

Public Sentiment and Attribution of Responsibility toward Public Institutions in the LPDP Alumni Controversy on Social Media

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Abstract: *This study examines public sentiment and responsibility attribution toward LPDP as a public institution in a social media controversy involving one of its alumni. Drawing on Attribution Theory and digital crisis communication, this study argues that reputational risk is shaped not only by negative sentiment but also by how public responsibility is attributed to individuals and institutions. A descriptive quantitative approach was applied using computational sentiment analysis and text-based attribution analysis. Data were collected from Twitter/X through scraping with the keyword "LPDP Dwisasetyaningtyas" during 20 February–6 March 2026". A total of 106 tweets were processed using the Knowledge Discovery in Databases (KDD) stages: data selection, preprocessing, transformation, analysis, and interpretation. The results show that neutral sentiment dominated the conversation at 82.08%, followed by negative sentiment at 15.09% and positive sentiment at 2.83%. Attribution analysis shows that individual attribution appeared in 100% of tweets, institutional attribution in 89.62%, moral attribution in 61.32%, and systemic attribution in 10.38%. These findings indicate that the LPDP controversy is better understood as a reputational issue based on visibility and attribution rather than merely a crisis driven by negative sentiment.*

Article history:

Received: 26 June 2026

Revised: 05 August 2026

Accepted: 11 August 2026

Published: 14 August 2026

Keyword:

Public Sentiment, Responsibility Attribution, LPDP, Crisis Communication, Social Media

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How to cite: Balqis, H. A., & Ayuningtyas, F. (2026). Public Sentiment and Attribution of Responsibility toward Public Institutions in the LPDP Alumni Controversy on Social Media. *PERSEPTIF: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora*, 4(3), 501–513. <https://doi.org/10.70716/perseptif.v4i3.672>

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has fundamentally changed the way the public interprets events (Suci & Musi, 2026). Social media has transformed into an interactive space that allows the public to form, strengthen, and disseminate interpretations of an issue. The process of escalating an issue into a crisis is generally marked by several indicators, such as increased visibility, intensified public discourse, and the emergence of moral judgments against the actors involved (Musdalifah et al., 2023).

An issue may initially remain within the control of an institution, but as public attention increases, trust erodes, and narratives develop unchecked, the issue has the potential to transform into a reputational crisis (Meriana et al., 2026). Social media serves as a space where issues are continuously disseminated, produced, and negotiated. The public acts as a passive recipient of information, while active actors interpret, comment on, and reinforce certain narratives. As a result, the line between fact and opinion becomes increasingly blurred, and crises often arise from the accumulation of collectively evolving perceptions (Prasetyo & Misidawati, 2026).

This phenomenon was evident in the controversy surrounding alumni of the Indonesian Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP) that emerged after Dwi Sasetyaningtyas's viral social media post (Balqis, 2026). In the post, she expressed pride in her child's foreign citizenship status, stating that she was content with being the only Indonesian citizen in her family. This statement sparked

widespread public reaction, with many deeming the narrative unethical and unethical as a recipient of a publicly funded scholarship (Balqis, 2026). Public reaction intensified as the discourse became more personal, including the disclosure of information about her husband, who is also suspected of being an LPDP scholarship recipient and has not yet completed his community service obligations (Jannah, 2026).



Figure 1. Dwi Sasetyaningsih's Content Upload on Instagram
Source: okezone.com (2026)

The problem becomes more complex when public discourse shifts from the individual to the institutional realm. The public begins to associate these actions with the LPDP as an institution, even tracing the family background of the individual, including allegations of unfulfilled service obligations by other related parties (Balqis, 2026). At this stage, the issue has become a question of institutional legitimacy. This demonstrates that in the digital crisis, the boundaries between individuals and institutions are becoming increasingly blurred (Putri et al., 2026).

From a communications perspective, these public reactions reflect an attribution process. The public begins to associate the issue with broader values, such as "public money" and "state responsibility". Attribution Theory, individuals tend to attribute an event to internal factors, such as character or intentions, rather than situational factors (Widiastuti, 2026). In this case, the initial attribution directed at the individual then spreads to the institution, thereby increasing reputational pressure on LPDP (Jannah, 2026).

