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The Portrayal of Rohingya Refugees in Indonesian News Media: A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This research investigated the representation of Rohingya refugees stranded in Aceh province in the Indonesian news media during the four-year crisis between 2020 and 2023. The study aimed to examine how Rohingya refugees were represented in the media during the crisis using the Critical Discourse Analysis and the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA). The research employed a mixed method analysis to analyse the corpus data of 46,769 words extracted from 62 news articles published in two mainstream Indonesian publications, namely the regional Serambi Indonesia and the national Jakarta Post, between June 24, 2020, and March 27, 2023. Using corpus linguistics and Van Dijk's CDA, the research uncovered four prominent argumentation strategies used in the media to portray the refugee crisis. Serambi Indonesia and the Jakarta Post utilised the Humanitarianism and Administration argumentation the most, concentrating on precarious conditions and efforts to handle the influx of refugees. Nevertheless, the local daily Serambi Indonesia used some Threat/Danger argumentation, portraying refugees as dangers and threats to local safety. The study further reveals how the media's alignment with the government agenda is decisive for the press to construct public narratives. The narrative is expected to influence people's attitudes and behaviours toward refugees in the province of Aceh.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Mid-year 2020 has become the starting point of Rohingya refugees to massively come to the Indonesian archipelago. According to [UNHCR \(2023\)](#), since 2022, the number of Rohingya refugees in Indonesia has multiplied six times. There are thousands of Rohingya refugees now being sheltered across the country. UNHCR projected that more Rohingya refugees will come in the future as they still face prosecution in their country. In the Aceh province alone, 656 Rohingya refugees were being sheltered in many parts of the region ([UNHCR, 2023](#)). Since then, headlines in Indonesian news media and Aceh province have shown pictures of Rohingya refugees entering Aceh province in their daily coverage. As the number of refugees in Aceh Province has risen, news media, especially local news outlets, has paid more attention to these newcomers. In 2022, the local daily *Serambi Indonesia* published over 150 articles about Rohingya migration. After a few months of handling the refugees, a debate arose among politicians at the end of 2022 concerning which parties should take responsibility for handling the Rohingya problem, whether it is the central government or the provincial government.

Numerous research on critical discourse analysis has shown that news media play an essential role in influencing people's attitudes and behaviour toward refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. Most of these studies have been conducted in first-world countries, namely the UK, USA, EU, Canada, and Australia. These include studies conducted by [Baker et al. \(2007\)](#), [Bartoszewicz et al. \(2022\)](#), [Macauley and Deppeler \(2020\)](#), [O'Doherty and Lecouteur \(2007\)](#), [Parker et al., \(2022\)](#), [Saeed \(2007\)](#), [Wodak and Richardson \(2013\)](#). The commonality among these studies is that in order to construct narratives about refugees, these media employed a specific type of argumentation. For example, research by [O'Doherty and Lecouteur \(2007\)](#) on the media representation of refugees in Australia is an example of prior research on the same subject. They discovered that the Australian print media intentionally marginalised incoming refugees from war-torn countries by labelling them 'illegal immigrants' and 'boat people'. Similarly, a study conducted by [Macauley and Deppeler \(2020\)](#) demonstrated how young immigrants from Sudan attracted 'persistent negative media attention'.

This undertaking research raised the question of how Indonesian news outlets operating nationally and locally have presented the coverage of Rohingya refugees in the Aceh province. It aimed to analyse the type of argumentation strategy the selected news media employed to represent the Rohingya refugees in their coverage. The study seeks to fill several gaps; first, many refugee studies focus on analysing frame and contextual analysis, and this research examines argumentation strategies analysis. Second, as most research focused on the condition of refugees in developed countries such as the UK, USA, and European Union, this research looks at the state of refugees in Aceh province, which is the under-developed and the third poorest province in Indonesia ([CNN Indonesia, 2022](#)). Lastly, unlike prior research that relied on a qualitative approach, the present study used a mix-method design from corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis to examine the portrayal of Rohingya

refugees in the Indonesian context. It thus intends to add a new perspective to comprehend the news media's images of Rohingya refugees with a higher level of validity and reliability of its findings. For clarity, the research question that this study attempted to answer is "How did Indonesian local and national news media represent the refugees during the Rohingya refugee crisis between 2020 and 2023?"

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA)

Corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis is rooted in corpus linguistics (CL). [Lin and Adolph \(2023, p. 37\)](#) said CL examines language by analysing natural language samples. They pointed out:

Corpus linguistics is the scientific study of a principled collection of machine-readable texts, which can be spoken, written, or multimodal. It incorporates a range of methods and practices for compiling and interrogating language corpora to reveal patterns underlying real language-in-use. As an applied linguistic discipline, corpus linguistics has attracted the interest of lexicographers, grammarians, language teachers, sociolinguists, psycholinguists, discourse analysts, language acquisition researchers, new media, medical communication, and computer-assisted language learning. In the digital age, where terabytes of language data can easily be produced daily by individuals, (social) media, and organisations, corpus linguistics is casting new light on digital communication and modern life and informing the development of new and smart technologies ([Lin & Adolph, 2023, p. 37](#)).

