

E-Reputation in digital public spheres: Discourse network analysis of Indonesian Universities online

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ABSTRACT

Background: E-reputation is increasingly important for the positioning of Indonesian universities in a complex landscape. The complex interplay among universities, media, and other actors in the construction of e-reputation, especially through the lens of actors' networks and interactions, remains a rather understudied phenomenon. **Purpose:** The purpose of the research paper is to examine the relational positioning of Indonesia's ten leading universities as depicted in the online media of 2024, thereby filling a gap in the understanding of the mechanisms of the construction of e-reputation. **Methods:** 279 online news articles related to top universities in Indonesia, such as Universitas Indonesia, UGM, ITB, etc., were analyzed through the application of Discourse Network Analysis (DNA 3.0.11), and then visualization was carried out through Visone 2.28.1. Network metrics were used to assess each university's visibility. **Result:** The results show significant differences in centrality and media attention. Universitas Indonesia, UGM, and ITB are found to be the central institutions that play a crucial role as a hub during significant academic and policy events. On the other hand, other institutions are found to be peripheral. The attention from media sources such as Kompas.com and Republika.co.id centres on controversies surrounding achievements, in which students, alumni, and government actors play significant roles. **Conclusion:** E-reputation is not only a product of discourse networks among various actors, such as institutions and media, but also of media framing and stakeholder engagement. **Implications:** From this research, universities must consider how to manage their e-reputation by strategically engaging with media and stakeholders. Similarly, policymakers must consider how to incorporate e-reputation into policy and media literacy for the maintenance of reputation.

Keywords: E-reputation; discourse network analysis; digital discourse analysis; digital public sphere; universities in Indonesia

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INTRODUCTION

In the new digital era, the reputation of universities goes beyond academic performance and formal recognition, adding the institution's engagement in online public relations. While traditional reputation is built from general perceptions and interactions, e-reputation is essential for universities in reputation competition, whether it be at home or abroad. The rapid progress of information technology has increased rivalries at both ends of the spectrum. Akrami (2024) illustrates some of the universities that have taken to social media. Constructive e-reputation management is essential to increase the visibility and reputation of the University. There is no doubt that the social media and the digital world serve as the most significant means of shaping and controlling reputation.

However, the unique characteristics of Indonesia's universities remain highly heterogeneous, including distinctions among public and private, religious, foundation, or state-based universities. These structural variations affect the institutions' capabilities of managing public relations and communications, developing institutional narratives, and connecting with audiences. In this context, Rizquha & Abdullah (2022) draw attention to the phenomenon of social media employed strategically to positively influence and manage perceptions of institutions through specific digital communication techniques. The education sector's evolution has increased the number of

competitors, and therefore, universities need to better define and solidify their institutional identity. This point of view aligns with Corporate Identity Theory. Corporate Identity Theory says that an organization strategically formulates its identity to create an image for its stakeholders, differentiating itself through its mission and values, its culture, and its visual identity and communication (Balmer & Greyser, 2006). In higher education, corporate identity refers to more than logos or symbols or marks of the institution. Corporate identity incorporates how universities communicate their achievements in the instruction they administer, the governance they engage in, and the services they provide for society through the various media they participate in. The strongest corporate identity builds the strongest foundation of the trust and reputation of stakeholders in the institution, especially now that the global community and the various disciplines continue to grow more competitive and digital. This institutional identity represents the university's ability to acquire various resources such as money, qualified professors, and students. The identity of an educational institution reflects its value in meeting the needs of students and fosters public confidence in the institution (Tien et al., 2019). Because of the rapid development of technology, it has become crucial for universities to innovate their communication and branding techniques to improve public trust, and similarly to remain aligned with the anticipated perceptions in the expanding digital world.

Trust from students and stakeholders

within and outside of the higher education sector, both digital and face-to-face, activates policies and shapes the university's brand (Defeyter et al., 2021). This view aligns with Relationship Management Theory. Long-term, mutually rewarding relationships with strategic publics comprise the foundation of any successful organization. One-way communication is not enough to support organizational success (Ledingham, 2018). For colleges and universities, ongoing relationships with students, alumni, government personnel, members of the business community and the media strengthen their competitive position and enhance their institutional reputation in the digital space. To merit a place in the open global market, Akrami (2024) argues that preserving the reputation of universities is paramount. To this end, reputation management is of utmost importance. In line with this global outlook, the case of Indonesia is illustrative in that the country's digital and communicative university infrastructural frameworks determine the perception of the universities. Marta et al. (2019) found that the compliance of authors in the Indonesian communication sciences journal was contingent on the efficient and clear presentation of information via the Open Journal Systems (OJS). This is problematic and goes beyond the university's digital platform that is poorly managed. It is a concern of a technological deficit, that creates clear obstacles for potential contributors, and ultimately undermines the trust of the academic community and the public at large.

