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Argumentative Structure and Legitimation Strategies in Prabowo Subianto's Speech on the Free Nutritious Meals Programme

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ABSTRACT

Studies on education policy in Indonesia have primarily focused on program implementation and impact, while the dimension of discursive legitimacy has received limited scholarly attention. This study aims to examine how the argumentative structure in President Prabowo Subianto's speech on the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) functions to legitimize education policy within the framework of human resource development. The study employs a qualitative approach with a critical discourse analysis design. The data consist of the official text of the President of the Republic of Indonesia's speech on the presentation of the 2026 Draft State Budget. Data were collected through documentation and note-taking techniques, with the researcher as the primary instrument supported by an argumentative categorization matrix. Data analysis involved identifying argumentative units, mapping the Toulmin argument structure, analyzing legitimacy strategies based on van Leeuwen, and interpreting the findings using Fairclough's Political Discourse Analysis framework. The results indicate that the argumentative structure of MBG is constructed through causal relations between nutrition, health, and superior human resources, reinforced by quantitative evidence and the framing of the stunting crisis. The policy is legitimized through technocratic rationalization, moral evaluation, and institutional authorization. The novelty of this study lies in integrating three theoretical frameworks to conceptualize education policy legitimacy as a multidimensional discursive process that combines fiscal rationality, collective values, and state-centered development ideology. The study recommends further interdisciplinary research integrating linguistics, policy studies, and political communication.

Keywords: Argumentative Structure, Speech of the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Free Nutritious Meal Program, Legitimacy of Education Policy

INTRODUCTION

Political discourse is the primary arena for establishing public policy legitimacy through structured and persuasive argumentative practices. From the perspective of rhetorical argumentation theory, political speeches function not only to convey information and persuade the public, but also to build claims, formulate justifications, and construct cause-and-effect relationships to gain public approval (Toulmin, 2003; Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969; Walton, 2007; Aristotle, 2007; Kritina, et al., 2021). Toulmin's argument structure model, which includes claim, data, warrant, backing, qualifier, and rebuttal, has been widely used to analyze how political actors construct policy legitimacy (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004; Schiappa, 2026). In the context of contemporary discourse, the argumentative structure of

presidential speeches serves as a strategic tool in framing social problems and policy solutions (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012; Wodak, 2015; Wang, Wu, & Cui, 2020; Gavrishina, 2024).

Toulmin's argument structure model is a key foundation in modern argumentation studies and is widely used in discourse analysis in politics, education, and public communication (van Eemeren, 2018; Hitchcock & Verheij, 2006; Schiappa, 2026). The first component, claim, refers to the statement or position the speaker seeks to prove or defend. Claims are central to an argument because they are the propositions the audience hopes to accept (Toulmin, 2003; Turós et al., 2025). In the context of public discourse, claims often take the form of policy recommendations, moral evaluations, or assertions of social facts (Zarefsky, 2014). Recent studies show that in political discourse, claims not only convey information but also shape the orientation of collective action (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012; Gallhofer & Saris, 2021).

The second component is data or grounds, namely the evidence or reasons supporting the claim. Data can take the form of empirical facts, statistics, concrete examples, or authoritative references (Toulmin, 2003). In contemporary argumentative practice, the use of quantitative data often serves to establish the rational legitimacy and credibility of the speaker (Schiappa, 2026). Research in recent argumentative journals indicates that the power of data in public arguments depends heavily on the audience's perception of the validity and relevance of the evidence presented (Lewiński & Mohammed, 2013).

The third component is the warrant, which is the principle or assumption that connects the data to the claim. Warrants are often implicit because they are considered common knowledge accepted by the audience (Toulmin, 2003). Within the pragma-dialectic framework, warrants serve as inferential rules that enable a logical transition from reason to conclusion (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004; van Eemeren, 2018). Recent studies in Argumentation emphasize that explicit warrants are crucial in the context of political polarization, as ideological differences often lie in unstated assumptions (Gallhofer & Saris, 2021).

The fourth component is backing, which is additional support that strengthens the warrant when it is questioned. Backing can take the form of scientific theories, legal norms, cultural values, or institutional authority (Toulmin, 2003). In critical discourse analysis, backing is often linked to normative and ideological legitimacy (van Leeuwen, 2007). Research over the past five years has shown that in public policy discourse, backing is often expressed through constitutional references or international standards to enhance policy legitimacy (Reyes, 2011; Khosravi-Nik, 2017).