Corpus-based research has emerged as the prevailing trend and methodology in modern linguistics. Researchers frequently employed CL to examine several facets of language, including syntax, semantics, language pedagogy, translation, and discourse analysis. CL is a scientific approach to studying and describing language that relies on corpora as the primary data source and a starting point for research. The system incorporates all the information from the corpus. It aims to identify the co-occurrences, patterns, tendencies, and probabilities of elements, features, or feature groups supported by statistical significance measurements. CL focuses primarily on quantitative analysis and is mainly concerned with the specific context of a given circumstance ([Ancarno, 2020](#)). CL has also been used to study phenomena at the level of discourse features, such as the characteristics of language features, the different ways a particular function, the description of other language varieties, and the identification of where specific features occur throughout texts ([Baker, 2012](#)). Meanwhile, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a theory proposed by Teun A. van Dijk and Norman Fairclough in 1980. The theory explores the connection between the use of language and the social and political context in which it occurs. It explores issues such as gender, ethnicity, cultural difference, ideology, and identity and how these are both constructed and reflected in texts. It also investigates ways in which language constructs and is constructed by social relationships ([Van Dijk, 1993](#)).

Putting together CL and critical discourse analysis led to the emergence of Corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA) (Brookes, 2014). Cheng (2012) stated that CACDA has increasingly gathered scholarly attention. Its focus was on research that examines issues related to immigrants, socioeconomic disparities, the marginalisation of certain minority groups, and political disputes. Today, the name CACDA refers to an overarching designation for research that integrates CL with CDA. It encompasses a wide range of studies, such as corpus-based critical discourse analysis, studies on corpora and discourse, and those focusing on speech and corpora. CACDA, which encompasses research combining CL and CDA analysis methods, is proposed as a more suitable descriptor for discourse analytic study's interdisciplinary nature than CDA, primarily associated with linguistic research. CACDA is commonly regarded as sufficiently adaptable to encompass all research that combines corpus linguistics with critical discourse analysis.

2.2 Discourse Historical Approach (DHA)

As stated previously, in qualitatively analysing the data, the study utilised the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) introduced by Wodak and Meyer (2009). In analysing refugees' discourse, asylum seekers, and immigrants (RASIM), they outlined the argumentation/argumentative strategy's analytical framework, which involves six types: Humanitarianism/Vulnerability, Administration/Responsibility, Number, Burden, and History. According to Wodak (2009), argumentation is a technique that requires either explicit or inferred premises. The "conclusion rules or content-related grounds that link an argument or group of reasons to a conclusion or claim are argumentative methods. It justifies the transition from the argumentation to the conclusion. This strategy is essential for categorising arguments that appear convincing. It is frequently employed in biased discourses against outgroups" (Wodak, 2009, p. 34). The analysis specifically focuses on the linguistic dimension of the texts, including the naming of the participant, predictor, and object. Using this analytical framework, the research analysed the selected article headlines to find the most dominant argumentation strategies employed in the selected papers.

Table 1. Argumentation strategies in discourse historical approach (adapted from Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

Argumentation Strategies	Warrants
Threat/danger/criminality	If there are specific dangers/threats, one should do something about them.
Responsibility/administration	If a state or group of persons is responsible for the emergence of a specific problem, it or they should act to find a solution to that problem
Humanitarianism/vulnerability	If a political action or decision does or does not conform with human rights or Humanitarianism convictions and values, the one should or should not perform or take it.
Numbers	If numbers prove a specific topos, a specific action should (not) be performed or carried out
Burden	If a specific problem burdens a person, institution, or country, one should act to diminish that burden.
History	Because history teaches specific actions have specific consequences, one should perform or omit a specific step comparable to the historical example.

2.3 CACDA on the Portrayal of Refugees Across News Media

Melvin DeFleur and Timothy Plax proposed the Media Portrayal theory in 1980 (as cited in [Chen & Zhou, 2022](#)). Media portrayal creates a way in which the news media presents or represents events, people, and issues to the public through various forms of communication. It involves shaping, reshaping, and stabilising the meanings that are intended to create a narrative and influence public perspectives ([Serafis et al., 2020](#)). Relevant to this, [Wodak and Meyer \(2009\)](#), in their thorough studies of refugee-related news discourses, identified the most common narrative news media established when it comes to refugee issues. They further argued that these narratives can be approached by a formulation of argumentation strategies employed in news coverages. The use of argumentation strategies in analysing media portrayals of refugees has been conducted in many studies. For instance, the research conducted by [Esses et al. \(2013\)](#) in their studies on the portrayal of immigrants and refugees revealed that refugees were actively portrayed as ‘burden’ by news media, referring to them as ‘enemies at the gate’. Similarly, [Mustafa and Pilus \(2020\)](#) found that Canadian Right-leaning and Left-leaning media used different strategies to portray Syrian refugees, with Right-leaning media often associating them with threats and criminality.

Corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA) has been proficiently employed to examine the discourses of many marginalised communities, including refugees. In the realm of literature, the initial collaborative investigation with CACDA was conducted by [Baker and McEnery \(2005\)](#). Using a corpus-based methodology, they analysed the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in texts from the United Nations and newspapers. They found that newspaper texts contained discourses that portrayed migrants as commodities, intruders, nuisances, or even floods. Additionally, negative themes were also identified in the texts produced by the UNHCR, highlighting the challenge of resisting prevailing narratives. They put forward that using words was determined to be a crucial element in upholding discussions on asylum seekers. By analysing the usage of terminology, such as ‘failed’ versus ‘rejected’, the hidden sentiments of the writers toward the subject can be uncovered ([Baker & McEnery, 2005](#)).

[Aluthman \(2019\)](#) utilised CACDA to scrutinise the framing of immigration in the Brexit corpus. The study’s corpus comprised 108,452,923 tokens from news articles, tweets, and blogs about Brexit. Corpus-based statistics, including collocation, keyword, and concordance, approached the data analysis in the research. The study showed that immigration is a prominent issue within the corpus. An investigation of the terms ‘immigration’ and ‘immigrants’ revealed mixed perspectives on immigrants in EU discourse.

[O’Regan and Riordan \(2018\)](#) undertook a study comparing the portrayal of RASIM in Irish and UK publications. They employed CL and CDA to examine how refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants were portrayed in the UK and Irish magazines between September and November 2015. The analysis indicated that anti-immigrant sentiment in the mainstream press is neither inherently inevitable nor prone to increase when a specific threshold of immigrants is achieved. Amidst current global migration patterns and political difficulties, one can contend that media portrayals of RASIM significantly influence public opinion and contribute to a climate of apprehension. This is achieved through the depiction of refugees and migrants as potential dangers to general security, thereby reinforcing existing stereotypes.

Kitishat et al. (2020) conducted a comprehensive investigation of the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordanian publications. The analysis employed the CACDA technique. The research corpus data included 10.140 articles from mainstream news media from 2016 to 2018. These articles contained 103.170 different word kinds and a total of 1.956.589 tokens. The research suggested that Jordanians view Syrians as 'relatives' and 'guests'. Jordanian newspapers, however, magnified the detrimental effects of Syrian immigration on the Jordanian economy, education, healthcare, and other sectors. Jordanians voiced dissatisfaction with the competition posed by Syrians for their resources and access to government services.

Sijani (2023) used CACDA to examine how Syrian refugees were portrayed across four prominent Canadian English-language newspapers from December 2015 to December 2017. This research identified three dominant themes: intake, integration, and concern, that were used to portray Syrian refugees throughout the entire political spectrum. The findings suggested that implementing a more inclusive immigration policy did not eliminate the prejudiced and discriminatory portrayals deeply embedded in media coverage of refugees. However, it can create a foundation for a more robust and compassionate treatment of refugees in the media.

A lack of research has been undertaken concerning the Rohingya refugee situation. The researchers found a lack of corpus-based studies examining the perspectives on Rohingya refugees. For instance, Isti'anah (2019) employed Critical Discourse Analysis to examine how Southeast Asian media portrayed the Rohingya in their headlines, focusing on utilising Halliday's textual function of language. The investigation showed that media outlets in Southeast Asia had parallels and variations in their portrayal of the Rohingya issue. Furthermore, Vu and Lynn (2020) used automated framing analysis and assessed textual aspects to study how the elite press in three nations framed the Rohingya refugee crisis in 2017. The findings indicated that the portrayal of the Rohingya was heavily influenced by ideology and culture.

Similarly, Al Farisy and Mandarani (2020) used textual analysis to examine CNN's portrayal of the Rohingya crisis. It was found that the Rohingya were portrayed as being vulnerable. The latest scholarly inquiry into the Rohingya refugee crisis was undertaken by Rashid and Saidin (2023) who conducted a qualitative content analysis to investigate the escalation of hostility towards Rohingya refugees among Malaysians on social media during the COVID-19 crisis. They argued that Malaysians' frustrations arose from reinforcing latent anxieties within social circles.

The research offered valuable insights into how Rohingya refugees were portrayed in the news media. However, as contended by Ancarno (2020), a linguistically grounded analysis is required to enhance the validity and empirical nature of the investigation. According to Baker and McEnery (2005), a corpus-assisted approach allows the analyst to understand the meanings and functions of specific word choices used in texts about refugees. On the other hand, CDA is employed to critically examine the smaller components of the text and interpret the findings within the broader social context. The utilisation of CACDA has demonstrated its effectiveness in examining the portrayal of refugees and other immigrant groups in the media (Sijani, 2023). This approach has been successfully applied in several countries, such as the UK (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008) and Australia (Salahshour, 2016). This research used this methodology to examine the portrayal of Rohingya refugees in the Indonesian news media.