The public response to this controversy also demonstrated a strong moral dimension, where individual actions were judged personally and linked to national values and responsibility to the state. In this context, the public engaged in a process of attribution regarding who was responsible for the incident. Attributions initially directed at individuals then evolved into attributions to institutions, thus forming the perception that the incident reflected a broader problem (Putri et al., 2026).

The Indonesian Endowment Fund for Education (LPDP) subsequently clarified the status of the alumni in question and reaffirmed its commitment to integrity and accountability. Although administratively, the institution's obligations have been fulfilled, the institution's response

demonstrates the need to address growing public pressure in the digital space (Andini et al., 2026). Furthermore, the investigation into other alleged violations indicates that the issue has reached a more serious stage in terms of institutional reputation.

This development suggests that crisis escalation is triggered by events, ways of thinking, and how to respond to them (Noor, 2026). From a crisis communication perspective, one factor accelerating escalation is the presence of inhibiting thinking, a pattern of thinking that hinders an effective response to an issue. This thinking can take the form of a formalistic approach that relies too heavily on administrative procedures, a pattern of thinking that hinders effective response to an issue, or a pattern of thinking that hinders effective response to an issue top-down non-dialogic, response after-the-fact reactive, and sectoral perspectives that divide responsibility (Noor, 2026). These patterns lead to delayed responses, information gaps, and narrative asymmetries, ultimately leaving room for the public to form their own interpretations.

In the case of LPDP, the pattern after-the-fact becomes dominantly visible when institutional responses emerge after viral issues and framing negative sentiment has already formed. In this situation, communication attempts to catch up with the prevailing opinion (Balqis, 2026). The initial lack of response creates space for the public to produce narratives based on assumptions and emotions, which are then amplified by social media (Noor, 2026).

At this stage, issues begin to be linked to moral values such as nationalism and justice, thus encouraging the formation of moral attributions toward institutions. Institutional responses are required to be swift, able to control the narrative, demonstrate empathy, and provide clarity to the public. Failure to respond quickly and contextually will reinforce negative perceptions and accelerate the escalation of the crisis (Novel & Nurhajati, 2025).

This phenomenon has broader implications in the context of sustainable development. As the manager of the education endowment fund, LPDP has a strategic role in supporting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) (Wamalwa, 2019). Within the context of SDG 4, public trust in state scholarship programs is a crucial factor in ensuring sustainable access to education (Alcántara-Rubio et al., 2022). Meanwhile, within the framework of SDG 16, legitimacy and trust in public institutions are key indicators of good governance (Haas & Ivanovskis, 2022).

In this context, sentiment analysis becomes relevant as an initial approach to identify patterns of public response. Sentiment analysis is a computational method used to classify public opinion in digital text into positive, negative, and neutral categories. In social media research, sentiment analysis is not only used as a technical classification tool, but also as a way to understand the dynamics of public perception toward an issue, organization, or public policy. Twitter/X is frequently used in sentiment studies because the platform enables real-time public expression, information sharing, and issue amplification (Rossi et al., 2026).

As one study demonstrated, sentiment analysis of education-related issues on Twitter can provide insights into public acceptance, rejection, or neutral attitudes toward specific policies. The study employed the Knowledge Discovery in Databases framework which includes data selection, preprocessing, transformation, data mining, and evaluation to systematically analyze public opinion. Consequently, this research positions sentiment analysis as the initial step for identifying patterns in public responses, followed by an analysis of responsibility attribution (Arib Fadhlurrohman et al., 2025).

However, sentiment analysis alone is not sufficient to explain reputational risk in digital crisis communication. A crisis may not always be marked by the dominance of negative sentiment. In some cases, neutral conversations can still increase the visibility of an issue and repeatedly associate it with institutional accountability. Therefore, this study combines sentiment analysis with responsibility attribution analysis (Coombs & Tachkova, 2024).

In this study, public attribution of responsibility is analyzed through four categories: individual attribution, institutional attribution, moral attribution, and systemic attribution. Individual attribution refers to public judgment directed toward specific actors involved in the controversy, such as alumni or related individuals (P. Zhang et al., 2026). Institutional attribution occurs when the public connects the issue to LPDP as the public institution associated with the scholarship program, including questions about awardee supervision, service obligations, and sanction mechanisms. Moral attribution refers to public evaluation based on normative values such as nationalism, justice, public funds, taxes, and responsibility toward the state. Meanwhile, systemic attribution appears when the public links the issue to broader mechanisms, such as monitoring systems, institutional rules, transparency, and governance structures (Alatas et al., 2025).

