible, the timing of action, and its relationship to the issue raised. A statement that the government will conduct an evaluation indicates planned follow-up. Evidence of procedural changes and evidence of the implementation of corrective measures have different evidentiary significance and therefore need to be recorded separately. Announced administrative responses do not, in themselves, demonstrate successful problem resolution. Assessing the outcomes of these actions requires implementation records or appropriate corroborating sources.

The three actions are complementary. Listening provides information about problems; explanation shows how those problems have been considered; and adaptation demonstrates change when the evidence indicates a need for correction. Their actual sequence may vary, as when urgent action precedes a more comprehensive explanation. The government may also maintain a decision while providing reasons that can be examined. Such a decision may demonstrate listening and explaining, but it is not coded as adaptation if no change occurs. This distinction prevents the model from equating responsiveness with an obligation to satisfy every demand expressed online.

Developing the Digital Responsiveness Loop Model

Building on this adaptation, the study develops the Digital Responsiveness Loop Model as a diagnostic framework for tracing relationships between digital issues and institutional responses. It adopts the three-action typology from the original responsiveness framework Esaiasson et al., (2017) and retains the separation between actions, perceptions, and decision acceptance. The model changes the unit of analysis to observable links between issues and responses and extends the focus from elected representatives to implementing institutions. It also interprets adaptation as corrective policy or program action rather than alignment with majority opinion. These modifications reflect the analytical needs and available evidence in the MBG case. They require empirical validation beyond the original study.

The model makes digital issue recognition explicit, assesses response quality through five indicators, and connects follow-up with subsequent listening. Analysis begins by mapping the issues in comments. It then traces government acknowledgment, examines explanations, and identifies decisions and follow-up actions. Within the proposed loop, the government reports the outcomes of its actions or explains why it has maintained a decision. Subsequent reactions can provide input for identifying unresolved problems and improving implementation. Issue recognition is treated as a component of listening rather than as a sixth indicator of response quality.

The term loop describes how public input connects with government responses, reports on outcomes, and subsequent public feedback. A completed communication cycle may result in program changes or a decision to retain existing arrangements with openly stated reasons. These outcomes must be distinguished in the analytical record. When feedback is used to revise procedures or the handling of subsequent problems, this can indicate policy learning. Any claim that learning has occurred requires evidence that feedback informed subsequent decisions. The appearance of new comments after a clarification is insufficient to establish this process.

Applying the model requires traceable links between issues and responses. Each link must be supported by evidence that the response addresses the issue, identifies the responsible institution, and fits the documented timeline. Sources must be verifiable. An explicit reference to an issue or complaint strengthens the link. A shared reference to MBG establishes only that a comment and a response concern the same program. Analysis can be conducted at the level of an issue or event, allowing a single official explanation to be linked to multiple comments addressing a similar problem. Such a link does not establish that every comment was read or answered individually. Temporal sequence alone also does not demonstrate that online comments caused policy change.

The model thus provides criteria for tracing the relationships among online concerns, institutional responses, and feedback on implementation. It retains perceived responsiveness and decision acceptance as theoretical constructs, but the present corpus cannot establish whether citizens noticed, believed, or accepted a response. Broader implications for participation, accountability, and legitimacy require separate measures and appropriate research designs. Similarly, an absence of traceable evidence identifies a limit of the public record; it does not establish that no internal response occurred. These limits guide the interpretation of Figure 1: its arrows represent proposed relationships, not causal effects demonstrated by this study.

Figure 1 summarizes the proposed relationships. Components 1–3 connect public sentiment pressure, institutional issue recognition, and government response actions. Recognition is an observable aspect of listening, not a separate indicator of response quality. The actions are assessed through acknowledgment, relevant explanations, and documented adjustments. Their sequence is analytical rather than mandatory, as discussed above.

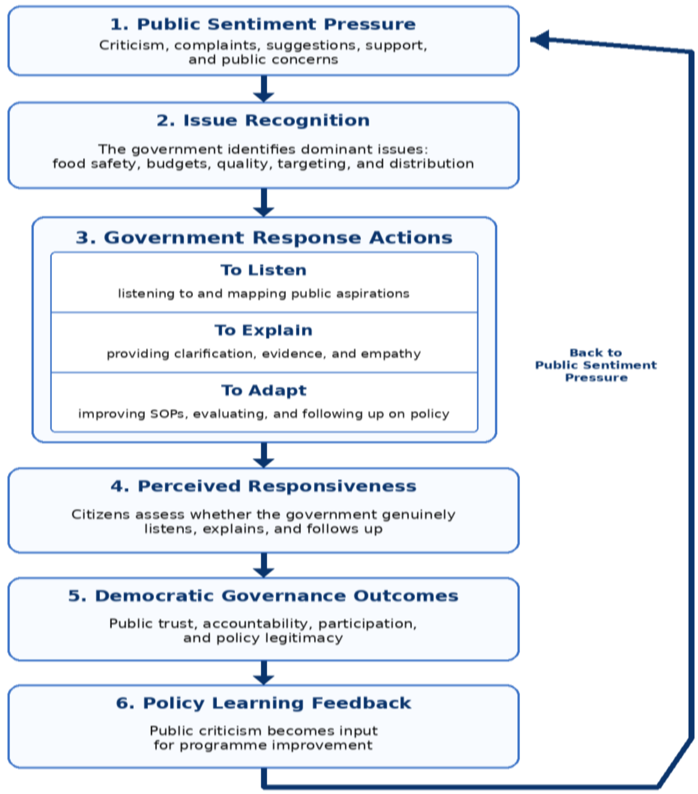

Figure 1. Digital Responsiveness Loop Model
Source: Developed by the authors from the responsiveness-action typology (Esaiasson et al., 2017).