The fifth component is the qualifier, which indicates the level of certainty or strength of a claim, such as "possibly," "likely," or "can be assured." Qualifiers indicate that an argument is probabilistic, not absolute (Toulmin, 2003). In contemporary rhetorical studies, qualifiers are understood as mitigation strategies that reflect epistemic caution while simultaneously building credibility (Hyland, 2019). The appropriate use of qualifiers can enhance persuasiveness by demonstrating an awareness of the complexities of social reality.

The final component is rebuttal, which acknowledges the possibility of rebuttal or conditions that could weaken a claim. The presence of rebuttal indicates that an argument considers alternatives and is not dogmatic (Toulmin, 2003). In modern argumentation theory, rebuttal is considered an indicator of the quality of deliberation because it opens up space for dialogue and criticism (van Eemeren, 2018). Research in Discourse & Society and Argumentation over the past five years confirms that the absence of rebuttal in political discourse often indicates a hegemonic strategy or an attempt to naturalize policy (KhosraviNik, 2017; Lewiński & Mohammed, 2013).

Overall, the Toulmin model provides a flexible and contextual analytical framework for understanding how arguments are constructed in real-world communication practices. The strength of this model lies in its ability to explain both the logical relationships and the pragmatic dimensions of argumentation in public discourse (Schiappa, 2026; van Eemeren,

2018). Therefore, in studies of contemporary political policy and discourse, the Toulmin model remains relevant as an instrument for uncovering the mechanisms of legitimization, rationalization, and negotiation of meaning in the global public sphere.

Ramage, Bean, and Johnson (2016) explain that effective argumentation requires a clear statement of position, logically supported reasons, and empirical evidence or facts that can strengthen the validity of the argument. In the context of a speech, these three elements function to build audience trust in the speaker and strengthen the persuasive power of the message. Therefore, argumentative structure is a crucial element in public communication because it determines the extent to which the ideas presented are rationally accepted by the listener.

The study of argumentative structure in political speeches is increasingly important because policy legitimacy is determined not only by the substance of the program but also by how the program is discursively constructed. Van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimacy theory emphasizes that policies are legitimized through strategies of authorization, rationalization, and moral evaluation. Meanwhile, a critical discourse analysis approach demonstrates that political argumentation is always related to power relations and the representation of social actors (van Dijk, 2014; Wodak, 2015; Reyes, 2011). Therefore, the argumentative structure in the speech about the Free Nutritional Meal Program is relevant to study as a practice of legitimizing educational policy framed through the construction of crisis and solution.

In the tradition of political rhetoric, presidential speeches often contain deliberative arguments aimed at influencing public policy and public opinion (Charteris-Black, 2018; Atkins & Finlayson, 2016). Talavira & Potapenko (2023) state that argumentative speeches have a structured discourse organization, in which the speaker constructs arguments step by step to influence and build the audience's belief in the position being presented. This organizational pattern allows the audience to follow the speaker's logical train of thought and makes it easier for them to understand the relationship between the issues raised and the solutions offered.

Recent research shows that argumentation in political speeches is not neutral but rather structured to guide the audience's interpretation of social reality (Ilie, 2017; Zarefsky, 2014). Analysis of argument structure allows the identification of patterns of policy claims, evidentiary support, and implicit warrants that are often unconscious to the public (Schiappa, 2026; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012). Thus, this study has theoretical significance in expanding the application of argumentation theory to the Indonesian political context.

From an education policy perspective, the Free Nutritional Meal Program is positioned as a solution to the problems of learning quality, unequal access, and stunting, which impact academic achievement. Global literature shows that school feeding programs contribute to increased school enrollment and learning outcomes (Bundy et al., 2018; Drake et al., 2017). However, the success of a policy is determined not only by the program's design but also by the political legitimacy that underpins it (Schmidt, 2014; Béland & Cox, 2016). In the Indonesian context, education policies often encounter public resistance due to weak government communication (Suryadarma & Jones, 2013; Bjork, 2005).

Initial observations of President Prabowo Subianto's speeches indicate a pattern of argumentation emphasizing the causal relationship between malnutrition, low learning concentration, and the quality of national education. This claim is supported by statistical data and crisis narratives, and is linked to the urgency of government intervention through a nutritious meal program. This structure reflects the patterns of rationalization and moral evaluation as described in legitimacy theory (van Leeuwen, 2007; Reyes, 2011). However, the warrants linking health premises to the success of education reform are often implicit and require in-depth analysis through an argumentative structure framework.