3. METHODS

In answering the research question, two key elements were emphasised in this study. First, the research was synergically approached by corpus linguistics analysis and the theory of argumentation strategy, which is part of the more extensive theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This theoretical framework enables us to comprehend how the media influences narratives of social phenomena, forming socially shared perceptions and understandings of newly arrived individuals in mainstream society. Second, the study sought to compare, figure out, and analyse if commonalities and conflicting argumentative strategies were discovered in both types of news media.

This study employed Corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA) involving a mixed method to examine the portrayal of Rohingya refugees in two Indonesian news media, namely the *Serambi Indonesia* (SI) and *the Jakarta Post* (JP) between 2020 and 2023. When selecting the sources, the research was governed by three principles: first, the news items must be available online; second, the news items must be free of charge; and third, the news items must originate from popular sources with considerable viewership. SI is a printed and online newspaper circulated within the Aceh province that uses the Indonesian language. It was published by PT Aceh Media Grafika in 1970 and became the oldest and largest news media in the province. Furthermore, SI is chosen for analysis since it is the biggest and most widely circulated in the province of Aceh (Nurrahmi, 2022). Meanwhile, JP is a national Indonesian news media that uses the English language, published by PT Bina Media Tenggara in 1983. It is the only national news media that has an English version (Fitriani et al., 2021). The selection of JP is based on the fact that it covered a large number of Rohingya-related topics during the crisis between 2020 to 2023 compared to other national news media. Furthermore, in providing a smooth comparison between Indonesian and English data, the researchers first translated the SI's Indonesian language data into English and had it proofread carefully by a native speaker of English to maintain a proper context of the language. Then, it was proofread by a native Indonesian who holds a professorship in English-Indonesian translation studies in order to preserve the nuance of the original language.

Furthermore, the CACDA approach is often presented as discourse analysis whose validity is boosted by the use of corpus methods of analysis perceived as more “scientific” or “empirical” (Ancarno, 2020, p. 174). Quantitative refers to using corpus linguistic techniques, encompassing statistical analysis, frequency assessment of keywords, and examination of language patterns (collocates). Furthermore, qualitative research involves implementing argumentative strategies based on the Discourse Historical Approach analytical framework formulated by Wodak and Meyer (2009), which entails a meticulous critical analysis considering multiple and broader contexts.

3.1 Data Collection

The research analysed online news articles circulated by SI and JP media covering the Rohingya refugee crisis. Apart from size and circulation scale, the two-news media have a different ideological stance. SI can be considered a conservative-leaning news outlet as it identifies itself as ‘a Guardian of the Sharia law in Aceh’ (Nurrahmi, 2022). Meanwhile, JP is seen as a secular news media that puts the national

interest at first place (Fitriani et al., 2021). The news articles were made publicly and freely available online by the publishers to which the researcher needs no permission to retrieve them. The data collected were news containing headlines featuring the Rohingya refugee crisis in Aceh within a four-year publication period (2020-2023). The data were then compiled into the corpus data which had 217 news articles comprising 278.471 words. Among the 217 selected news articles, 186 articles were collected from SI and 31 from JP (see Table 2).

The data were gathered from the official websites of the news media using the keywords ‘Rohingya refugees in Aceh’ in the search box. There is an explanation for why there is a huge gap in the number of Rohingya-related news between the two selected news media. First, since SI is locally circulated within Aceh province, it has a higher frequency of covering the Rohingya crisis in its news. In addition, Rohingya became a predominant issue that attracted a large readership among the Acehnese people. Meanwhile, JP is a national-based news media operating nationwide and thus has lower coverage of the Rohingya crisis in Aceh province. However, it still has larger Rohingya-related news compared to other national-based news media. In comparing the imbalanced number of articles between the two selected news media, the research first normalised the data by using a down-sampling technique (Saldana, 2009). It aimed to reduce the size of the larger corpus, which was the SI corpus, to match the size of the smaller one (the JP Corpus). It involved selecting samples from the SI corpus randomly until its size matched the JP corpus. This ensured that both corpora had an equal number of samples (see Table 3).

Table 2. The details of corpus data.

News media	Rohingya-news articles	Words	Types
<i>Serambi Indonesia</i>	186	238.690	22.142
<i>The Jakarta Post</i>	31	39.781	5.551
Total	217	278.471	27.693

Table 3. The normalisation of corpus data.

News media	Rohingya-news articles	Words	Types
<i>Serambi Indonesia</i>	31	41.034	5.735
<i>The Jakarta Post</i>	31	39.781	5.551
Total	62	46.769	11.286

3.2 Data Analysis

The present study utilised the CADS framework developed by Baker and McEnery (2015), which categorises the analysis methods into four distinct stages. The initial stage entailed identifying and describing linguistic patterns by applying a corpus linguistic methodology. During this phase, the utilisation of keyword analysis was implemented. The significance of keywords in critical discourse analysis lies in their ability to function as access points for examining discourses (Baker, 2018). Generating the top 100 keywords involved comparing the ‘*Pengungsi Rohingya*’ [Rohingya refugees] of the 41.034-word *Serambi Indonesia* customised corpus and the 232.853.664-word Leipzig Corpora Collection of the Indonesian reference corpus. Furthermore, the ‘Rohingya refugees’ 39.781-word customised corpus of *the Jakarta Post* was contrasted against the 200.000.000-word British News Reference Corpus. The keyword analysis used Antconc’s latest corpus tool, employing the log-likelihood

significance metric. Subsequently, each keyword was examined on 50 randomly selected concordances. This examination aimed to categorise the concordances thematically and ascertain their respective themes.