This study uses Social Network Theory (Dobbels et al., 2018; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Social networks analyze patterns of social interactions to develop insights about the nature of communication and the role of reputation. A key proposition of the theory is that the outcomes of social interactions are the result of a combination of specific characteristics and social positional roles of the individual actors in the relational network. In the case of a university, reputation and visibility in the digital environment are a function of the university's social connectivity rather than the content of the university's communication. Weir and Ali (2024) outline four components of social network analysis: (1) the primary focus is social interactions; (2) the social data; (3) relational graphs; and (4) mathematical and computational modeling. In this context, the actors (universities, media, and audiences) are referred to as "nodes," while the interactions between them are referred to as "ties". The theory suggests that information, power, and resources are concentrated in these structures. Central actors ultimately gain significant visibility, while the absence of central actors and ties in a network encourages the flow of information across multiple communities (Burt, 1992; S. Zhang et al., 2020). A central feature of the evolving reputation of a university, e-reputation, is the degree of interconnected communication channels. This perspective integrates network characteristics - density, cohesion, and centrality accompanied by public discourse to analyze the development of positive

and negative reputation of the institution. Based on Social Network Theory, this study frames e-reputation as an emergent property of relational connectivity and digital discourse, and furthers network-based explanations of an institution's visibility and legitimacy.

Social Network Theory shows how relationships impact the flow of information and affect the visibility of an organization. Digital Reputation Theory illustrates how the information flows that result from the relationships explain online assessments of an organization. Stakeholders' perceptions of an organization's credibility and legitimacy are shaped by the cumulative impact of engagement and participation in digital communication and media, as well as the content that is created and posted by users (Aula, 2011; Shah et al., 2021). Within the context of higher education, a university's e-reputation is determined by the constant digital engagement and not merely by the quality of the university's activities. This view expands the network theory by considering that interactions in the digital space lead to outcomes that affect the competitive position and reputation of an organization.

Some research seems to omit the importance that digital media has on substantial university reputations, and only focuses on the reputation management of university management. As Ford (2023) notes, there is a paradox, and a challenge, in the management of Facebook negative sentiments, and the negative management of social media hoaxes or smear campaigns directed against a university.

In digital discourse, the Discourse Network Analysis (DNA) method was used to explain the interaction and relationships of the various actors involved in the construction, diffusion, and circulation of digital narratives (Leifeld, 2020; Wallaschek et al., 2020). In this sense, this study attempts to bridge the gap by employing Discourse Network Analysis, a method that has not gained much traction in the research in the higher education sector, and which combines the discourse and social network perspectives in such a way that both the narratives and the relationships between the actors can be captured. Thus, DNA can effectively identify the relevant actors in the construction and dissemination of discourses about universities, and illustrate how these discourses are constructed and represented through social media.

A university's e-reputation can be severely impacted by uncontrolled digital crises that may include data leaks and public fraud accusations. Sidharth & Ravi (2023) identified directed to responsive leadership regarding social media. The narratives of these universities should be proactive and substantially in tune with the new realities of the digital society. According to Rizquha & Abdullah (2022) with the rise in competition between universities, the need for brand management in higher education has risen. A university's reputation goes beyond the standard of academics, what also counts is the branding and the identity the university constructs about itself to the outside world. In the global marketplace, branding aids in the promotion of these universities. Vowell (2024)

considers the university culture and its influence on the online teaching process, which leads the public to form a certain image about the quality of education offered by universities. This is in relation to the way universities manage their image and reputation in an era where online education is prevailing.