Various studies on political speech in Indonesia tend to focus on general rhetorical analysis or populist strategies without systematically examining the argument structure of

education policy (Heryanto, 2019; Mietzner, 2020). International studies on policy legitimacy also focus more on the European and North American contexts (Schmidt, 2014; Wodak, 2015). In the past ten years, studies on political argumentation have developed rapidly, but few have integrated Toulmin's argument structure theory with analyses of education policy legitimacy in Southeast Asia (Schiappa, 2026; van Eemeren, 2018). This gap makes this research relevant and scientifically novel.

Furthermore, studies on school feeding policy in the education literature emphasize implementation and quantitative impacts rather than its discursive construction (Bundy et al., 2018; Drake et al., 2017). Research on education policy discourse in Indonesia has also not specifically examined how argumentative structures are used to frame policies as systemic solutions (Bjork, 2005; Suryadarma & Jones, 2013). Thus, there is a gap between education policy studies and political argumentation studies that needs to be bridged through interdisciplinary analysis.

Based on this background, the research problem formulation of this study is how argumentative structures are constructed in President Prabowo Subianto's speech on the Free Nutritional Meal Program and how these structures function to legitimize education policy? This study aims to identify the components of argumentative structures, analyze the legitimation strategies used, and explain the relationship between the construction of education problems and the proposed policy solutions. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the study of political argumentation and policy discourse analysis in Indonesia. Practically, this research contributes to a critical understanding of the public and policymakers regarding the importance of argumentative constructions in education policy communication.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a critical discourse analysis design oriented toward argumentative analysis. This qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to deeply understand the construction of meaning, argumentation patterns, and legitimation strategies in political speech texts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Specifically, this research combines Toulmin's (2003) theory of argument structure with a political discourse analysis approach (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012) to identify how education policy claims are constructed and legitimized through argumentative structures. The analysis is conducted interpretively, taking into account the socio-political context of discourse production (Wodak, 2015; van Dijk, 2014).

The discourse analysis model used is the Political Discourse Analysis model developed by Fairclough & Fairclough (2012), which places argumentation at the core of policy analysis. This model views political discourse as a form of practical argumentation consisting of premises about current circumstances (circumstances), goals, values, and claims for action. This framework is integrated with Toulmin's (2003) argument structure model, which includes claims, data, warrants, backing, qualifiers, and rebuttals, to identify the microstructure of argumentation. Furthermore, legitimacy strategies are analyzed using the categories of authorization, moral evaluation, and rationalization (van Leeuwen, 2007; Reyes, 2011) to strengthen critical readings of the argumentative function of speeches.

The research data consists of the text of President Prabowo Subianto's speech at the Submission of the Government Statement on the Draft Law on the State Budget (APBN) for Fiscal Year 2026 and its Financial Note before the Plenary Session of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, Jakarta, August 15, 2025. This speech explicitly discusses the Free Nutritional Meal Program in relation to education issues. The data were in the form of official transcripts of speeches obtained from public government sources, namely the website <https://setkab.go.id/>. The unit of analysis was argumentative speech containing policy claims, supporting reasons, and normative justification. Data selection was conducted

purposively, considering thematic relevance to education policy and the frequency of causal arguments (Patton, 2015).

Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation and note-taking of transcribed speech texts. This process included identifying text segments containing policy arguments, initial coding based on argument structure components, and classifying legitimacy strategies. Data collection also considered the situational context of the speech, such as the delivery forum and intended audience, to understand the pragmatic dimensions of argumentation (Ilie, 2017; Wodak, 2015).

The primary research instrument was the researcher herself, a human instrument competent in discourse analysis and argumentation theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To maintain analytical consistency, an analysis guideline was used in the form of a categorization matrix containing Toulmin's components (claim, data, warrant, backing, qualifier, rebuttal) and van Leeuwen's legitimacy categories (authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization). This matrix served as a systematic tool in identifying argumentative patterns and legitimacy functions within each text unit.

Data validity was tested through theoretical triangulation and diligent observation. Theoretical triangulation was conducted by comparing analytical findings based on the Toulmin model, Political Discourse Analysis, and legitimacy theory (Flick, 2018). Additionally, peer debriefing with fellow discourse researchers was conducted to reduce interpretive bias. Interpretive validity was maintained through repeated readings of the text and noting the socio-political context underlying the discourse production (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; van Dijk, 2014).

The data analysis technique in this study was carried out in a step-by-step and integrative manner, combining Toulmin's argument structure model, van Leeuwen's legitimacy theory, and Fairclough's Political Discourse Analysis framework. The first stage was identifying argumentative units within the speech text. At this stage, researchers conducted an intensive reading of the entire speech transcript to identify segments containing policy claims, problematizing statements, causal relationships, and forms of normative justification. Argumentative units were determined based on the presence of propositions that demonstrate positions, reasons, or justifications for the Free Nutritional Meal Program. This process aims to filter narrative or descriptive texts that do not contain argumentative functions so that the focus of the analysis remains on the construction of policy arguments.