Policy-learning feedback (component 6) connects reported follow-up with subsequent public input and government listening. As explained above, a completed communication loop requires a traceable account of how an issue was handled and reported back. Policy learning requires additional evidence that this feedback informed a later decision or implementation practice. Keeping an existing decision with publicly stated reasons is recorded as explanation, not adaptation, when no change occurs.

The relationships between government response actions, perceived responsiveness (component 4), and democratic governance outcomes (component 5) remain theoretical propositions. They draw on the original responsiveness–acceptance framework (Esaiasson et al., 2017) but are not tested in this study. Official channels and sentiment distributions cannot establish whether users feel heard, trust the responsible institutions, accept program decisions, or participate further. These relationships, including their place in the wider feedback loop, require separate empirical investigation.

Operationalizing Response Quality

Table 1 presents five indicators for assessing the quality of government actions within the model. The typology of actions comes from Esaiasson et al., (2017); the indicators and evidence criteria are developed in this study. Each indicator is linked to an action to clarify what is assessed. Some indicators, including response speed and transparency, may apply to more than one action.

Table 1 Operationalization of digital response quality indicators

Indicator	*Related action*	*Evidence and operational criteria*	*Interpretive limits*
Response speed	*To listen* and subsequent responses	Elapsed time from the first documented issue or complaint to government acknowledgment and a substantive explanation. The timing of acknowledgment and explanation is recorded separately.	Where dates are unavailable, the indicator is classified as not assessable. Describing a response as fast or slow requires an explicitly stated benchmark.
Response substance	*To explain*	The response addresses the central issue and explains the reasons for a decision, supporting information, or steps taken to address the problem. The assessment includes quotations and sources.	Promotional messages or generic answers are insufficient to demonstrate that a specific issue has been explained.
Communicative empathy	*To listen* and *to explain*	The response acknowledges citizens' concerns, experiences, or the effects they have encountered and treats complainants respectfully. Assessment is based on the content of the communication.	The assessment concerns communicative expressions, not officials' internal sincerity or citizens' feelings that have not been measured.
Information transparency	*To explain* and follow-up reporting	The reasons for decisions, data or references, responsible actors, and the status of the response are clearly communicated and can be verified in relation to the issue.	Transparency in a single post does not establish accountability across the institution as a whole.
Policy or implementation follow-up	*To adapt*	Documented corrections or changes related to the issue, with information on their timing and implementing actors. Plans, announced changes, documented actions, and verified outcomes are recorded separately.	A promise to conduct an evaluation does not establish adaptation. Maintaining a decision with openly stated reasons is recorded as explanation when no change occurs.

Source: Developed in this study by adapting the typology of actions proposed by Esaiasson et al., (2017)

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative case-study design to examine digital government responsiveness in the governance of Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meal Programme (MBG). The case is bounded by the relationship between public digital discourse and publicly observable government responses. The study combines descriptive sentiment analysis, word-frequency analysis, manual thematic coding, and official document analysis. It is therefore positioned as a qualitative case study with an embedded descriptive sentiment component, rather than as an exploratory mixed-methods study. Sentiment data are used to map the composition of digital discourse, while thematic and document analyses are used to interpret public concerns and examine whether corresponding government responses are publicly visible (John W. Creswell & J. David Creswell, 2018). The primary empirical corpus is a secondary dataset obtained from the Kaggle Code/Notebook *klasifikasi-sentimen-analisis-MBG*, published by the user zhulfanifaisaladam2. The dataset contains 4,968 comments classified as positive, neutral, or negative. The comments and their original labels were retained without relabelling. The provenance record documented the notebook title, publisher, URL, access year, number of records, available variables, and sentiment distribution. Because the available Kaggle record does not provide a complete sampling frame, collection period, platform-level metadata, account information, or original annotation instructions, the labels are treated as inherited secondary classifications. The reported percentages therefore describe observed social-media discourse within the dataset and cannot be interpreted as representative of Indonesian public opinion as a whole.

Additional data consisted of publicly available BGN publications, official government statements, MBG complaint-channel information, and MBG-related posts published on official institutional websites and verified social-media accounts. The regulatory corpus included Law No. 14 of 2008 on Public Information Disclosure, Law No. 25 of 2009 on Public Services, Presidential Regulation No. 95 of 2018 on the Electronic-Based Government System, Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Regulation No. 83 of 2012 on Guidelines for Social Media Use by Government Agencies, and Presidential Regulation No. 115 of 2025 on the Governance of the Free Nutritious Meal Programme. Academic literature was searched through Google Scholar, Sinta, Garuda, and related scholarly sources using combinations of the terms "government responsiveness," "social media," "digital democratic governance," "public sentiment," "policy implementation," "MBG," and "Makan Bergizi Gratis." The literature was used to develop sensitising concepts and preliminary analytical categories, while empirical themes were determined from the comments and official records rather than from the literature alone (Bowen, 2009).