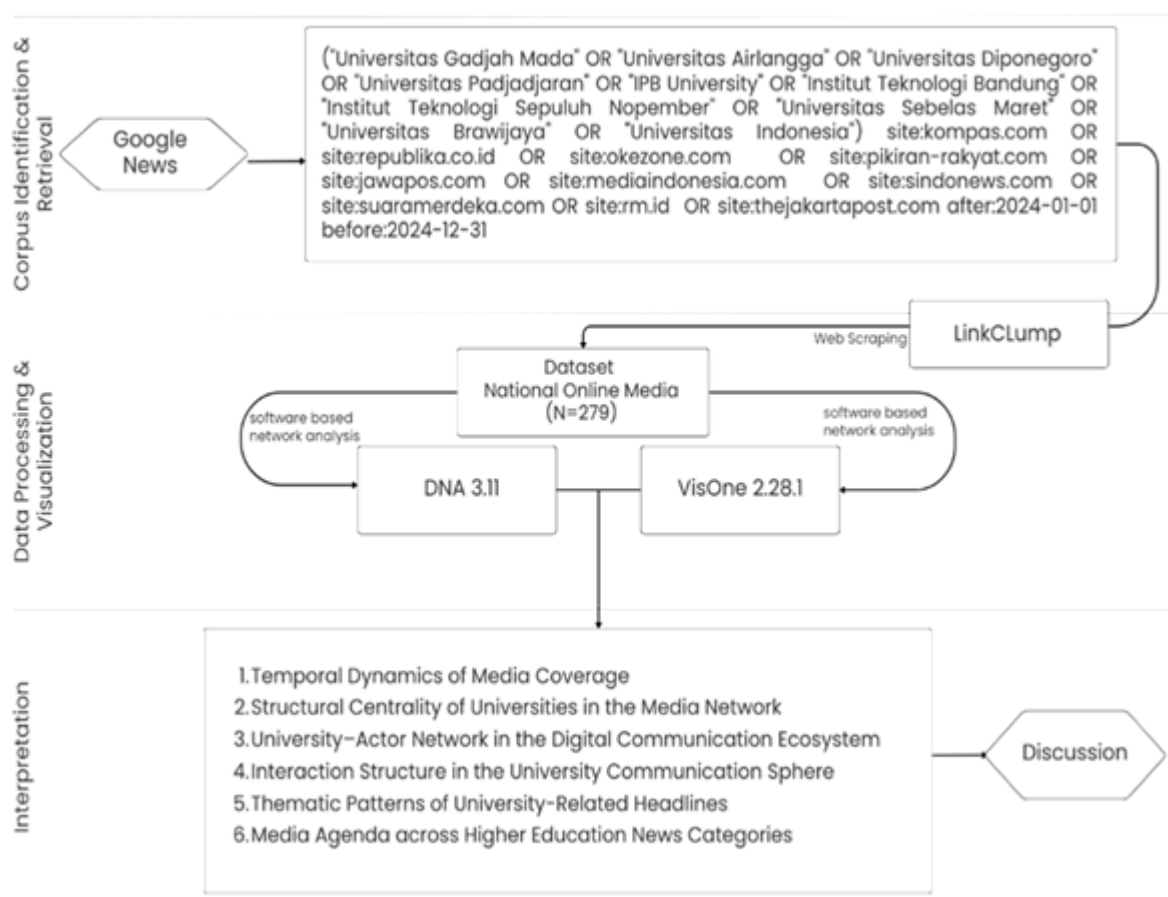
While acknowledging the enhanced learning experience facilitated by digital technologies, Awaludin (2022) aclaims that the adoption of such technologies for quality teaching has been detrimental to the reputation of the university. With regards to the university e-reputation management, the rapid adjustments that need to be made to the digital educational environment causes the use of new technologies to be of major importance in all other areas such as the implementation of strategically positioned cloud-based accounting systems with the use of blockchain technologies for financial insight and assurance (Prabawangi et al., 2026; Qurniawati et al., 2024). As noted by Adeusi (2024), states that blockchain technology improves the financial information system of the university and builds trust with the employees, students, and other stakeholders. The research examines how institutional identity is digitally represented and contested. The results will help communication managers and policymakers improve the university's reputation during and after the pandemic as the digital world continues to grow. To achieve these objectives, the research will answer the following questions: 1). RQ1: In what way do the changes of online media coverage of

Indonesian universities in 2024 relate to their positions within the networks and the visibility aspect of their e-reputation? 2). RQ2: In what way do the different roles and structures of the digital ecosystem actors influence university e-reputation? 3). RQ3: In what way do the online media discourse and information framing about universities affect institutional visibility and the public perception?

This study contributes to the assessment of Indonesian universities in the context of digital communication networks and further develops the integration of the discourse and network approaches in communication studies. Additionally, it aids university communication managers and policymakers in developing digital reputation enhancement strategies due to the heightened competition in the higher education digital landscape.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a method called Discourse Network Analysis (DNA) that is an integration of discourse analysis and network analysis. Discourse analysis follows an evolving stream of ideas, while network analysis focuses on the positions of different actors and how they relate to one another in a network (Leifeld, 2017). In this case, DNA is used for mapping the discourse in Indonesia's higher education system and identifying the media and the predominant discursive actors. In DNA studies, the unit of analysis is the discourse of the actors, which includes the actor's utterances, news



Source: Author, 2025

Figure 1 Research Workflow

commentary, interactions in social media, and so on.

Figure 1 shows, a total of 279 articles were obtained in the course of 2024. Through 2024 Google News collected 279 articles by utilizing a Boolean query directed at the top Indonesian media and top university names. The articles are pertinent to higher education and the universities, offering insight into the portrayal of these universities in public discourse by dominant online media, which is why they were chosen.

This comprehension focused on analyzing the trends and patterns of university discourse in order to forecast potential university-related

occurrences in the forthcoming year. In this case, all news articles related to the target universities were retrieved and analyzed using the university's name as a search criterion, considering the articles in full and unedited form. This research was conducted on the first ten online news channels in Indonesia that, based on the scoring presented in Table 1 of the SCIMAGO Media Rankings of (2024).