These four categories are used to distinguish the direction of public judgment regarding the LPDP alumni controversy on social media. Individual attribution refers to the public's tendency to link the controversy to specific individuals, such as alumni, family members, or parties directly involved in the event. Individual attribution arises when the public assesses the statements, actions, or attitudes of alumni as the primary cause of the controversy. Institutional attribution occurs when the public demands explanations regarding the oversight of awardees, service obligations, or sanction mechanisms.

Moral attribution refers to the process by which the public evaluates an issue based on normative values such as justice, nationalism, propriety, integrity, or gratitude toward the state. Moral attribution is evident in narratives such as "public funds," "taxes," "nationalism," "Indonesian citizens/foreign nationals," and "service." Moral outrage can intensify the threat of a crisis because it can strengthen public demands for accountability (Coombs & Tachkova, 2023).

Systemic attribution arises when the public links an issue to systems, rules, oversight mechanisms, policies, or institutional structures deemed to have enabled the problem. Systemic attribution can be observed in discussions regarding alumni monitoring, service contracts, data transparency, and the consistency of sanctions (P. Zhang et al., 2026). The contribution of this study is that public sentiment is used to gauge the tone of conversations, while attribution of responsibility is used to explain the direction and meaning of public assessments of LPDP as a public institution.

A reputational crisis like this case demonstrates that ineffective public communication can directly impact an institution's trust and legitimacy. Based on this situation, this study focuses on analyzing public sentiment toward LPDP in the alumni controversy on social media. This study examines the distribution of sentiment and understands how it reflects the public attribution process and contributes to the escalation of the issue into a reputational crisis in the digital space

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a descriptive quantitative approach using computational sentiment analysis on social media data. This approach was chosen because the study aims to measure public sentiment trends and to understand how the public attributes responsibility to individuals and institutions in the LPDP alumni controversy on social media. Sentiment analysis is used to classify public opinion into positive, negative, and neutral categories, while attribution analysis is used to examine the direction of public judgment toward actors deemed responsible (Safitri Reza, 2021).

Methodologically, this study adapts the stages of Knowledge Discovery in Databases (KDD), which include data selection, preprocessing, transformation, analysis, and interpretation of results. KDD models are widely used in sentiment analysis research because they can guide the text data processing workflow from raw data to the generation of information that can be systematically analyzed (Arib Fadhlurrohman et al., 2025). In the LPDP sentiment analysis study, similar stages were also employed through the processes of web scraping, preprocessing, labeling, modeling, and evaluation of data from social media platform X (Safitri Reza, 2021).

Research Design

The research data was obtained from the X/Twitter platform through a scraping process using Python on Google Colaboratory. The data used consists of public posts discussing the LPDP alumni controversy during the period from February 20 to March 6, 2026. This period was chosen because it covers the initial phase of the issue's emergence, the peak of the discussion, and the decline in conversation intensity. The initial data then underwent a selection process to remove duplicate tweets, empty data, spam, and posts irrelevant to the LPDP alumni controversy.

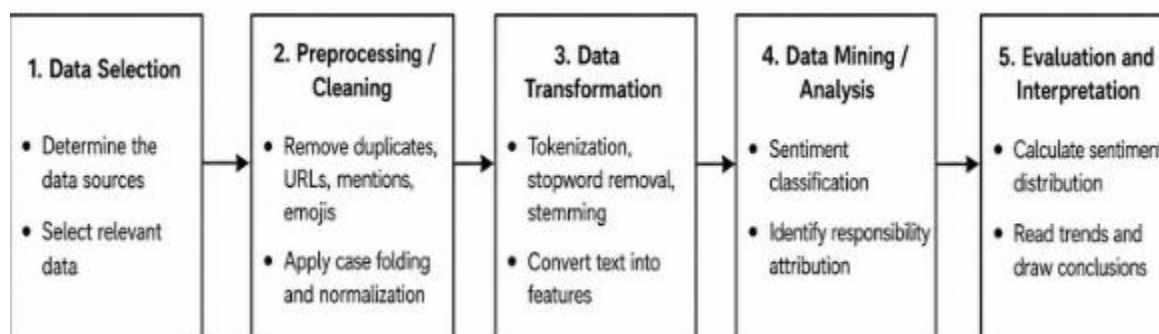


Figure 2. Framework of Stages in the Knowledge Discovery in Database Model

Source: Compiled by Researchers (2026)

Data Preprocessing

A preprocessing stage was conducted to clean the text data so it could be analyzed computationally. This process included cleaning removing URLs, mentions, symbols, punctuation, numbers, emojis, and unnecessary characters; case folding converting all letters to lowercase; and text normalization to standardize word forms. The preprocessing stage is a crucial step in sentiment analysis because the quality of the text data significantly determines the accuracy and interpretability of the classification results (Dewi & Nugroho, 2026).