The subsequent phase of analysis entailed the interpretation of the language patterns that were identified. Collocation analysis was utilised to examine the contextual usage of frequently occurring terms. This analysis aimed to understand how these keywords contributed to distinct discursive constructs. Collocates refer to words that often appear together close within textual contexts (Cheng, 2012). The calculations were performed using the Dice Coefficient (DC) statistical metric in the Antconc. The collocation window was configured to include four words on both sides of the node word and any collocates that appeared less than four times was excluded. Furthermore, the investigation also involved the analysis of keywords and collocates using concordance analysis.

The third stage involved a qualitative nature of analysis. In this study, the authors employed argumentative strategies as an analytical framework (Reisigl & Wodak, 2008). The top 100 keywords and collocates were analysed against this framework. It functioned to give the descriptive and interpretive findings into a broader social and political framework in the setting of Indonesia. Furthermore, the final phase, according to Baker (2012), involved a crucial assessment highlighting the potential ramifications of language usage, such as questioning who benefitted or might be potentially disempowered. This stage might also include interpreting the ideologies behind the employment of a particular discourse.

4. RESULTS

After analysing the data based on the quantitative aspect of keyword analysis using the Antconc concordance tool, 100 keywords were created in both news excerpts. Tables 4 and 5 display an example of keyword lists generated from the corpus of the investigated news media (SI and JP, respectively). They were categorised thematically, indicating the initial investigation phase against the following qualitative analysis of argumentative strategies based on the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) analytical framework.

Table 4. Thematic categories related to Rohingya refugees in SI.

Emerging categories	Examples of keywords
Threat/danger/criminality	<i>mencuri</i> 'steal', <i>melanggar</i> 'violate', <i>perdagangan manusia</i> 'human trafficking', <i>kabur</i> 'escape', <i>penyelundupan</i> 'smuggling', <i>ditangkap</i> 'arrested', <i>tersangka</i> 'suspect', <i>merusak</i> 'destroy'
Responsibility/administration	<i>penampungan</i> 'shelter', <i>dipindahkan</i> 'transferred', <i>satgas</i> 'taskforce', <i>menangani</i> 'handling', <i>pemerintah pusat</i> 'central government', <i>pemerintah Aceh</i> 'Aceh government', <i>koordinasi</i> 'coordination', <i>rekomendasi</i> 'recommendation', <i>konsul Amerika</i> 'US counsel', <i>relokasi</i> 'relocation', <i>DPRK</i> 'local council'
Humanitarianism/vulnerability	<i>pengungsi</i> 'refugees', <i>anak-anak</i> 'children', <i>bayi</i> 'baby', <i>menderita</i> 'suffering', <i>memprihatinkan</i> 'misery', <i>dikubur di laut</i> 'buried at sea', <i>terdampar</i> 'stranded', <i>diusir</i> 'persecuted', <i>pembunuhan massal</i> 'genocide', <i>kemanusiaan</i> 'humanity', <i>sakit</i> 'sick', <i>hamil</i> 'pregnant', <i>lemah</i> 'weak', <i>kelaparan</i> 'starving', <i>meninggal</i> 'died'.
Burden	<i>beban</i> 'burden', <i>masalah</i> 'problem'.

Table 5. Thematic categories related to Rohingya refugees in JP.

Emerging categories	Examples of keywords
Responsibility/ administration	shelter, transferred, taskforce, handling, central government, Aceh government, coordination, recommendation, US counsel, relocation, local council, commitment, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, help, accommodation, Rohingya taskforce, ASEAN, immigration office.
Humanitarianism/vulnerability	refugees, suffering, misery, buried at sea, stranded, persecuted, genocide, humanity, sincere, enthusiastic, flee, adoption, healthcare, killed, raped, destiny, rescue, illness, treatment
Burden	burden, problem, economic, social, incentive, neglect, refuse, demonstration, protest.

Since the traditional corpus linguistic analysis is inadequate for explaining and interpreting the emergence or absence of specific language patterns fully, and it typically overlooks the social, political, historical, and cultural context surrounding the data (Baker et al., 2007), a qualitative analysis of quantitative data was needed to analyse the data against the argumentative strategies of DHA. In the following qualitative analysis, the researchers discovered four argumentation strategies employed by SI and JP when reporting about Rohingya refugees. The identified argumentative strategies were: (1) Humanitarianism/Vulnerability, (2) Danger/Threat, (3) Administration, and (4) Burden/Border Security. Of the top 100 emerging keywords, SI utilised 29% Humanitarianism, 40% Administration, 20% Danger/Threat, and 11% Burden (see Figure 1). Meanwhile, JP used 84% Humanitarianism Argumentation, 13% Administration, 0% Danger/Threat, and 3% Burden (see Figure 1). The dominant argumentation strategy that SI employed was Administration argumentation, while JP used Humanitarianism argumentation most. Detailed illustrations of four argumentative techniques and examples taken from the news excerpts in the researched news media are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Comparison of Argumentative Strategy between the *Serambi Indonesia* and the *Jakarta Post*.