Data analysis proceeded through an embedded analytical sequence. First, descriptive sentiment analysis calculated the distribution of the three inherited sentiment categories. Second, a normalised working copy of the comments was used for word-frequency analysis after lower-case conversion, spelling normalisation, and removal of URLs, punctuation, and stop words. Third, manual thematic coding was used to identify the substantive issues expressed in the comments. Fourth, official documents and government communications were analysed to identify publicly observable responses to those issues. The results of these stages were brought together through an issue response matrix that connected the volume and content of public concerns with the existence, quality, and traceability of government responses. The coding protocol consisted of three layers. The first layer preserved the inherited sentiment label. The second layer identified the substantive issue raised by each comment, including food safety and quality, transparency and accountability, targeting and equity, implementation capacity and distribution, and policy benefits or programme acceptance. The third layer coded the observable government response and its relationship to the five responsiveness indicators. Comments could receive one primary and one secondary issue code because a single comment could address more than one concern. Statements about contaminated food, poisoning, or hygiene were coded as food safety; requests for budget, procurement, or monitoring information as transparency and accountability; demands to prioritise poor or 3T regions as targeting and equity; complaints about kitchens, logistics, portions, or distribution as implementation capacity; and statements concerning nutritional, household, or employment benefits as policy benefits. Generic political comments without an explicit MBG reference were excluded.

Coding was conducted manually using a written codebook and a structured spreadsheet. Two researchers independently coded a calibration set and a 10% audit sample consisting of 497 comments. Disagreements were discussed using the inclusion and exclusion rules, and unresolved cases were adjudicated by a third team member. The researchers retained the codebook, coded files, disagreement log, and analytical memos as an audit trail. Because the sentiment labels were inherited from a secondary source and the thematic codes were multi-label, inter-coder checking was used to strengthen qualitative credibility rather than to validate the original sentiment classifier (Johnny Saldaña, 2021; Nowell et al., 2017). Government responsiveness was analysed by adapting Esaiasson et al., (2017) three actions of *to listen*, *to explain*, and *to adapt*. The action of *to listen* was operationalised through response speed, measured as the time between a documented public issue and the first official acknowledgement or answer. The action of *to explain* was assessed through response substance, communicative empathy, and information transparency. A substantive response directly addressed the public concern and provided relevant clarification, evidence, responsibility, or proposed action. Empathy was identified when the response acknowledged concern, harm, or affected groups. Transparency required attributable and verifiable information, including data, procedures, status, or follow-up channels. The action of *to adapt* was assessed through policy follow-up, such as investigation, corrective action, evaluation, changes to standard operating procedures, or a publicly reported outcome. Response speed was recorded as same day, one to three days, more than three days, or not traceable; no external normative deadline was imposed.

Official records were included only when the issuing institution was identifiable, the source was publicly accessible, the date or publication context was recoverable, and the record explicitly addressed MBG implementation, a complaint mechanism, or a coded public issue. Each record was documented by its institution, date, URL, response type, relevant passage, and follow-up status. A statement was counted as a response only when it substantively addressed the corresponding issue. For example, a general statement about the benefits of MBG was not counted as a food-safety response, whereas a safety protocol, incident clarification, complaint acknowledgement, inspection result, or corrective action was. When no directly matched official record was found, the issue was coded as having "no publicly traceable response." This procedure prevents the 4,968 comments from being treated as evidence of government responsiveness by themselves.

The regulatory analysis was conducted as a bounded document review. The selected regulations were examined for provisions concerning response-time expectations, complaint escalation, substantive explanation, follow-up reporting, and cross-agency responsibility for digital complaints. The conclusion that operational standards for social-media responsiveness remain limited applies only to the instruments and provisions identified through this search

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and does not imply that no other administrative guidance exists. The study is exploratory in purpose. It identifies patterns in observed digital discourse and examines the visibility of government responses, but it does not estimate national public opinion, establish causal effects on trust or legitimacy, or infer internal bureaucratic motives. Conventional participant member checking was not conducted because the study did not include interviews and relied on a secondary public-comment dataset. Credibility was instead supported through source triangulation, dual coding, peer adjudication, negative-case review, decision memos, and an audit trail (Yvonna S Lincoln & Egon G. Guba, 1985). The findings are consequently interpreted as corpus-specific evidence of social-media discourse and publicly visible institutional responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings identify a concentration of implementation concerns in the observed digital discourse on Indonesia's Free Nutritious Meal Programme (Makan Bergizi Gratis, MBG), alongside publicly documented government explanations and reported or announced follow-up. The evidence is sufficient to identify relevant institutional responses to particular issues, but it does not establish a complete connection between the 4,968 comments, government action, and citizens' subsequent assessments. In accordance with the qualitative case-study design, sentiment classifications describe the composition of the comment corpus, thematic analysis identifies the concerns expressed, and official documents provide a separate basis for examining government responsiveness. The secondary comment corpus contains 4,968 records with inherited sentiment labels. Its reported source is the Kaggle notebook klasifikasi-sentimen-analisis-MBG. The analysis retains the original classifications: 2,486 comments were labelled negative, 2,212 neutral, and 270 positive. Table 1 reports their distribution. These are comment-level counts; they do not establish the number of distinct people participating in the discussion.