Sentiment Analysis

After the data was cleaned, automatic sentiment classification was performed using a Python-based Indonesian sentiment classification model. Each tweet was categorized into three classes:

positive, negative, and neutral. The classification results were then analyzed descriptively to determine the distribution of public sentiment (Dewi & Nugroho, 2026). The percentage of each sentiment was calculated by comparing the number of tweets in each category to the total number of tweets analyzed.

Attribution Analysis

In addition to sentiment analysis, this study also identified public attribution of responsibility. The attribution analysis was conducted by grouping tweets into four categories: individual attribution, institutional attribution, moral attribution, and systemic attribution. Individual attribution refers to tweets directed at specific individuals, such as alumni or family members involved. Institutional attribution refers to tweets that link the controversy to LPDP as an institution. Moral attribution covers narratives related to public funds, nationalism, Indonesian citizens/foreign nationals, taxes, and public service. Meanwhile, systemic attribution covers conversations regarding oversight, regulations, contracts, monitoring, and institutional evaluation.

The attribution categories in this study are multi-label, meaning that a single tweet can fall into more than one category. For example, a tweet that mentions an individual, LPDP, and public funds simultaneously can be categorized as individual attribution, institutional attribution, and moral attribution. Thus, the attribution results should not be interpreted as mutually exclusive categories, but rather as measures of the frequency with which attribution themes appear in public discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before conducting sentiment analysis, the research data first underwent data selection and cleaning. The data was obtained by scraping Twitter/X using keywords “LPDP Dwi Sasetyaningtyas” related to the LPDP alumni controversy during the period from February 20 to March 6, 2026. The initial dataset consisted of 106 tweets. All data were in Indonesian and contained conversations relevant to issues concerning LPDP, alumni, citizenship, public service, and institutional responsibility.

The initial stage of data processing involved checking text completeness, removing empty data, and identifying potential duplicates. Based on the results of the review, no empty data or duplicate tweets were found, so the dataset remained at 106 tweets. Next, the data underwent a cleaning process to remove URLs, mentions, hashtag symbols, punctuation marks, irrelevant numbers, emojis, and special characters. This process was carried out to ensure the text was cleaner and ready for computational analysis.

Table 1. Data Processing Stages

Data Processing Stage	Number of Tweets	Description
Initial scraped data	106	Twitter/X data collected during 20 February–6 March 2026
After removing missing data	106	No missing data were found
After removing duplicates	106	No duplicate tweets were found
After the cleaning process	106	URLs, mentions, emojis, symbols, and special characters were removed

After sentiment labeling	106	Tweets were classified into positive, negative, and neutral categories
Final data analyzed	106	Used for sentiment analysis, daily trend analysis, and responsibility attribution analysis

After the cleaning process, the number of usable data points remained at 106 tweets. This indicates that all of the initial data met the basic criteria for analysis. The cleaned data was then automatically labeled into three sentiment categories: positive, negative, and neutral. After the labeling process, all 106 tweets were successfully classified into these sentiment categories. Thus, the final dataset used in the sentiment analysis and public accountability attribution consists of 106 tweets.

The stages of data processing in this study follow the principles of Knowledge Discovery in Databases (KDD), which is the process of transforming raw data into meaningful information through data selection, preprocessing, transformation, analysis, and evaluation and interpretation. In this study, the data selection stage was conducted by ensuring the relevance of tweets to the LPDP controversy. The preprocessing stage was carried out through text cleaning. The analysis stage was conducted through sentiment classification and the identification of responsibility attribution. Subsequently, the analysis results were interpreted within the context of digital crisis communication and attribution theory.