The SCImago Media Rankings (2023) provide a comparative cross-national evaluation of online journalistic platforms based on their digital reputation, **Table 1**. List of the Top 10 Indonesian Online Media (General News) according to the Scimago Media 2024

Table 1 List of the Top 10 Indonesian Online Media (General News) according to the Scimago Media 2024

Media	Domain	Domain	Overall
Kompas	Kompas.com	Kompas.Com	71,75
Republika	Republika.co.id	Republika.Co.Id	67
Okezone	Okezone.com	Okezone.Com	62,25
Pikiran Rakyat	Pikiran-rakyat.com	Pikiran-Rakyat.Com	58,5
Jawa Pos	Jawapos.com	Jawapos.Com	57,75
Media Indonesia	Mediaindonesia.com	Mediaindonesia.Com	57,75
Sindo News	Sindonews.com	Sindonews.Com	55,5
Suara Merdeka	Suaramerdeka.com	Suaramerdeka.Com	53
Rakyat Merdeka	Rm.id	Rm.Id	46,5
The Jakarta Post	Thejakartapost.com	Thejakartapost.Com	46,25

Source: SCIMAGO Media Rankings of, 2024

serving as a reliable benchmark for identifying high-credibility media sources in discourse-oriented research. SCImago ranks high for media outlets that serve as authoritative information brokers and opinion leaders. Therefore, the units represent a valuable opportunity for both content analysis as well as analysis of the discourse networks. Further, their prominence enhances the access of data during the relevant time frame of six months as deemed acceptable for this particular study.

Web scraping, in conjunction with Google News, and Big Data, is the method for data collection in this study. It enables the collection of large quantities of qualitative data with greater accuracy and with great ease (Moran et al., 2020; Nemes & Kiss, 2021; Zhang, 2017). Data collection for this study also included the use of Linkclump, which allows users to copy multiple RLs. Once the data collection has been completed, the texts of the articles have

been harvested and the various texts have been processed for analysis. The corpus was then uploaded to DNA 3.01 and Visone 2.28.1 for text mining, matrix construction, and result analysis. In the produced networks, co-actors (universities, media, government, alumni, and students) were represented as nodes with weighted, undirected co-mention edges derived from articles. The combination of text analytics and actor network theory enables a more detailed examination of the discursive patterns and media coverage of higher education (Leifeld, 2020; Wallaschek et al., 2020), along with the analysis of the dominant themes and the possible meanings in Indonesian online media (Arifianto et al., 2023; Pillay & Scheepers, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The media attention focused on universities during the last year indicates a changing level of prominence for each university within the

Table 2 Centrality Measures (Degree, Betweenness, Closeness) of Indonesian Universities in a Co-occurrence Network of Media Mentions 2024

University	Degree Centrality	Betweenness Centrality	Closeness Centrality
Universitas Gadjah Mada (U1)	0.1307	0.0167	0.3923
Universitas Airlangga (U2)	0.1131	0.0124	0.3846
Universitas Diponegoro (U3)	0.1131	0.0124	0.3846
Universitas Padjadjaran (U4)	0.0989	0.0095	0.3769
IPB University (U5)	0.0954	0.0088	0.3692
Institut Teknologi Bandung (U6)	0.0919	0.0081	0.3615
Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember (U7)	0.0883	0.0075	0.3538
Universitas Sebelas Maret (U8)	0.0848	0.0069	0.3462
Universitas Brawijaya (U9)	0.0813	0.0063	0.3385
Universitas Indonesia (U10)	0.0707	0.0048	0.3308

Note: The network was constructed based on co-occurrence of universities within the same news articles. Nodes represent universities, and edges represent joint mentions