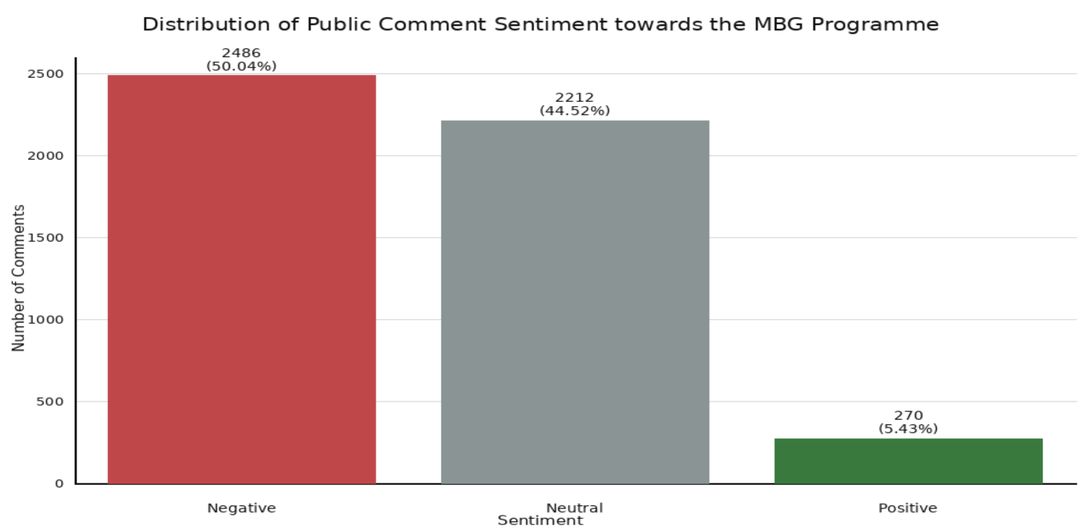

Figure 2. Distribution of Public Comment Sentiment towards the MBG Programme
Source: Kaggle dataset processed by the researchers, 2026

Table 1. Dominant Keywords by Sentiment Category

Sentiment	Dominant Keywords
Negative	food poisoning, poison, corruption, wasteful, failed, rogue actors, stop, waste, mistargeted, budget
Neutral	evaluation, improve, continue, school kitchen, cash assistance, transparency, priority for poor regions
Positive	helped, happy, grateful, praise be to God, thank you, continue, employment opportunities

Source: Kaggle dataset processed by the researchers, 2026

Negative comments accounted for just over half of the corpus, while the neutral category was nearly as large. Positive comments constituted a small share of these records. This distribution identifies the balance of inherited labels within the dataset. It cannot establish the prevalence of support or opposition in the Indonesian population because the source does not provide a complete sampling frame, collection period, platform composition, or sufficient account-level information to assess coverage and repeated participation. The data also do not support a time trend or a before-and-after comparison of government communication. The sentiment categories require substantive interpretation. A negative label does not by itself demonstrate government inaction, and a neutral label does not necessarily indicate conditional acceptance. The latter interpretation applies only to comments that explicitly combine support for the programme's aims with requests for implementation changes. Likewise, positive sentiment concerns favourable expressions in the corpus and cannot establish satisfaction among programme beneficiaries generally.

The thematic findings are organised around the five issue categories specified in the coding protocol. These categories describe the subject of a comment independently of its inherited sentiment label. A concern may therefore occur across sentiment categories, and a comment may address more than one issue. The expressions discussed below are thematic summaries of the findings, rather than newly verified verbatim quotations. Without a reported frequency table for the thematic codes, the categories cannot be ranked by prevalence or treated as mutually exclusive shares of the 4,968 comments. Food safety and quality formed a central concern in the reported analysis. References to poisoning, unsafe ingredients, hygiene, and the quality of meals connected the programme's nutritional purpose with the conditions under which food was prepared and delivered. Their analytical significance lies in the concern that intended nutritional benefits depend on safe implementation. These expressions identify demands for protection, explanation, and investigation. They do not independently verify the cause, severity, or geographical extent of any food-safety incident.

Transparency and accountability concerned the use of programme funds, procurement arrangements, supervision, and responsibility for implementation problems. Expressions associated with corruption, waste, budgets, and problematic implementers communicated suspicion or requests for scrutiny. Such allegations remain claims made within digital discourse. The empirical finding is the presence of demands for accessible financial information and accountable oversight; the comments do not establish that corruption or collusion occurred. This distinction prevents criticism of programme governance from being converted into an institutional finding without corroboration. Targeting and equity concerned who should receive support and which locations should receive priority. Suggestions to prioritise disadvantaged communities and frontier, outermost, and disadvantaged regions, commonly described as 3T areas, framed MBG as a question of distribution as well as nutrition. Proposals for cash assistance or greater parental involvement also indicated preferences about the form of assistance. These positions cannot be combined into a single public mandate, since they may represent different or incompatible delivery preferences. Their common analytical content is a request to explain beneficiary selection and the allocation of programme resources.

Implementation capacity and distribution concerned kitchen readiness, school-level arrangements, portions, logistics, and the continuity of meal provision. Suggestions to evaluate the programme or allow schools to manage provision referred to how the intervention should operate. This category is distinct from food safety when the comment principally concerns delivery arrangements, although the two may overlap when logistical problems are linked to meal quality. The thematic pattern therefore directs attention to operational explanations and evidence of implementation follow-up, rather than to programme promotion alone. Policy benefits and programme acceptance appeared in favourable accounts of children's meals, reduced household expenditure, and local employment opportunities. These expressions preserve evidence of support within a corpus containing substantial criticism. They are perceptions or expectations of benefit, rather than measurements of nutritional improvement, household savings, or employment effects. The reported neutral material also includes suggestions to continue MBG with stronger evaluation, oversight, or targeting. Where continuation and a requested change appear together, the interpretation of conditional acceptance is justified at the level of that comment, without extending it to the entire neutral category. The keyword material supports this thematic description but does not independently establish coding decisions. Terms such as evaluation, transparency, kitchen, and continue depend on their surrounding text: continue may express endorsement or a demand for continuation only after correction. Because numerical word counts and a ranked vocabulary are not reported here, these terms are presented as indicative expressions. Neither their ordering nor their inclusion establishes the relative frequency of a theme.