Based on the labeling results, the data was then classified into three sentiment categories. The classification results show that of the 106 tweets analyzed, 87 were neutral, 16 were negative, and 3 were positive. The percentage for each category was calculated based on the number of tweets in each category compared to the total final dataset analyzed. This distribution serves as the basis for interpreting trends in public responses to the LPDP alumni controversy on Twitter/X.

Distribution of Public Sentiment Regarding the LPDP Alumni Controversy

The sentiment analysis results show that public conversations on Twitter/X regarding the LPDP alumni controversy were dominated by neutral sentiment at 82.08%. Meanwhile, negative sentiment accounted for 15.09%, and positive sentiment only 2.83%. Based on the final total data analyzed, these figures indicate that the majority of tweets primarily contained information, chronologies, news quotes, or the reproduction of circulating narratives, rather than direct expressions of support or opposition.

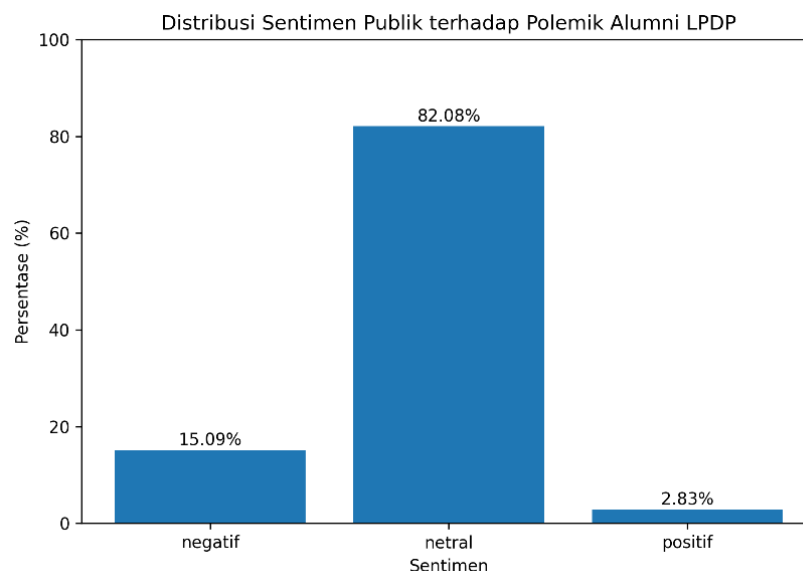


Figure 3. Sentiment Distribution Regarding the LPDP Controversy

Source: Compiled by Researchers (2026)

This finding suggests that the LPDP alumni controversy on Twitter/X is not only fueled by negative emotions but also by the dissemination of information that amplifies the issue's visibility. The dominance of neutral sentiment does not mean that this issue poses no reputational risk. In the context of digital crisis communication, neutral conversations can still serve as a platform for the spread of the issue, as the ongoing circulation of information allows the public to associate personal events with larger institutions.

Negative sentiment, at 15.09%, indicates public criticism of the parties involved in the controversy. This criticism generally relates to narratives about nationalism, public funds, the duty of service, and the ethics of state scholarship recipients. Although not dominant in number, negative sentiment remains significant as it indicates resistance and moral judgment regarding the case. Conversely, positive sentiment, at only 2.83%, suggests that narratives defending or supporting the parties involved are relatively weak in Twitter/X conversations.

Thus, these results show that the LPDP issue in this dataset is better understood as a reputation issue based on visibility and attribution, rather than merely as a crisis marked by the dominance of public anger. The high level of neutral sentiment indicates that the public is largely discussing the issue in an informative manner; however, the low level of positive sentiment and the presence of negative sentiment still point to reputational risks for LPDP.

Daily Trends in Public Sentiment

Daily sentiment trends indicate that conversations regarding the LPDP alumni controversy increased during the period of February 23–26, 2026. During that period, neutral sentiment was the most prevalent category. Neutral sentiment peaked on February 23 and rose again on February 26. Meanwhile, negative sentiment appeared in smaller numbers but remained present throughout the early phase up to the peak of the controversy.