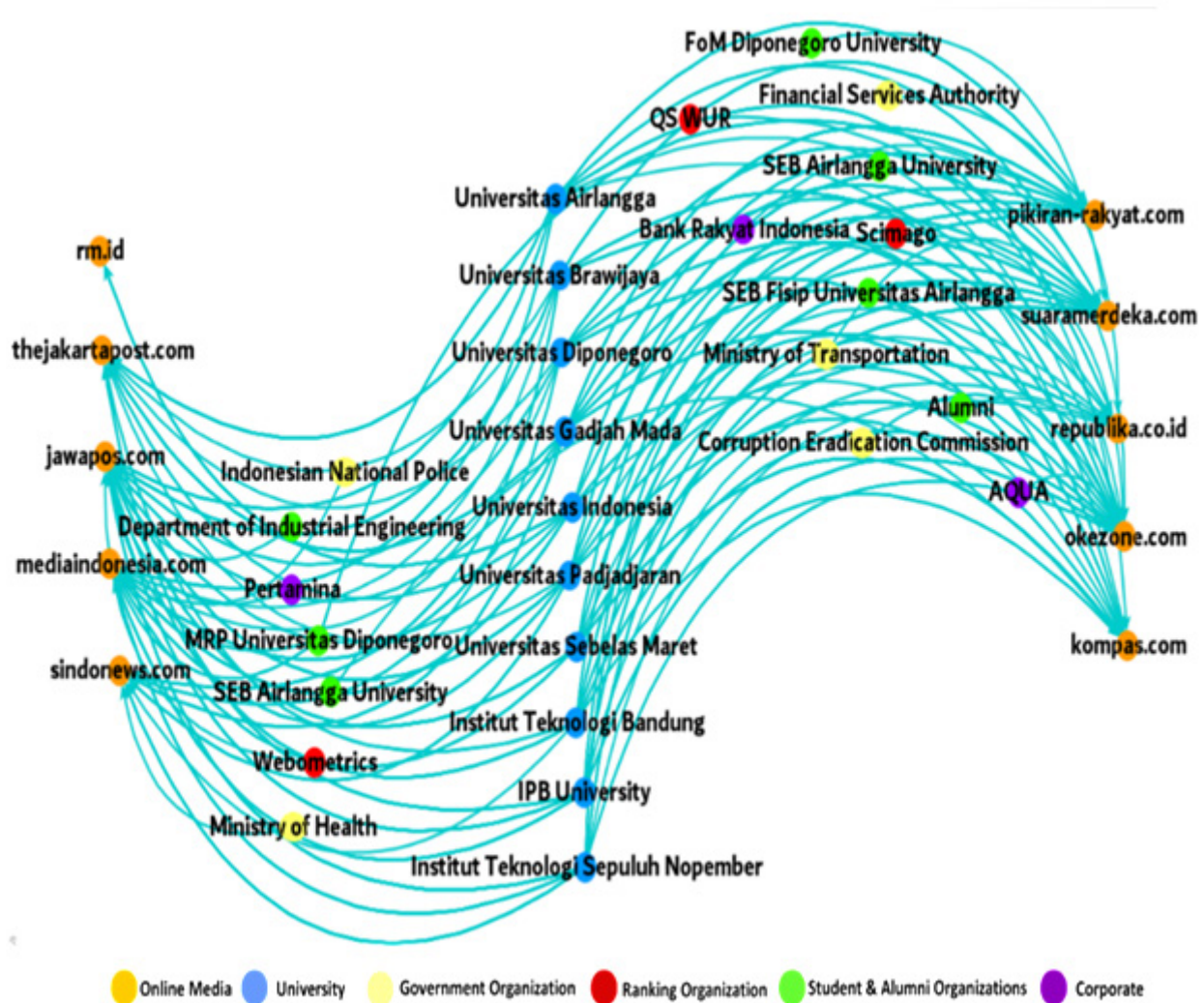
Source: Author, 2025

digital ecosystem. This section analyzes the digital attention cycle and its relation to a university's structural node position(s) within the online communication network to spatial structure of the e-reputation. Specifically, the analysis connects the network metrics of degree, betweenness, and closeness centrality to a university's level of visibility within media coverage and its engagement in digital discourse.

Degree centrality is about the direct interactions that each university has within the network, as presented in Table 2. When actors have high centrality, they tend to be mentioned in the same news articles or have their names cited together more frequently. University U1 has the highest centrality value of 0.1307. This indicates that University U1

has the greatest degree of digital engagement among the universities evaluated. U2 and U3 (0.1131) have strong relational activity with more than one actor as well. In contrast, U6 and U10 have the lowest centrality values of 0.0919 and 0.0707 respectively. This indicates that their public discourse on the web is as poorly integrated as discourse involving these universities. This demonstrates that there are considerable variations in connectedness among the institutions, and that these variations have a structural impact on the visibility and e-reputation of the institutions.

Betweenness centrality measures how much a university acts as a broker between actors in a communication network who would otherwise remain unconnected. With a centrality score of 0.0167, U1 has the highest value, indicating



Source: Author, 2025

Figure 2 Network of Universities among Organizational and Media Actors in Indonesia's DigiEcosystem

that it has a key position in the transmission of messages across disparate clusters. U2 and U3 are also positioned with a high betweenness score of 0.0124, meaning that they are intermediary hubs that facilitate message exchanges across clusters. These positions illustrate the ability to influence the stories that are in circulation and keep the universities in focus across different stakeholders.

The interaction patterns and discourse networks of Indonesian universities can be exposed using network analysis. The analysis

demonstrates how a university's co-mentions and discursive networks define the roles of a degree of relation and structural position among the other universities. In the analysis visualization (Figure 2), university actors, government actors, media actors, commerce actors and student actors are each represented by a node; the relations represented by a link are digitally co-covered, co-acted and co-appeared.