The second stage is coding the argument structure based on Toulmin's model. Each identified argumentative unit is then classified into claim, data (grounds), warrant, backing, qualifier, and rebuttal components. Claim is identified as the main statement that encourages policy acceptance, data as empirical evidence or illustrations supporting the claim, warrant as the implicit assumption connecting the data and the claim, backing as normative or authoritative reinforcement, qualifier as a marker of certainty, and rebuttal as a possible rebuttal or limitation of the argument. This stage allows mapping of dominant argumentative patterns, for example, whether the speech emphasizes rationalization based on statistical data or moral justification based on national values.

The third stage is identifying legitimization strategies using van Leeuwen's theoretical categories: authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoesis. Once the argument structure is mapped, each policy claim is analyzed to identify the accompanying legitimization strategies. Authorization is characterized by references to state authority, the constitution, or experts; moral evaluation is seen in the use of values such as social justice and child welfare; rationalization emerges through logical argumentation and causal relationships; Meanwhile, mythopoesis is identified through persuasive narratives or illustrations. This analysis aims to uncover how argumentative structures function ideologically in building public acceptance of education policies.

The fourth stage is an analysis of the social and political context using Fairclough's three-dimensional approach, encompassing text analysis, discursive practices, and social practices. In the text dimension, the results of coding argument structures and legitimation strategies are analyzed linguistically and rhetorically. In the discursive practices dimension, how the speech was produced and distributed is examined, including the president's position as an institutional actor and intended audience. In the social practices dimension, argumentation is understood within the context of Indonesia's socio-political conditions, including issues of stunting, educational inequality, and the policy reform agenda. This stage ensures that the analysis does not stop at the structural level but also explains the power relations and interests underlying the discourse construction.

The fifth stage is integrative interpretation and drawing conclusions. At this stage, all findings from the analysis of argument structures, legitimation strategies, and the social context are synthesized to answer the research problem formulation. Researchers identified dominant argumentation patterns, the relationship between the construction of the education crisis and policy solutions, and the most prominent forms of legitimacy. The interpretation process was conducted reflectively and cyclically, comparing findings across text sections to maintain analytical consistency. The final result is a comprehensive understanding of how the argumentative structure in President Prabowo Subianto's speech functions as a legitimizing mechanism for education policy through the Free Nutritional Meal Program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

a. Argumentative Structure Constructed in President Prabowo Subianto's Speech on the Free Nutritional Meal Program

Based on Toulmin's argumentative structure analysis, the main claim made by President Prabowo in the Free Nutritional Meal Program or MBG segment is that the MBG is a strategic instrument for building a superior generation and improving the quality of Indonesia's human resources. This claim is evident in the president's statement in the following excerpt from his speech:

"We are building a superior generation, our children, through Free Nutritional Meals (MBG). A superior generation is born from healthy bodies with adequate nutrition."

(Source: Text of President Prabowo Subianto's Speech)

This claim is supported by quantitative data (data/grounds) in the form of a target beneficiary population of 82.9 million students, pregnant women, and toddlers, as well as a budget allocation of IDR 335 trillion in 2026. The inclusion of fiscal figures strengthens the policy's rationality and creates the impression of a policy based on systematic planning.

Structurally, the MBG argument follows the following pattern:

- 1) Claim, using MBG data, to build a superior generation and improve the quality of human resources.
- 2) Data in the form of 82.9 million beneficiaries; Rp335 trillion budget allocation.
- 3) Warrant in the form of healthy children with adequate nutrition will have better learning quality.
- 4) Backing in the form of the state's obligation to develop superior human resources and eliminate stunting.
- 5) Qualifier in the form of national implementation targets and expanded reach.
- 6) Rebuttal (implicit) in the form of anticipating doubts about effectiveness by citing local economic benefits.

The warrant in this speech is implicit but logically strong, establishing a causal link between nutrition, health, quality, human resources, and national competitiveness. This pattern demonstrates a form of practical argumentation as explained by Fairclough & Fairclough

(2012). For a more detailed explanation of the argument structure constructed by President Prabowo Subiyanto in his speech, see the following table.