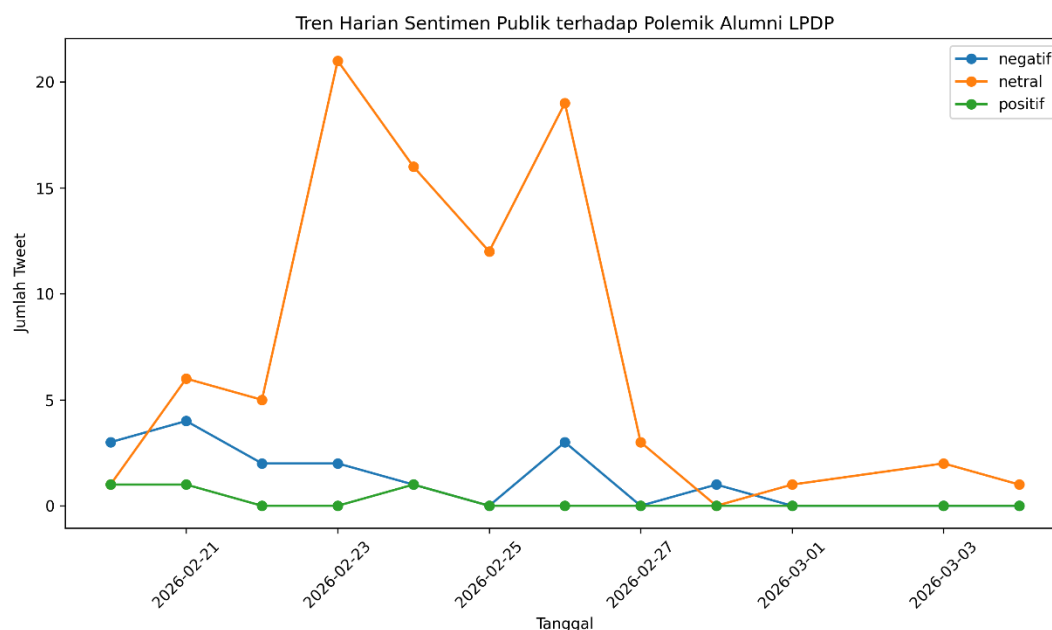


Figure 4. Daily Trends in Sentiment Distribution Regarding the LPDP Controversy
Source: Compiled by Researchers (2026)

This pattern suggests that the escalation phase of an issue is not always marked by a dominance of negative sentiment. In this case, the escalation was more evident through an increase in the volume of conversations and the spread of information. This means the public uses Twitter/X as a space to share, quote, and discuss the issue, even though not all posts explicitly convey emotional judgments.

From a crisis communication perspective, the increase in conversation volume remains significant because it indicates that the issue has garnered public attention. The more frequently an issue is discussed, the greater the likelihood that it will be linked to other actors beyond the initial event. In the case of LPDP, the increase in conversation created space for the public to connect alumni's personal statements with broader questions regarding institutional responsibility, oversight of awardees, and accountability for public funds.

Thus, these daily trends show that the escalation of issues on social media occurs not only through outbursts of negative emotions but also through increased visibility and the replication of narratives. This reinforces the argument that social media can transform personal issues into institutional discourse as conversations continue to spread and gain public attention.

Attribution of Public Responsibility

The results of the attribution analysis show that individual attribution appeared in 100% of the tweets analyzed. This means that all conversations in the dataset still referred to the individual at the center of the controversy. All tweets contained references to individual actors. This is understandable since the issue originated from an individual's statement that subsequently went viral on social media.

However, a more significant finding is the high rate of institutional attribution at 89.62%. This figure indicates that although the controversy began with a personal action, the public broadly associates the issue with LPDP as a public institution. In other words, the issue does not stop at the individual level but extends to an assessment of the institution that holds a symbolic connection to that individual.

Table 2. Distribution of Responsibility Attribution

Attribution Category	Number of Tweets	Percentage
Individual Attribution	106	100%
Institutional Attribution	95	89.62%
Moral Attribution	65	61.32%
Systemic Attribution	11	10.38%

Source: Compiled by Researchers (2026)

Furthermore, the moral attribution rate of 61.32% indicates that this controversy is not merely viewed as an administrative matter. The public associates this case with moral values such as nationalism, public funds, taxes, Indonesian citizens versus foreign nationals, public service, and a sense of justice. This finding demonstrates that the public is not only asking whether rules were violated, but also whether national values have been compromised.

Meanwhile, systemic attribution accounted for only 10.38%. This figure indicates that public discourse remains more focused on individuals, institutions, and morality than on discussions regarding oversight systems, contractual mechanisms, or the more technical aspects of LPDP's governance. In other words, the public tends to assess the controversy through symbols and morality rather than through policy analysis or institutional mechanisms.