The analysis also indicates that the thicker and denser the links are, the higher the interaction and the closer the nodes are to one

another semantically, relationally and in terms of the strength of the relations.

With regard to the structure of this digital device, the primary universities in the network are Universitas Indonesia (UI), Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM), Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB), and Universitas Diponegoro (Undip). The core cluster, the most connected core, defines the universities as valuable digital conversation locations. The outward links to the media, ministries, student associations, and other parties, showcase the universities' proficiency in the communicative sense. The elevated digital visibility resulting from this structural positioning is an essential component of the university's e-reputation.

The mentioned online national media groups Kompas.com, Republika.co.id, Okezone.com, Jawapos.com, and RM.id hold important information from the left-hand side of the network. Their proximity to the top universities illustrates the influence the media has on the public discourse surrounding the universities. The strong, reciprocal relationship of the media and the universities reveals interdependence. The universities rely on the media to promote their work, while the media rely on the universities for credibility and expert commentary.

On the right side of the network, we see more institutional and community actors, such as Kementerian Perhubungan, BEM FH, BEM FISIP, Jaringan Alumni Unair, and the Bank BRI and AQUA businesses. With respect to central universities, their positions are peripheral and

sometimes more distant, which indicates that their contributions to the ecosystem are limited to some of the more bottom-tier participatory roles, such as collaborative events, public campaigns, or CSR activities associated with the universities. These affiliations are thematic and situational, and they are quite frequent depending on the social or educational problems at hand. Closest to the network center, Webometrics, QS, and Scimago are tiered nodes that situate the global academic ranking discourse within the respective national digital discourse, thus establishing their position as epistemic authorities. This central location shows that global metrics are still prevalent within the networks of higher education.

Coverage of the 2024 shows research innovation, academic policy, university industry collaboration, and institutional participation in national issues. This illustrates that universities serve two of the most important functions; they are sites of the production of scientific knowledge and they acting as important stakeholders in the social and political arenas. Their role is a testament to the communicative environment that influences and reinforces institutional visibility and thus, the e-reputation in higher education.

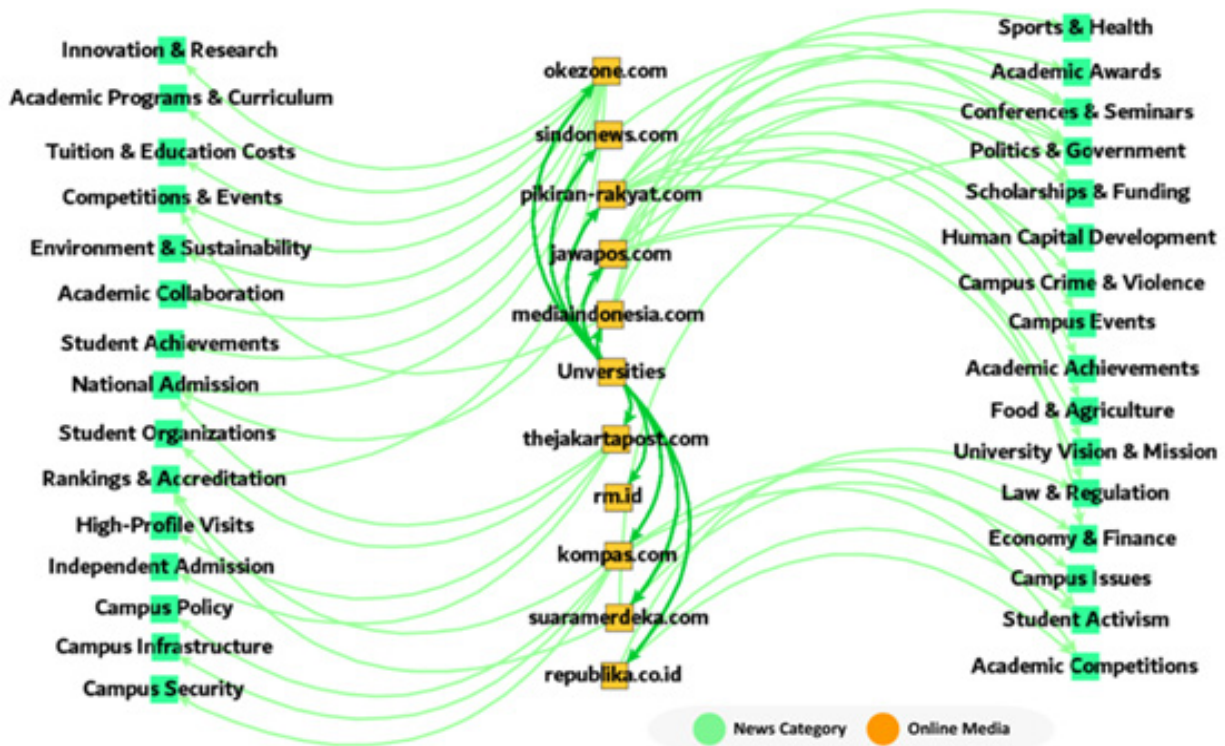
Figure 3 illustrates the discourse network connecting universities and the issues most frequently reported in the online news streams. In the case of the news portals Kompas.com, Okezone.com, Republika.co.id, Jawapos.com, and Suara Merdeka, they are structurally positioned as intermediaries in the coverage of