Evidence of government responsiveness

The institutional analysis examines communications issued by the National Nutrition Agency (Badan Gizi Nasional, BGN), using the actions of to listen, to explain, and to adapt as an analytical framework (Esaiasson et al., 2017). Their original formulation concerns learning about citizen preferences, justifying decisions, and adapting decisions towards majority opinion. Here, policy follow-up is a case-specific indicator of implementation responsiveness. Since the comment corpus cannot identify a population majority, corrective action is not treated as evidence of alignment with majority preferences. The five indicators below operationalise the study's documentary assessment; they are not presented as an independently validated scale derived from the original theory.

Table 2 makes explicit the evidence required for each indicator and the limits of the available assessment. The actions are assessed separately because an institution may acknowledge an issue or explain a decision without demonstrating a completed adjustment.

The evidence does not establish that the three actions occurred in a uniform sequence. No composite responsiveness score is calculated.

Table 2. Operationalisation and assessment of the five responsiveness indicators

Indicator	*Analytical action*	*Evidence required*	*Assessment supported here*
Response speed	To listen	Dates for a specific public issue and the first official acknowledgement or answer. Categories: same day, one to three days, more than three days, or not traceable.	Not traceable for the comment corpus. Publication dates alone do not identify when an issue was first raised or first answered.
Response substance	To explain	An explicit answer to the issue, with relevant reasons, evidence, responsibility, or proposed action. General promotion is insufficient for a different concern.	Issue-specific explanations are documented. Their presence does not show that every concern received an answer.
Communicative empathy	To explain	Explicit recognition of concern, harm, or affected groups. Polite language alone is insufficient.	Recognition of affected pupils is visible in the Bogor statement. How citizens received the message is unmeasured.
Information transparency	To explain	Attributable and checkable information about procedures, responsibilities, evidence, complaint channels, or follow-up status.	Sources identify officials and procedures. Published explanations do not by themselves verify operational performance or complaint closure.
Policy follow-up	To adapt	Documented investigation, corrective action, evaluation, procedural change, or reported outcome relevant to the issue; distinguish completed actions from commitments.	Investigative steps are reported and further measures announced. Completion and links to individual corpus comments remain unestablished.

Source: Author Analysis

The supplementary documentary evidence comprises six BGN communications published between 10 May and 27 September 2025 and retrieved on 9 September 2026. Each record identifies an issuing institution, a publication date, and an issue-relevant statement. Table 3 links these records to the thematic categories. The publication range defines this documentary subset, not the collection period of the comments. Because the latter cannot be established, the records cannot be assumed to precede or follow particular comments in the dataset. The strength of the connection varies. Some documents explicitly acknowledge a named incident or a circulating social-media issue. Others explain a programme mechanism relevant to a theme without identifying a triggering complaint. A complaint-channel announcement demonstrates an opportunity for input. None of these relationships establishes that a specific record answered an identifiable comment among the 4,968 observations. The matrix therefore distinguishes direct recognition of an issue from thematic correspondence and communication infrastructure.

Table 3. Public issues and the corresponding official documentary evidence

Issue and record	*Official source*	*Content of the record*	*Connection and follow-up status*
Food safety and quality R1	(Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025a)	Acknowledged suspected poisoning in Bogor; reported food testing and warnings; committed to medical support and further food-handler training.	Explicit incident acknowledgement. Investigation was reported; completed remedial outcomes and links to corpus comments are not established.
Implementation and distribution R2	(Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025b)	Addressed viral posts about raw-food packages in South Tangerang; clarified the absence of an authorised policy for that arrangement and described preparation of holiday guidance.	Explicit recognition of a social-media issue. Explanation and intended adjustment are visible; publication does not demonstrate completed correction.
Transparency and accountability R3	(Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025c)	Explained internal oversight, advance operating payments and virtual accounts; referred to a payment-arrears case in Kalibata.	Issue-relevant financial explanation. Oversight procedures are described; resolution of corruption allegations or the cited arrears is not verified.
Policy benefits and acceptance R4	(Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025d)	Presented the programme's stated links with employment and local food suppliers.	Thematic correspondence with perceived benefits. Programme explanation provides no direct evidence of complaint handling or independently measured benefits.
Targeting and equity R5	(Badan Gizi Nasional, 2026)	Described smaller modular kitchens suited to geographically difficult 3T locations.	A delivery arrangement relevant to territorial equity. Its adoption because of the sampled comments and its local outcomes are not established.
Access to complaint handling R6	(Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025e)	Announced complaint and information hotlines, operating hours, and verification and follow-up of reports.	Evidence of an intake mechanism. The announcement does not demonstrate processing or closure of individual complaints.

Source: Author Analysis

Listening and the visibility of issue recognition

Listening is observable most clearly when an official communication identifies a concern in public discussion, as illustrated by R2. The separate hotline announcement established a route for complaints and information requests and described verification and follow-up (Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025e). These observations support the presence of issue recognition and arrangements for receiving input. They do not demonstrate routine monitoring of all the platforms or comments represented in the secondary dataset. The speed indicator remains unassessable for the corpus. A press release supplies a publication date, but the analysis lacks a reliable paired record of the initial comment or issue and the first institutional acknowledgement. Even language describing action as immediate cannot substitute for those timestamps. Accordingly, the findings do not classify the government as generally fast or slow. They identify a limitation in tracing the timing of the response, separate from the documented existence of a response.