4.1 Humanitarianism/ Vulnerability

News coverage employing humanitarian argumentation documented the personal stories of refugees by having real people talk about their adventures and

struggles. To achieve this, media coverage frequently devotes entire articles to specific events detailing displaced people's experiences and life events. A news story with a humanitarianism angle will include in-depth interviews with refugees who describe why they fled their homes and their journeys to find asylum and a new home. Below are the excerpts from both news media showing argumentation of Humanitarianism:

- (1) *Cara Rohingya capai daratan Aceh, begini **pengakuan** imigran dari camp 3 Kutupalong Bangladesh* [The way the Rohingya reached mainland Aceh: here is **the confession** of immigrants from Camp 3, Kutupalong, Bangladesh] (*Serambi Indonesia*, 09/01/2023)
- (2) ***Derita** hidup Rohingya [The **desperate** life of Rohingya]* (*Serambi Indonesia*, 01/02/2023)

Another humanitarianism strategy has also emerged in JP, as follows:

- (3) Nearly 200 **starving** Rohingya reach Aceh after a month at sea (*The Jakarta Post*, 28/12/2022)
- (4) Indonesian fishermen **rescued** dozens of Rohingya refugees in Aceh waters. (*The Jakarta Post*, 24/06/2020)

The Humanitarianism argumentation is often identified in the headlines by the presence of pathetic adjectives attributed to Rohingya refugees. Sometimes, the humanitarianism narrative is unique because it provides refugees with media through which they can narrate their harrowing stories. They can be recognised by name, age, country of origin, and sometimes a visage to humanise the circumstances that have led to their current situation.

Similarly, the Vulnerability argumentation acknowledges the difficulties and life-threatening experiences refugees encounter before and after they arrive in a new country. In this context, the media illustrate refugees as fragile, defenceless individuals with minimal control over their destinies. While this argumentation is similar to Humanitarianism, the Vulnerability differs because the story's focus is not necessarily first-person accounts of refugees. The examples of Vulnerability as indicated by both news media headlines are as follows:

- (5) *Wanita Rohingya keluhkan **sakit di perut dan dada** saat ditanya kondisinya tapi bukan karena hamil* [Rohingya women complain of **pain in their stomach and chest** but not because they are pregnant]. (*Serambi Indonesia*, 16/11/2022)
- (6) *110 warga Rohingya **terdampar** ke Aceh Utara setelah sebulan di laut* [110 Rohingyas **stranded** in North Aceh after a month at sea]. (*Serambi Indonesia*, 16/11/2022)

Vulnerability argumentation is also found in JP. For examples:

- (7) A boat with 185 Rohingya refugees **landed** in Aceh. (*The Jakarta Post*, 09/01/2023)
- (8) More than 180 Rohingya Muslims **arrived** by boat in Aceh. (*The Jakarta Post*, 27/03/2023)

Using the Vulnerability argumentation, Rohingya refugees were depicted as vulnerable individuals at a greater risk of becoming victims of illicit activity, such as human trafficking. In conclusion, refugees were described as helpless victims, unable to defend themselves against external dangers and threats beyond their control. Rather

than being framed as criminals and initiators of irregularities, refugees were represented as their victims.

4.2 Administration

The Administration's argument concentrates on the short and long-term management of refugee reception and distribution in Aceh province once they have arrived. Another central theme of the Administrative Argumentation is political debates between political actors regarding implementing effective refugee policies and procedures. Other topics centred on the burden-sharing between the central government and the Aceh provincial government in managing refugees. Here are some instances:

- (9) *Pengungsi Rohingya terdampar di Abdya **ditempatkan** di eks puskesmas Blangpidie* [Rohingyas stranded in Southwest Aceh **sheltered** in ex-Blangpidie Community Health Center]. (*Serambi Indonesia*, 13/03/2023)
- (10) *Aceh bentuk **satgas** penanganan Rohingya* [Aceh to set out Rohingya **task force**] (*Serambi Indonesia*, 20/01/2023)
- (11) *DPRA minta **pusat** segera turun tangan untuk **tangani** imigran Rohingya di Aceh* [Provincial council urges the **central government to handle** Rohingya]. (*Serambi Indonesia*, 08/01/2023)

Furthermore, global vows from the United Nations and policies such as Joint accountability and admission quotas for the number of refugees between the host country and neighbouring nations should also be mentioned. Vestergaard (2020) pointed out that Administration argumentation highlights the political attempts to mitigate the crisis, develop an appropriate local and global resolution, and discuss the contentious policy debates surrounding intake quotas and utmost limits. The Jakarta Post's exceptions best illustrate this condition. For instance:

- (12) *Indonesia-Bangladesh reaffirms **commitment** to Rohingya refugees.* (*The Jakarta Post*, 20/07/2022)
- (13) *UN urges countries to **help** Rohingya at sea as hundreds land in Indonesia.* (*The Jakarta Post*, 28/12/2022)

4.3 Danger/Threat

The Danger/Threat portrays refugees as criminals who threaten public safety, associating the arrival of refugees with the prospect of increased crime in the host nation. Under the argument of Danger/Threat, refugees appear to be involved in unlawful activity. In Rohingya contexts, the argumentation is based on illegal activities involving refugees, such as plundering local property and attempting to flee from designated relocation sites. Additionally, the incoming Rohingya are linked to human trafficking. Interestingly, the argumentation of Danger only emerged in the local daily *Serambi Indonesia*. Here are instances:

- (14) *Delapan wanita Rohingya **kabur** dengan cara **merusak** pagar seng, polisi usut dugaan human trafficking* [8 Rohingya women fled by **destroying** a tin fence, **police investigate allegations of human trafficking**]. (*Serambi Indonesia*, 19/01/2022)

- (15) Tiga **tersangka** kasus Rohingya **ditahan**, ini **pengakuan** mereka [Three **suspects** in the Rohingya case **detained**, this is their **confession**] (*Serambi Indonesia*, 19/04/2022)
- (16) Warga resah Rohingya **melanggar** adat hingga **mencuri** kelapa [The locals are **concerned** about Rohingya **violating** their customs and **stealing** coconuts]. (*Serambi Indonesia*, 08/12/2022)

4.4 Burden

Although minimally employed by both news media, Burden argumentation, on the other hand, depicts refugees as a strain on the host country's economy and welfare system since they demand a lot of money and help. Media discourse includes discussions of concepts such as the demand for employment, access to government programs, and the cost of housing, and therefore, it predominantly depicts refugees negatively (Vestergaard, 2020). In the Rohingya context, the Burden argumentation is realised in themes of economic and social burden for the local government and people. Additionally, the argumentation includes the government's tighter measures toward the incoming Rohingya and the need for a stricter border security policy. Here are some examples exemplifying Burden argumentation taken from both news media:

- (17) Rohingya menjadi **masalah** bagi Aceh [Rohingya is a **problem** for Aceh]. (*Serambi Indonesia*, 29/12/2022)
- (18) Warga padang tiji minta Rohingya **dipindahkan** [Locals of Padang Tiji urge Rohingya **relocation**] (*Serambi Indonesia*, 20/01/2023)
- (19) Pemko nyatakan **tak ada lahan lagi** untuk tampung Rohingya, kirim surat ke Kemenkopolhukam [The City Government authority said **no more spaces** provided for Rohingya, send letter to Ministry of Politics and Security]. (*Serambi Indonesia*, 25/11/2022)

5. DISCUSSION

As touched upon previously, the primary research inquiry is to discover the divergent means that Rohingya refugees were put into the argument by Indonesian local and national news media from June 2020 to March 2023. The thematic analysis showed four argumentative strategies employed by SI and JP during their coverage of the Rohingya crisis. The revealed argumentation strategies were (1) Humanitarianism/Vulnerability, (2) Danger/Threat, (3) Administration, and (4) Burden/Border security. Moreover, the salient argumentative strategy SI employs is Administration argumentation, while JP uses Humanitarianism argumentation most.

The result of this study has shown that the most argumentation strategy employed by both news media is Humanitarianism and Administration, which comprised 70% in SI and 97 % in JP from a total argumentation strategy identified in both news media. These two strategies aim to construct a positive and neutral view of Rohingya refugees (Baker & McEnery, 2005). The Humanitarianism strategy refers to the state/condition of Rohingya refugees that people must help. This is done by attributing humanist characteristics to Rohingya refugees. It is found that both SI and JP often urge Acehnese people to help the incoming Rohingya for the sake of humanity. Considerably similar, the Administration strategy is concerned with government and community efforts to assist the incoming refugees and regulate the influx and distribution of refugees once they have landed in Aceh province. In this

case, both news media advocate authorities to provide basic needs and ensure the security of Rohingya refugees once they land on Acehese soil.

There are two possible explanations for this phenomenon. The first is that JP and SI have a long alignment history and relationship with the Indonesian Government's humanist and neutral stance on refugees, especially Rohingyas. The news media's positive/humanist and neutral depiction of Rohingya refugees reflects the Indonesian Government's policy in dealing with the refugees. Through the Securitization of Migration policy, the Indonesian government has established a new approach by adjusting Indonesian refugee legislation. Furthermore, the Indonesian constitution also emphasises worldwide nations' right to decide their fate. This constitutional mandate has been reflected in the Indonesian government's attempt to voice the powerless and marginalised groups globally, such as the UN assembly and ASEAN forum. Regarding Rohingya, the Indonesian government has and will work with the international community to solve the problems and bring justice to the Rohingya people (Alunaza & Juani, 2017). It can be argued that the Indonesian Government's humanist approach when dealing with Rohingya refugees is due to two reasons. The first is because there are some commonalities between Indonesian people and the Rohingya. Most Indonesians and Rohingya are Muslims (Alfiyah, 2018), and secondly, Indonesia had a similar experience of being colonised by Dutch invaders from 1920-1945.