Table 1. Structure of Toulmin's Argument in President Prabowo Subiyanto's Speech

No.	Toulmin Components	Findings in Speech
1	Claim	MBG builds a superior generation and improves human resource quality.
2	Data	82.9 million beneficiaries; budget IDR 335 trillion.
3	Warrants	Good nutrition produces quality human resources.
4	Backing	The state is obliged to develop human resources and eliminate stunting.
5	Qualifiers	The program reaches all corners of the country.
6	Rebuttal	Impacts the local economy and empowers UMKM/MSMEs.

From a legitimacy strategy perspective (van Leeuwen), the argumentation structure in President Prabowo Subianto's speech, based on the legitimacy analysis, reveals three dominant strategies:

1) Rationalization

The MBG is legitimized through the following cause-and-effect argument:

"MBG improves the nutritional quality of our children, the quality of Indonesia's future human resources..."

(Source: Text of President Prabowo Subianto's Speech)

This speech excerpt demonstrates that the program is constructed as a logical solution to the problems of education and stunting.

2) Moral Evaluation

The use of terms such as "superior generation," "our children," and "people's rights" builds moral legitimacy.

3) Authorization

Legitimacy is also strengthened through the President's position as the state authority in presenting the Draft State Budget (RAPBN) to the House of Representatives (DPR). Furthermore, no explicit mythopoetic strategy is found in the MBG segment, as legitimacy is based more on fiscal rationality and national morality. For further clarification, we can see the argument structure of the legitimacy strategy (van Leeuwen) in President Prabowo Subiyanto's speech in the following table.

Table 2. Van Leeuwen's Legitimacy Strategy in President Prabowo Subiyanto's Speech

No.	Legitimation	Strategy Indicators in Text	Function
1	Rationalization	The causal relationship between nutrition, human resources, and competitiveness	Forming logical legitimacy
2	Moral Evaluation	The terms "superior generation" and "our children"	Value-based legitimacy
3	Authorization	Delivery at the official RAPBN forum	Institutional legitimacy
4	Mythopoesis	Not dominant	-

The following table illustrates the argument structure of President Prabowo Subianto's speech, based on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model.

Table 3. Argument Structure Based on Fairclough's Political Discourse Analysis Model

No.	Analysis Level	Aspects	Findings
1	Text Dimensions	1. Causal Relations	Nutrition, superior human resources, competitiveness
		2. Rhetorical Strategies	Inclusive pronoun "we", accumulated benefits
		3. Rational Legitimacy	Use of data from 82.9 million recipients and a budget of Rp335 trillion to be disbursed
		4. Actor Representation	The state as the active actor, the people as the beneficiaries
2	Discursive Practice	1. Production Context	Draft State Budget Hearing at the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI) in Jakarta, August 15, 2025
		2. Discourse Position	Third National Priority Agenda
		3. Intertextuality	Integration with Fiscal and Development Discourse
		4. Distribution	National Legislative and Media Forum
3	Social Practices	1. Social Issues	Stunting, educational inequality
		2. Ideology	State-based development
		3. Power Relations	The state as an agent of transformation
		4. Social Goals	Superior human resources and global competitiveness

From the table above, we can describe the argumentative structure of President Prabowo Subianto's speech, based on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model of Political Discourse Analysis (PDA), as follows:

1) Text Analysis

At the text level, the argumentative structure of the MBG is constructed through a systematic problem-solution pattern. The President begins with the following normative statement:

"We are building a superior generation, our children, through Free Nutritious Meals (MBG). A superior generation is born from healthy bodies with sufficient nutrition."

(Source: Text of President Prabowo Subianto's Speech)

Linguistically, this clause demonstrates an explicit causal relationship between nutrition and a superior generation. The use of the inclusive pronoun "we" establishes collective solidarity and the president's position as a representative of the people. The firm, declarative sentence structure demonstrates ideological certainty regarding the urgency of the program. This argument is supported by quantitative data in the following excerpt from the president's speech.

"MBG, we are targeting to reach 82.9 million students, pregnant women, and toddlers..."

"We have allocated IDR 335 trillion for MBG in 2026."

(Source: Text of President Prabowo Subianto's Speech)

The use of statistical figures and budget allocations strengthens rational legitimacy. Within Fairclough's framework, this demonstrates a technocratic intertextuality strategy,

namely the use of economic-fiscal discourse to strengthen policy credibility. Rhetorically, there is an expansion of the program's benefits, as in the following speech excerpt:

"MBG improves the nutritional quality of our children, the quality of Indonesia's future human resources, and also empowers MSMEs and the local economy..."

(Source: Text of President Prabowo Subiyanto's Speech)

Recurring coordinating clauses demonstrate a strategy of accumulation of benefits, framing MBG not simply as a health program, but as a multidimensional policy.