The records show substantive variation in government communication. The South Tangerang statement also reported asking local service units to survey pupils' likely holiday attendance, describing an information gathering step without reporting its results (Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025b). The financial statement identified oversight responsibilities and payment procedures (Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025c). These examples document explanations directed at operational issues and qualify a blanket finding that official communication consisted only of promotion. The acknowledgement of affected pupils in R1 meets the documentary criterion for recognition of harm; recipients' perceptions remain unmeasured. Transparency is also partial: attributable explanations make institutional positions and procedures visible, but they do not independently verify implementation. The reviewed financial release does not provide an audit result resolving the allegations expressed in the comment themes, and its description of virtual-account monitoring does not establish public access to those accounts (Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025c).

The communication about employment and local supply chains corresponds to the benefits theme (Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025d). Its relevance is limited to explaining the programme's stated rationale and the institution's account of its benefits. It does not answer food-safety or procurement complaints. This separation avoids counting any favourable government statement as a response to every category of criticism.

Adapting implementation and documenting follow-up

The status of follow-up differs across the records. In the Bogor case, BGN's report of investigative steps is distinct from its subsequent or conditional commitments (Badan Gizi Nasional, 2025a). R1 supplies no completed investigation report or confirmation that all corrective measures occurred. An announcement can therefore establish an institutional commitment without demonstrating its fulfilment. Evidence of reduced incidents would require a separate assessment. The modular-kitchen statement described an implementation arrangement intended to accommodate difficult geography and smaller beneficiary groups in 3T locations (Badan Gizi Nasional, 2026). Its content corresponds to demands concerning territorial access. However, the document does not establish that this arrangement resulted from the comments in the dataset. It is therefore evidence of a relevant programme design feature, rather than a demonstrated feedback-driven change. Similarly, preparation of guidance is analytically distinct from its enactment, implementation, and evaluation. These distinctions yield a more specific finding than either complete responsiveness or complete inaction. Public documents make some recognition, explanation, and follow-up visible. Within this documentary subset, they do not allow a full reconstruction from an identifiable comment to an assigned action, a completed outcome, and communication of that outcome back to the contributor. This is a limit on what the available records demonstrate; it does not establish that no additional action or communication occurred elsewhere.

Regulatory context and the scope of the identified gap

The selected regulatory material provides evidence of existing obligations relevant to responsiveness. Law No. 25 of 2009, Articles 36–37, addresses complaint mechanisms, responsible personnel, follow-up, and documentation. Article 44(3) requires a response within

14 days of receiving a complaint, including information on whether its contents are complete. This provision concerns a defined complaint procedure; it cannot be applied automatically to every social-media comment. It also means that a general claim that Indonesia has no complaint-response standards would be inaccurate. The public-information framework is similarly distinct from unrestricted digital commentary. An explanatory article on the Ministry of Finance website describes the formal information-request process under Law No. 14 of 2008, including a maximum 10-working-day response period, extendable by up to seven working days with notice. Government social-media guidelines also include responsiveness and integration based in Regulation No. 83 of 2012. Presidential Regulation No. 95 of 2018 provides the wider framework for electronic government. These sources identify relevant standards and institutional context; their existence is separate from evidence of compliance in the MBG cases. Presidential Regulation No. 115 of 2025 on MBG governance was promulgated on 17 November 2025, after the six communications in Table 3. It is therefore treated as subsequent governance context, rather than a retrospective benchmark for those responses. Across the selected evidence, the unresolved question is how the observed digital issues entered an applicable complaint or information procedure and how their handling was documented. The study does not establish the absence of all operational guidance, a nationwide regulatory vacuum, or a causal effect of regulation on response quality.

Synthesis within the responsiveness framework

The combined evidence supports a bounded account of digital responsiveness. The comment corpus records substantial criticism alongside neutral expressions and a smaller positive category. Its substantive content identifies concerns about safety, accountability, equitable targeting, and delivery, together with perceived programme benefits. The official-document analysis adds evidence that some related issues received acknowledgement, explanations, and reported or announced follow-up. These institutional records strengthen the empirical basis for examining responsiveness independently of the sentiment percentages. The principal unresolved connection is between identifiable contributors, institutional action, and contributors' subsequent evaluations. Perceived responsiveness, trust, policy acceptance, and legitimacy were not measured as outcomes in this study. They cannot be inferred from sentiment labels or the publication of official statements. The same evidence does not establish internal bureaucratic motives or a causal explanation based on organisational culture. Within these limits, the Digital Responsiveness Loop Model serves as a framework for organising the observable and unobserved connections between discourse and government action. The findings do not validate the full loop, establish a causal mechanism, or demonstrate that the three responsiveness actions necessarily produce democratic governance outcomes.

Discussion

The findings indicate that digital responsiveness in the Free Nutritious Meal Programme (MBG) is observable through several official acknowledgements, explanations, and reported or announced follow-up actions. However, the available evidence does not establish a complete connection between the comments analysed, government action, and citizens' subsequent evaluations. This distinction provides the central interpretation of the study: the empirical record supports an examination of how particular concerns are addressed in public communication, while leaving the broader responsiveness–acceptance relationship untested. The coexistence of critical digital discourse and documented government responses therefore requires an analysis of the relevance, content, and evidentiary status of those responses. The sentiment distribution provides a descriptive entry point into this analysis. Negative comments constitute the largest category, accounting for 50.04% of the corpus, alongside a substantial neutral category of 44.52% and a smaller positive category of 5.43%. These proportions describe the inherited classifications within the dataset. They do not establish the distribution of preferences among the Indonesian population or measure government responsiveness. Moreover, the neutral category cannot be interpreted collectively as conditional acceptance. Such an interpretation is appropriate only where the substantive content explicitly supports programme continuation subject to particular improvements. The analytical value of sentiment classification consequently lies in identifying the composition of the observed discourse and directing attention to the concerns expressed within it.