different issues and the people involved. The issues related to the nodes UKT, SNBP 2024, Pemecatan Dekan, Mahasiswa Baru, Riset dan Inovasi, and Dies Natalis indicate that the electronic coverage of universities concentrates on the major events and controversies of the higher education policies and not on the academic achievements of the university.

issues regarding the scientific reputation are of primary concern, while they are less prominent than those related to policies. Thematic nodes such as KKN, ISMA 2024, Women in STEM, and Dies Natalis present positive narratives about student activities, gender equity, and community service activities.

Figure 4 illustrates the relationship between issue categories related to the university and the online media channels that cover them. Each media outlet in Indonesia has its own story focus, editorial framing, and sensitivity to the problem of higher education. In this case, the



Source: Author, 2025

Figure 4 Media Focus across News Categories in the Higher Education Discourse

text nodes, positioned on the left and right, relate to the different types of issues, such as student success, campus politics, tuition fees, and research and innovation. The central square nodes represent the digital media outlets. The connecting lines show the relationship between themes. The thicker the line, the more often the media cover the same issue.

In this case, large-scale media such as Kompas.com, Republika.co.id, Jawapos.com, Okezone.com, and SuaraMerdeka.com are structurally core hubs, and possess the greatest number of cross-topic links. Their positions indicate that mainstream media are discourse mediators, meaning they not only distribute information but also steer the focus of what university-related topics are prioritized

in public discourse. This structural centrality indicates that the media's engagement greatly facilitates the dissemination of narratives that assist universities in increasing their digital visibility, which significantly contributes to their e-reputation.

The considerable interconnections between media and the UKT issue, the dean's firing, and the student protests indicate that one incident on campus can generate stories that go far and wide. When there is some kind of violent incident on campus, or a dispute regarding the operations of the university, the media coverage tends to escalate to a discussion about student safety, the regulation of the education system, and the accountability of the leadership. Such patterns demonstrate that, while there may be

multiple, interrelated issues, the university's digital reputation is not dependent on a single issue or action taken by the institution.

One of the most remarkable insights is the impact of media framing on the public. Instead of being neutral, the media constructs stories that have the power to diminish or amplify universities. This is in line with Ahlstrand (2025), that argues the Indonesian media under Jokowi presented a dual role as an information provider and an active political arena. Winkel (2025), argues that media framing captures the public's imagination and steers the reception of policies and innovations. Furthermore, in a study similar to ours, Hastjarjo (2021) notes that the most influential arena in the formation of public opinion about universities is social media and online news portals. This digital communication ecosystem illustrates that reputation is not a consequence of academic work, rather, it is the result of a digital story that is actively produced.

Branding Theory provides an additional framework for this research. According to Keller (1993) institutional brands are built through consistent messaging and exposure to stakeholders. Media coverage gives them the opportunity to expand coverage and build their brand. Openness of the media is an opportunity to build a brand and create a distinguishing and lasting reputation for the institution.

Apart from media, this study shows that other stakeholders have significant roles to play. Students and alumni emerge as significant stakeholders whose supportive or critical

comments have a place in public discourse and demonstrates the democratic potential of the internet. With regard to credibility and accountability, industry collaboration and government oversight are other factors. This coincides with Nuruzzaman et al. (2024) so the performance and ability of PR practitioners are needed to make the best use of digital media. Research objectives: 1. Segmentation of the digital public relations audience at TGBC based on students from Thailand, England, Myanmar, China, and other international students. Because non-Thai students cannot understand Thai, they have versions of Facebook for English, Chinese, Thai, and Myanmar. Swadaya Gunung Jati University (UGJ, which showed that some Indonesian universities have begun to use digital public relations methods aimed at specific audiences and Aliu et al. (2018), which reported that external collaborations foster the legitimacy of social relations. The government's role in controlling and evaluating higher education echoes Teferra (2016), who spoke of the social accountability of universities and their role in the development process. Additionally, Nathaniel (2024) indicates that even university libraries can foster trust through strategic public relations, illustrating that other similar strategies can have a considerable impact on the reputation of institutions.