2. Analysis of Discursive Practice

At the level of discursive practice, this speech was produced in the official RAPBN forum before the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI). This context lent institutional authority to the discourse being constructed. The presentation in the plenary session demonstrated that the MBG was not positioned as campaign rhetoric, but as a state policy integrated into the national fiscal architecture.

The production of the MBG discourse is also integrated with the national priority agenda, positioned as the third priority after food and energy security. This placement demonstrates a framing strategy that human resource development has strategic urgency equal to economic security and national sovereignty. The distribution of the discourse through legislative forums and national media broadens the reach of public interpretation while building political consensus. From Fairclough's perspective, this demonstrates the process of policy naturalization through institutional legitimacy.

3. Analysis of Social Practice

At the level of social practice, the MBG is constructed as a response to structural issues: stunting, education quality, and global competitiveness. The president's statement can be seen in the following speech excerpt:

"We will eliminate stunting as quickly as possible."

(Source: Text of President Prabowo Subiyanto's Speech)

The above speech excerpt demonstrates a spirit of constructing a health crisis discourse as a basis for state intervention. The MBG policy is positioned as a structural solution to develop "superior human resources" capable of global competition. This discourse also reflects the ideology of state-centered national development. The state appears as the primary actor, present, protecting, and allocating massive resources through the state budget.

Within Fairclough's framework, the MBG argument reproduces a power relationship that positions the state as an agent of social transformation, while the people are constructed as beneficiaries who must be supported through fiscal policy.

b. The Function of Argumentation Structure in Legitimizing Education Policy

The analysis of the function of argumentation structure in legitimizing education policy in President Prabowo Subianto's speech revealed the following five functions:

1) Causal Construction Function as Rational Legitimacy

The argumentation structure in the speech establishes a systematic causal relationship between nutrition, health quality, and human resource excellence. The President stated in his speech, *"We are building a superior generation, our children, through Free Nutritious Meals (MBG). A superior generation is born from healthy bodies with sufficient nutrition."* This statement serves as the primary claim linking the MBG program to the strategic goals of national education. By establishing an explicit cause-and-effect relationship, the argumentation structure legitimizes the policy as a logical and scientific solution to the problem of education quality.

This argument is not merely normative but is supported by quantitative data. The mention of a target of 82.9 million beneficiaries and an allocation of IDR 335 trillion demonstrates that legitimacy is built through fiscal rationalization. The function of the argumentative structure here is to create the impression of a planned, measurable, and data-driven policy.

2) The Function of Benefit Expansion as Multidimensional Legitimacy

The argumentative structure not only limits the MBG to health issues but also extends it to the economic and social empowerment spheres. The President stated in his speech, "*The MBG improves the nutritional quality of our children, the quality of Indonesia's future human resources, and also empowers MSMEs and the local economy...*" This enumerative pattern demonstrates a strategy of accumulating benefits within a single argumentative sequence. The function of this expansion is to broaden the basis of policy legitimacy.

By linking the MBG to job creation and the empowerment of farmers and MSMEs, education policy is framed as a national development policy. The argumentative structure serves to build cross-sectoral support, so that the MBG is understood not only as an educational intervention, but as an economic transformation project. The resulting legitimacy is comprehensive because it simultaneously touches on health, education, and economic dimensions.

3) The Function of Framing the Crisis as a Basis for State Intervention

The argumentative structure in the speech also serves to establish the context of the crisis as a basis for legitimizing policy intervention. The President emphasized in his speech, "*We will eliminate stunting as quickly as possible.*" This statement frames stunting as an urgent problem requiring swift and systemic action. Thus, the argumentative structure establishes moral and social urgency.

Through this framing, the MBG is positioned as the answer to the health crisis that directly impacts the quality of education. The argumentative function here is to create justification for preventative and structural state action. Policy legitimacy is achieved through the construction that without state intervention, the quality of future generations will be threatened.

4) The Function of Integration with National Education Policy

The legitimacy of the MBG is strengthened through its integration with the national education agenda. The President stated in his speech, "*We are realizing quality education. Education is the most powerful weapon for producing superior human resources who are globally competitive.*" This statement places the MBG within the broader framework of developing quality education. The argumentative structure ideologically links nutrition to educational quality.

In the context of its integration function with national education policy, the function of the argumentative structure is to align the MBG policy with the national education vision. The MBG does not stand as a separate program, but rather as an integral part of education reform. Legitimacy is gained through unifying discourses on health, education, and human resource development within a single policy framework.