The thematic findings develop this descriptive account by distinguishing evaluations of programme objectives from concerns about implementation. Food safety, financial accountability, beneficiary targeting, distribution arrangements, and perceived benefits represent different objects of evaluation. A comment criticising meal quality does not necessarily reject the programme's nutritional objectives, just as an expression of support does not establish satisfaction with every implementation arrangement. Suggestions concerning delivery and targeting also identify alternatives that require further examination; they do not constitute a unified public mandate. This heterogeneity makes issue content essential to assessing responsiveness. A government statement about employment benefits, for example, may correspond to supportive discourse while leaving a specific question about food safety unanswered. This interpretation is consistent with the study's positioning as a qualitative case study incorporating an embedded descriptive sentiment component. Sentiment classification maps the corpus, thematic analysis identifies substantive concerns, and official-document analysis examines publicly observable institutional responses. Their integration occurs through comparison at the issue level. The 4,968 comments and six selected official records are different analytical units and cannot be used to calculate a response rate. One institutional statement may address concerns expressed in many comments, while a single comment may contain several issues. The relevant question is whether an official record addresses an identifiable concern and what evidence it provides of acknowledgement, explanation, or follow-up.

The responsiveness–acceptance framework helps clarify the significance of these distinctions. Esaiasson et al., (2017) identify listening, explaining, and adapting as three forms of responsiveness, while distinguishing institutional actions from citizens' perceptions of those actions and their acceptance of policy decisions. This separation is particularly useful for the MBG case because the available sources primarily concern expressed views and official communication. They offer limited access to whether contributors encountered a response, considered it relevant, or believed that their concerns had received meaningful attention. Consequently, the publication of a response can be examined as an institutional action without assuming a corresponding improvement in perceived responsiveness or policy acceptance.

Applying this framework to programme implementation nevertheless requires an explicit theoretical qualification. In the original formulation, adaptation concerns adjusting policy decisions towards majority opinion. Here, policy follow-up is used as a context-specific indicator of implementation responsiveness, encompassing reported corrections, evaluations, and proposed changes to delivery arrangements. This extension is appropriate to the study's focus on how an existing programme handles implementation concerns, but it does not demonstrate alignment with majority preferences. The comment dataset cannot establish those preferences, and an administrative adjustment may arise from technical monitoring or operational requirements independently of digital criticism. Evidence of adjustment and evidence that public input informed that adjustment therefore require separate assessment (Hastings & Gannon, 2022).

The five indicators operationalise these theoretical concerns for documentary analysis. Response speed addresses the timing of observable acknowledgement; substance, empathy, and transparency examine different qualities of explanation; and policy follow up examines evidence relevant to adaptation. These indicators are analytical criteria developed for this study, rather than five dimensions originally specified by Esaiasson et al. Speed also captures only a limited aspect of listening. A prompt acknowledgement does not establish that an issue has been understood or investigated, while an untraceable response interval cannot be classified as delay. The indicators consequently support differentiated interpretation rather than a composite responsiveness score or a fixed sequence through which every response must proceed.

The clarification concerning raw-food packages in South Tangerang illustrates the value of identifying an explicit connection between an issue and an official response. BGN directly referred to a controversy circulating on social media, clarified that the reported arrangement did not reflect an authorised policy, and described preparations for holiday guidance and information gathering about pupil attendance. This record supports an interpretation of issue recognition and substantive explanation, together with an announced process relevant to future delivery arrangements. It provides stronger evidence of responsiveness to a digital controversy than a statement sharing only the general topic of MBG. Nevertheless, it cannot be matched to particular comments in the analysed corpus, and it does not independently establish that the proposed guidance or subsequent corrections were implemented.

The response to suspected food poisoning in Bogor further demonstrates why communication content and implementation outcomes must be distinguished. BGN reported laboratory testing and warnings to the relevant service unit, alongside commitments concerning medical treatment and additional training. Acknowledgement of harm and commitments to assistance provide documentary grounds for examining empathy and follow-up. They do not establish whether affected families experienced the communication as empathetic or whether the announced measures resolved the underlying problem. The theoretical implication is that responsiveness has an observable communicative component whose reception and practical consequences require additional evidence (Liu et al., 2024).

Transparency requires similar differentiation. The official account of layered financial oversight identifies supervisory responsibilities and financial arrangements, thereby providing information relevant to concerns about programme accountability. However, disclosure of an oversight mechanism does not establish that its operation, findings, or corrective outcomes are publicly verifiable. This distinction is consistent with Heimstädt & Dobusch, (2020) argument that the relationship between transparency and accountability should itself be investigated empirically. Applied to MBG, the question becomes how disclosed information enables people to examine institutional handling of a concern and assess the explanation offered. The present evidence identifies relevant disclosure while leaving its use and consequences unresolved.

The modular-kitchen initiative for disadvantaged, frontier, and outermost areas illustrates a further boundary in interpreting adaptation. Its stated design corresponds to concerns about geographic access and distribution, making it relevant to the targeting and equity theme. However, thematic correspondence does not establish that the initiative resulted from the comments analysed. Nor does an announcement demonstrate improved access for intended beneficiaries. This record can therefore inform discussion of an implementation arrangement addressing a related problem, while its origins, delivery, and effects remain separate empirical questions. Such distinctions prevent every programme development from being classified automatically as an instance of democratic responsiveness.