From the perspective of Public Relations Theory, these findings indicate that institutional reputation is built from the constant relationship between universities and the strategic publics that surround them, as opposed to one-way

communication from the institution (Grunig, 1993). The interactions of the students, former students, collaborators, and the government, as well as online media, produce, share, and elaborate the digital stories that sustain the public image of the university. Therefore, good public relations practice in higher education includes the opening of conversations through digital platforms, and engagement and relationship building with the stakeholders.

Multiple parallels can be observed when situating these findings within a wider context. Vissers et al. (2024) have noted that press releases from European universities tend to blur the lines between science communication and public relations. This fortifies the idea that the way universities communicate is a strategy embedded in the way they manage their image. Al-Makki (2023) illustrates the way digital PR constructs images of universities in a certain way in the context of Saudi Arabia; Khasawneh (2024) positioned image and reputation to ethical communication and social responsibility. Peters and Jandrić (2018) for their part, have argued that universities need to respond to the demands of the new digital landscape by adopting more open and collaborative approaches. This is something that Komljenovic (2019) and Singh and Manohar (2024) have reinforced in their advocacy for the need of e-reputation to be planned in a more strategic and long-term way. The same as in the corporate world, Amin (2022) showed that in the academia, corporate reputation is vulnerable to manipulation via a range of actors and practices in the digital realm.

Reputation management that incorporates the new digital technologies of artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics afford for the first time universities a more proactive and flexible way of monitoring and managing their public image.

Corporate Identity Theory is also supported in this research, as it is evident that the digital environment allows universities to communicate a consistent identity across multiple platforms (Balmer & Greyser, 2006). In a highly competitive environment, consistently showing the university's values and commitment to education and service helps build a distinctive university identity and assists stakeholders in recognizing the university.

The growing involvement of media, government, and industry stakeholders has increased the significance of e-reputation management strategies in universities (Miotto et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2021). These insights align with the Indonesian context, but the current study pushes the boundary by employing a DNA approach, enabling the understanding of the relational dynamics of reputation beyond the narratives, but also the relational positions of the players in the discursive network.

Additionally, Relationship Management Theory postulates that long-term stakeholder relationships determine an institution's reputation (Ledingham, 2018). The discourse network demonstrated in this study shows that universities do not have total control over their e-reputation. Reputation is constructed through relationships with the media, government, industry, students and alumni. From this

relational viewpoint, stakeholder connectivity becomes a strategic advantage in maintaining an institution's legitimacy in the digital public sphere.

Crisis communication and social listening, considering that crises are spreading rapidly through news channels. In such a scenario, the proactive development of crisis management protocols is a must, considering that digital narratives of crises can be built in no time. Ferrá (2022) showed that effective crisis communication management can rebuild lost public trust. Universities should also take advantage of social listening and sentiment analysis tools (Choi et al., 2020; Nuortimo, 2023) in order to address issues that are emerging in real-time. The development of a strong digital reputation over time is a must, including SEO strategies, among others, and positive digital presence in issues of global interest, such as SDGs (Vallez et al., 2022).

Policy integration, digital reputation management is an important area that needs to be incorporated into governance within higher learning institutions. This is achieved by developing guidelines for ethical digital communication; promoting transparency (Proskurina, 2024) and using digital technologies such as blockchain technology and artificial intelligence to enhance trust.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the e-reputation of Indonesian universities is influenced not

only by academic achievement, but also by the complex dynamics of digital communication in the online media ecosystem. The results show that universities that are structurally central in discourse networks tend to enjoy better media visibility, since they are related to a bigger constellation of stakeholders, concerns and institutional narratives circulating in digital public spaces. As bridge actors, institutions further consolidate their visibility by connecting otherwise separate discourse communities, allowing information and narratives to flow from one stakeholder group to another. These results imply that digital prominence is not only about the speed of information but about the quality and intensity of relational connectedness within changing communication networks. Thus, e-reputation should be considered a socially constructed and ongoing negotiated outcome of interactions between universities, media organizations, policymakers, industry partners, students and the wider public, rather than directly reflecting institutional performance alone.

The e-reputation model developed from this research demonstrates that e-reputation is constructed through relationships of universities, the media, government, industry, students, alumni, and ranking organizations. The combination of Discourse Network Analysis and Social Network Theory enables this research to demonstrate that e-reputation is a relational construct through discourse rather than a product of university performance. From a practical perspective, the results of this

study urge universities for further investment in the strategic management of digital communications, stakeholder relationships, and reputation in the highly competitive digital public spheres.

Subsequent studies should utilize longitudinal and comparative methods of inquiry to explore how discourse networks and university e-reputation change in different digital settings. Additionally, considering the new communication channels and qualitative studies on stakeholder perceptions, governance, and new technologies would enrich the understanding of e-reputation in the higher education sector.

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