5) The Function of Representing the State as an Actor of Transformation

The argumentative structure also constructs the representation of the state as the primary actor in social transformation. Statements by the president in his speech, such as "*The State Budget must be used for the greatest possible welfare of the Indonesian people.*" demonstrate that the MBG policy is legitimized through the state's fiscal authority. The state is positioned as the protector and driver of public welfare.

This argumentative function strengthens the institutional legitimacy of the policy. By placing the MBG within the architecture of the 2026 Draft State Budget, the policy gains formal and constitutional legitimacy. The argumentative structure presents the MBG as an implementation of the state's responsibility for education and the welfare of the people.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the argumentative structure of President Prabowo Subianto's speech regarding the Free Nutritional Meals or MBG Program is constructed through a systematic, practical argumentation pattern oriented toward legitimizing educational policy. The main claim stated in the quote, *"We are building a superior generation, our children, through Free Nutritional Meals (MBG). A superior generation is born from healthy bodies with sufficient nutrition,"* represents a form of deliberative rhetoric as proposed by Aristotle (2007), namely rhetoric oriented toward future action. The argument is not merely persuasive but designed to establish policy rationality based on cause-and-effect relationships. In this context, the president's speech demonstrates the integration of logos and ethos as the foundation of legitimacy, aimed at influencing the public as recipients of the message through perlocutionary speech acts (Talavira & Potapenko, 2023).

The argumentative structure found is in line with Toulmin (2003) model, Hitchcock & Verheij (2006) opinion, and the research results of Turós et al. (2025), especially regarding the relationship between claims, data, and warrant. The mention of the figures "82.9 million beneficiaries" and "Rp 335 trillion" serves as a basis for strengthening claims through data-based legitimacy. From Schiappa (2026) perspective, the use of quantitative data in public discourse serves as a strategy to strengthen credibility and control audience interpretation. Thus, legitimacy is not constructed solely through moral narratives, but through technocratic rationalization.

However, unlike classical argumentation models that tend to focus on formal structures, these findings demonstrate a multidimensional argumentative expansion. The statement that *"MBG improves nutritional quality... and also empowers MSMEs and the local economy"* demonstrates a strategy of accumulating benefits. This aligns with Charteris-Black (2018), who emphasized that modern political speech often utilizes metaphors and enumerations to expand the scope of legitimacy. Education policy, in this context, is legitimized as both economic and social development policy.

Within the framework of Fairclough & Fairclough (2012) Political Discourse Analysis, the MBG argument structure demonstrates a pattern of practical reasoning consisting of premises about conditions (stunting and human resource quality), values (a superior generation), and actions (MBG implementation). This structure demonstrates that policy is positioned as a rational response to social problems. Thus, legitimacy is not merely rhetorical but tied to the construction of a specific social reality.

This finding can also be compared to van Leeuwen (2007) legitimation strategy. Rationalization becomes the dominant strategy through the causal relationship between nutrition, human resources, and national competitiveness. Furthermore, moral evaluation is evident in the phrase "our children," which fosters emotional closeness. The combination of rationalization and moral evaluation demonstrates that the legitimacy of education policy is not solely based on economic logic but also on collective values.

From the perspective of Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) new rhetoric theory, MBG's argumentation demonstrates an effort to build a universal audience, namely all Indonesians. The use of the inclusive pronoun "we" serves to build solidarity and bridge the gap between leaders and the people. This reinforces the political ethos discussed by Zarefsky (2014), where the speaker's credibility is integral to the effectiveness of argumentation.

In the context of Indonesian politics, these findings complement the studies of Heryanto (2019) and Mietzner (2020), which highlight populism and identity politics. Unlike populist rhetoric, which tends to be antagonistic, the MBG argument is more oriented toward state-centered development. The state is represented as an agent of social transformation through the statement that the state budget (APBN) is used for the welfare of the people. This demonstrates an institutionally based legitimacy model, rather than merely emotional mobilization.

Substantively, the MBG policy also aligns with global literature on school feeding programs. Bundy et al. (2018) and Drake et al. (2017) show that school nutrition interventions have a significant impact on participation and learning outcomes. However, the novelty of this research lies in analyzing how these policies are legitimized discursively, rather than simply being evaluated quantitatively. Thus, this study bridges the gap between education policy studies and political argumentation studies.

Within the framework of Béland & Cox (2016), ideas play a crucial role in shaping public policy. The MBG's argumentative structure establishes the idea that quality education depends on health interventions. This idea is then naturalized through the Draft State Budget (RAPBN) forum, thereby gaining institutional legitimacy. This naturalization process aligns with Fairclough's analysis of the relationship between discourse and power.