These examples connect the responsiveness framework to digital governance through the institutional handling of publicly expressed concerns. Khan identifies information provision, public feedback, and service-related monitoring among the uses of social media in government (Gohar F. Khan, 2017). The present study interprets their democratic relevance through opportunities for contributors to raise concerns, examine official reasons, and scrutinise follow-up. Digital communication may make these activities visible, but visibility alone does not establish reciprocal engagement. A response issued through an official website, for instance, may address a social-media controversy without demonstrating that the original contributors received or evaluated it. The connection between channels is therefore part of the empirical problem. Within this interpretation, the Digital Responsiveness Loop Model contributes an organising framework for examining connections that are often treated as self-evident. The findings inform its components concerning digital discourse, issue recognition, and publicly communicated response actions. Perceived responsiveness, democratic governance outcomes, and the incorporation of subsequent citizen evaluations into policy learning remain untested connections (Esaiasson et al., 2017; Tomkiv et al., 2017). The model's contribution is thus a contextual elaboration of the responsiveness framework that makes the evidentiary requirements of digital feedback explicit. Establishing a complete loop would require evidence that an issue was received, considered, addressed, and communicated back, followed by evidence concerning citizen evaluation and institutional learning. The present study neither validates that full sequence nor demonstrates that listening, explaining, and adapting necessarily occur in a fixed order.

The bounded regulatory findings further refine the interpretation. The instruments examined already address public complaints, access to information, and government communication. For example, Law No. 25 of 2009 establishes responsibilities for complaint handling and follow-up. The unresolved question concerns how particular social-media issues enter applicable institutional procedures and how their handling becomes publicly traceable. Because an ordinary comment is not automatically equivalent to a formal complaint or information request, compliance cannot be assessed without identifying the relevant procedure and qualifying records. Presidential Regulation No. 115 of 2025 also postdates the selected official responses and therefore provides subsequent regulatory context rather than a retrospective performance benchmark. The practical implications concern documentation and public explanation within these existing arrangements. Program authorities could make issue handling easier to examine by recording the concern received, the responsible unit, the initial acknowledgement, the evidence considered, and the status of follow-up. Public updates could distinguish actions already completed from measures under investigation or still planned. Where a suggested change is declined, explaining the reasons and relevant constraints would make the decision more accessible to scrutiny. These are recommendations derived from the analytical framework and the limitations of the available records; their effects on public trust or programme acceptance have not been demonstrated by this study. Participation also requires attention to whose concerns become visible. Given the dataset's unknown sampling coverage, comment volume cannot determine the relative needs of beneficiaries or the wider population. As a normative implication, digital issue monitoring should be complemented by opportunities for beneficiaries, families, schools, and people with limited digital access to communicate their experiences. Prioritisation should consider the seriousness and substance of a concern, including potential harm, rather than relying exclusively on online visibility (br Surbakti et al., 2025; Dommett & Power, 2023). Such arrangements would permit a broader assessment of implementation needs while preserving the distinction between social-media discourse and population-level preferences.

Several limitations condition these interpretations. Inherited sentiment labels and incomplete provenance restrict what can be established about classification validity and coverage. The unavailable comment collection period prevents reliable temporal matching with official records and rules out conclusions about changes in sentiment following particular responses. Official releases document institutional accounts, but they do not independently verify implementation or provide a complete inventory of government activity. Internal decision-making processes and citizen evaluations also fall outside the empirical corpus. Explanations invoking bureaucratic inertia, organisational culture, fragmented authority, or limited personnel therefore remain possible subjects for future investigation, rather than findings established here. The same limitation applies to claims concerning declining trust or democratic legitimacy.

Future research could strengthen the model by following identifiable issue episodes across time, linking dated public concerns with official acknowledgement, investigation, decisions, implementation evidence, and subsequent contributor evaluations. Comparisons across episodes with different documented outcomes would help examine when explanation is followed by correction and when concerns remain unresolved. Institutional interviews could investigate how information enters decision-making, while interviews or surveys with affected citizens could assess whether responses were received and considered meaningful. These extensions would allow the proposed connections to be examined more directly. Within its exploratory scope, the present study contributes an issue-based interpretation of digital responsiveness that keeps expressed sentiment, documented government action, and democratic outcomes analytically distinct.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that public discussion of the Free Nutritious Meal Programme on social media was dominated by negative and neutral sentiment reflecting criticism, concern, and conditional acceptance of programme implementation. The findings are not presented as representative of all public opinion in Indonesia, but as signals of digital opinion indicating public pressure on programme governance and communication.

By adapting Esaiasson et al., (2017) *responsiveness-acceptance connection* theory, the study finds that *government digital responsiveness* should be understood as a sequence of listening, explaining, and adapting. The government has established complaint channels and official communication, but democratic responsiveness is determined not only by the presence of channels; it also depends on the government's capacity to build *perceived responsiveness*, namely the public perception that criticism and aspirations genuinely receive attention.

This study contributes by extending democratic-responsiveness theory to the context of *digital democratic governance*. In practical terms, it underscores the importance of digital-response standards, the integration of cross-agency communication systems, stronger public-official competencies, and public-participation mechanisms that allow citizens' criticism to enter the policy-improvement process. The study is limited by its use of a secondary sentiment dataset and the absence of interviews with government actors or citizens. Future research could therefore adopt a *mixed-methods* design to test the relationships among digital responsiveness, *perceived responsiveness*, and public acceptance of policy.

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