JP itself is seen as a liberal news media which often covers news and advocates the rights of minority groups, including refugees in the country. The news outlet has long been channelling the Indonesian government to address the refugee crisis internationally. The finding that liberal-leaning news media depicted refugees neutrally and positively has also been found in some previous notable research. This series of studies included studies on refugees' representation in the UK newspapers (Baker et al., 2007), Syrian refugees' depiction on the Canadian context (Sijani, 2023), the portrayal of Syrian refugees in Turkish news media (Paksoy, 2022), and the framing of Syrian refugees in Jordanian newspapers (Kitishat et al., 2020).

The second explanation for the phenomenon is the media's good relationship with the Muslim people in Aceh province. SI alone is a religiously conservative-leaning news outlet known as a member of the Caucus of Sharia-Care Journalists operating in Aceh Province, known as KWPSI. It is reasonable for the news outlet to take responsibility for constructing a positive view of Rohingya refugees, who are notably Muslims. This positive image aimed to build a sense of Muslim brotherhood between Rohingya and Aceh people and encourage the Aceh people to accept the Rohingya refugees with an open hand. This finding is not peculiar to this research. A study conducted by Kitishat et al. (2020) in the Jordanian context found that Jordanians considered incoming Syrian refugees as 'guests' and 'brothers'. They contended that this positive perception and attitude toward refugees is caused by the fact that Jordanians and Syrian refugees share the same religious background, creating a sense of Muslim brotherhood.

What makes a major difference between SI and JP is that the former employs a significant amount of Crime/Threat and Burden argumentative strategies, which portray Rohingya refugees negatively. In contrast, JP employs almost none of them. One possible explanation for this condition can be traced to the diachronic development of the Rohingya-related news across SI. There has been a major shift in Rohingya portrayal in SI after September 2022. To have a closer look, the negative depiction of Rohingya refugees began emerging from September 2022 until March

2023, when there was a shift in public and political elites' perceptions of Rohingya refugees arriving in Aceh. During that time, many cases of rejection and even persecution of Rohingya refugees took place in some places in Aceh province. It is thus strongly argued that SI takes part in confirming bias. Confirmation bias takes place when media coverage often reflects and reinforces societal biases and stereotypes (Zhou & Shen, 2022). It somewhat affirms the prevailing negative perception of immigrants or refugees within a society. In that case, media coverage may inadvertently or intentionally reinforce these biases, leading to the portrayal of immigrants and refugees as criminals or burdens. This condition is in line with research findings done by Taylor (2021). She conducted a diachronic analysis framing of immigration in the UK newspaper from 1800 to 2018 to identify a possible change in the portrayal of immigrants. She found that there was an emerging pattern of migrants as an economic resource as the dominant frame, from once when immigrants were seen as an economic burden in the past.

6. CONCLUSION

This study uncovered the positive and neutral portrayal of Rohingya refugees in local and national Indonesian news media. Humanitarianism and Administration are the primary argumentative strategies, supplemented by the reasoning strategies of 'brothers in humanity' and 'desperate Muslim refugees'. The importance of assisting and protecting Rohingya refugees exemplifies the media's ideological posture on the refugee issue. In addition, both publications emphasised the need for all Indonesians, particularly those from Aceh, to assist their Rohingya Muslim brothers and sisters. There is evidence that migrants were constructed as vulnerable and destitute figures. These publications focused on the human aspect of refugees to justify political, economic, and social actions and to portray a nation sympathetic to the human rights of individuals who have endured hardship.

This research implies media representation awareness, public perception, ethical reporting, policy discussions, interdisciplinary collaboration, comparative analysis, advocacy, and media literacy. By researching how Rohingya refugees are portrayed in the media, the study hopes to raise awareness about potential biases and stereotypes affecting public opinion and guiding policy decisions. The multidisciplinary approach emphasises the value of collaboration among linguists, media researchers, and refugee professionals. Furthermore, the findings can help to promote advocacy efforts for more responsible reporting as well as media literacy initiatives by offering actual instances of how language influences media attitudes toward refugees.

A potential constraint of this study is that the corpus data could not possess sufficient scale to offer a whole perspective on the subject matter. Furthermore, due to its limited selection of only two news presses, the findings may not accurately reflect the wide range of Indonesian news media. The results may not be readily applicable to different contexts or news outlets. Subsequent studies can expand the size of their corpus data and utilise multimodal analysis. This research endeavour has the potential to enhance our comprehension of how Rohingya refugees are depicted in Indonesian news media and the broader consequences of media portrayal on public opinion and policy. Researchers have the freedom to select the path corresponding to their research interests and objectives for contributing to the field.

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