Furthermore, the framing of stunting as an urgent crisis, through the statement "We must eliminate stunting as quickly as possible," demonstrates a strategy of moral urgency. Wodak (2015) explains that the construction of crisis is often used to justify interventionist policies. However, in this case, the crisis is not directed at political antagonism, but rather at mobilizing national development.

These findings also demonstrate the integration of education and economic discourse, as discussed by Schmidt (2014) in the context of economic policy legitimacy. The use of fiscal figures and macroeconomic targets demonstrates that education is positioned within a framework of national economic stability. This integration extends policy legitimacy from the education sector to the fiscal sector.

From a methodological perspective, the qualitative approach employed aligns with the interpretive principles of Creswell and Poth (2018). In-depth analysis of the text allows for the identification of power relations and ideologies not evident in quantitative studies. Interpretive validity is strengthened through theoretical triangulation as recommended by Lincoln & Guba (1985).

Conceptually, the main novelty of this research lies in the integration of three theoretical frameworks Toulmin, van Leeuwen, and Fairclough to analyze the legitimacy of education policy. This integration demonstrates that argumentative structures function simultaneously as mechanisms of rationalization, moralization, and institutionalization. This multidimensional approach broadens the scope of studies on political argumentation in Southeast Asia.

Furthermore, this research demonstrates that the legitimacy of education policy in Indonesia is based not only on constitutional norms but also on global development rhetoric. The mention of competitiveness and superior human resources demonstrates the internalization of global discourses on human capital (Suryadarma & Jones, 2013). Thus, the MBG is positioned as part of a human capital-based development strategy.

From the perspective of pragma-dialectical argumentation theory (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004; van Eemeren, 2018), this speech demonstrates a lack of explicit rebuttal. This indicates that discourse is constructed within the context of institutional consensus, rather than antagonistic debate. Thus, legitimacy is achieved through collective affirmation, rather than confrontation.

Finally, this discussion demonstrates that the function of the argumentative structure in President Prabowo Subianto's speech is not only to establish the legitimacy of the MBG policy as an educational program, but also as an ideological project of national development. The

argumentative structure integrates fiscal rationality, collective morality, and institutional authority into a coherent narrative. The theoretical contribution of this research lies in mapping how the legitimacy of education policy is articulated through the political discourse of developing countries in the context of globalization.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that, first, the argumentative structure of President Prabowo Subianto's speech regarding the Free Nutritional Meals Program or MBG is constructed through a systematic and layered pattern of practical argumentation. This structure integrates normative claims about a "superior generation," supporting quantitative data (82.9 million beneficiaries and an allocation of IDR 335 trillion), and causal warrants linking nutrition, health, and human resource quality.

Through a combination of technocratic rationalization, moral evaluation, and institutional authorization, the argumentation functions not only as a persuasive tool but also as a mechanism for legitimizing education policy within the framework of national development. Thus, the legitimacy of the MBG is constructed simultaneously through logical, ethical, and structural dimensions.

Second, this study demonstrates that the function of the argumentative structure in the speech goes beyond simply justifying education policy. The MBG argumentation is positioned as an ideological project for state-centered human resource development, integrating discourses on health, education, and the economy within a single policy narrative. The argumentative structure serves to naturalize the relationship between nutritional interventions and global competitiveness, while simultaneously representing the state as a legitimate and responsible agent of social transformation. Thus, the legitimacy of education policy in this context is multidimensional: rational, moral, economic, and institutional.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of political argumentation studies and policy discourse analysis by demonstrating that the legitimacy of education policy can be understood more comprehensively through an integration of Toulmin's model, van Leeuwen's legitimacy theory, and Fairclough's Political Discourse Analysis. An important implication is that education policy studies should not be analyzed solely from the perspective of implementation and impact, but also from the perspective of the discursive constructions that shape public acceptance. This multidimensional approach opens up space for further research on how public policy in developing countries is legitimized through a synthesis of technocratic rationality and collective morality in the context of globalization.

Practically, these findings imply that the success of education policy communication is largely determined by the argumentative structure used in official state discourse. Policy development supported by data-based arguments, clear causal relationships, and integration with national values can strengthen public legitimacy and political stability. For policymakers, this research emphasizes the importance of argumentative communication strategies in building social support for national-scale education programs. For academics, the results of this study encourage the need for interdisciplinary studies involving linguistics, political science, and policy studies to understand the dynamics of policy legitimacy in Indonesia and the Southeast Asian region.

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