From the perspective of Attribution Theory, these findings indicate a shift in responsibility from individuals toward institutions. The public not only evaluates alumni's personal statements but also links them to the LPDP as the institution managing public funds. This type of attribution process is crucial in crisis communication because an institution's reputation can be affected not only by the organization's direct actions but also by the actions of individuals associated with that organization.

Sentiment, Attribution, and the Escalation of an Issue into a Reputational Crisis

When the distributions of sentiment and attribution are analyzed together, it becomes clear that the predominance of neutral sentiment does not eliminate the potential for a reputational crisis. Although most tweets are informative in nature, the high levels of institutional and moral attribution indicate that the controversy has shifted from a personal issue to a matter of public accountability.

This finding suggests that a reputation crisis on social media is not necessarily characterized by a predominance of negative sentiment. In this case, the reputational risk actually arises from the strong connection between individual actors, institutions, and the moral values constructed by the public. The public continues to discuss the issue in a neutral tone, but within that conversation, LPDP remains present as an institution associated with issues of accountability, public funds, and the duty of service.

Thus, the controversy surrounding LPDP alumni can be understood as a form of attribution-based reputation crisis. Such a crisis arises when the public not only views an event as a personal mistake but also begins to question the institution's role in overseeing, explaining, and taking responsibility for the policies associated with that individual.

Implications for Crisis Communication in Public Institutions

The results of this study indicate that LPDP is in a reputationally sensitive position because it manages public funds and is directly linked to national education policy. Under such circumstances, an institution's communication response cannot be based solely on rules or contracts. Public institutions must also construct a narrative that addresses the public's moral expectations.

The dominance of institutional attribution indicates that the public expects LPDP to act as an explanatory agent, not merely as an administrative body. Meanwhile, the strong moral attribution suggests that the public interprets this controversy through the lens of justice, nationalism, and responsibility toward the state (Fathilah et al., 2025). Therefore, a more appropriate crisis communication strategy is one that is prompt, transparent, empathetic, and data-driven.

LPDP needs to explain not only whether specific individuals have fulfilled their obligations but also how the alumni monitoring system operates, how sanctions are enforced, and how the accountability of public funds is ensured. With this approach, crisis communication aims not only to quell the controversy but also to restore public trust in the institution.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that public discussion of the LPDP alumni controversy on Twitter/X was dominated by neutral sentiment, rather than negative sentiment. From 106 tweets analyzed, 82.08% were classified as neutral, 15.09% as negative, and only 2.83% as positive. This finding shows that the conversation was largely shaped by the circulation of information, news quotations, chronology, and public discussion, rather than direct emotional rejection or support. However, the dominance of neutral sentiment does not mean that the issue had no reputational risk. In digital crisis communication, neutral conversations can still increase the visibility of an issue and expand its association with institutional accountability.

The attribution analysis provides a more critical insight into the controversy. The results show that individual attribution appeared in all tweets, while institutional attribution appeared in 89.62% of tweets. This indicates that although the controversy began as a personal issue, public discussion quickly connected it to LPDP as a public institution. Moral attribution also appeared in 61.32% of tweets, showing that the issue was interpreted through values such as nationalism, public funds, scholarship obligations, and moral responsibility. Meanwhile, systemic attribution appeared in only 10.38% of tweets, indicating that public discussion was less focused on technical governance issues such as monitoring systems, contractual mechanisms, or institutional procedures.

Based on these findings, the LPDP alumni controversy can be understood as a reputational issue based on attribution. The escalation of the issue was not primarily caused by the dominance of negative sentiment, but by the expansion of responsibility attribution from an individual actor to a public institution. This confirms that reputational crises in social media are not always marked by emotional negativity alone. They may also emerge when a personal controversy becomes repeatedly associated with broader institutional accountability and moral expectations.

The findings also have implications for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 on Quality Education and SDG 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. As a state-funded scholarship institution, LPDP plays an important role in supporting access to quality education and developing national human capital. Therefore, public trust in LPDP is closely related to the legitimacy of education financing and the sustainability of public scholarship programs. At the same time, the controversy highlights the importance of institutional transparency, accountability, and responsive public communication as part of strengthening public institutions.

For public institutions such as LPDP, the findings highlight the importance of crisis communication that goes beyond administrative clarification. Institutions need to respond not only to

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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