



## Public Perceptions of PPPK and PNS in Indonesia through Social Media Discussions

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**Abstract,** Public sector reform in Indonesia has introduced a dual employment system within the Aparatur Sipil Negara (ASN), consisting of permanent civil servants (Pegawai Negeri Sipil/PNS) and contractual civil servants (Pegawai Pemerintah dengan Perjanjian Kerja/PPPK). Although this policy aims to improve workforce flexibility and address staffing needs, it has generated various public responses related to fairness, job security, and professional recognition. These responses are increasingly expressed through social media which functions as an important space for public discussion and opinion formation. This study analyzes public perceptions of PNS and PPPK in Indonesia through social media discussions. A qualitative content analysis method was applied to publicly available posts and comments from X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok during the period 2024–2025. Individual posts and comments were used as units of analysis and coded thematically to identify dominant narratives and recurring issues. PPPK employees are often perceived as having lower job security and social status, while PNS employees are associated with stability and prestige. At the same time, many social media users express criticism toward government policy implementation, particularly regarding financial capacity, transparency, and perceived favoritism. Social comparison between PPPK and PNS further strengthens stigma and symbolic inequality within the civil service system. This study concludes that public sector reform should be understood not only as an administrative change but also as a social issue shaped by public perceptions. Analyzing social media discourse provides valuable insights for policymakers in improving communication strategies, policy implementation, and public trust in ASN reforms.

**Keywords:** PNS, PPPK, Public Perception, Public Sector Reform, Social Media.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Public sector reform has become a central issue in many developing countries, including Indonesia, particularly in relation to employment systems and bureaucratic effectiveness. One significant reform in Indonesia is the implementation of a dual employment system within the *Aparatur Sipil Negara* (ASN), consisting of Pegawai Negeri Sipil (PNS) and Pegawai Pemerintah dengan Perjanjian Kerja (PPPK). While PNS positions are traditionally permanent and associated with long-term job security, PPPK positions are contractual and limited by specific employment periods. This structural distinction has generated diverse public responses, especially regarding fairness, job security, and professional recognition (Fajarwati et al., 2024). As these issues increasingly surface in digital spaces, social media has become a key platform for expressing and shaping public perceptions toward both employment categories.

Indonesia is among the countries with the highest number of social media users globally, making digital platforms an influential space for public opinion formation. In the global research trends, social media is consistently examined as an influential factor in public perception formation, particularly through mechanisms such as information dissemination,

issue framing, and the intensity of user engagement (Abduh & Anwar, 2024). In this context, discussions about PNS and PPPK frequently appear on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok particularly during recruitment periods or policy announcements. These discussions do not only reflect individual opinions but also represent collective sentiment that may influence broader societal trust in government institutions.

Public perception plays an essential role in determining the legitimacy and acceptance of government policies. According to Sudrajat (2025) public trust and satisfaction are closely related to how policies are perceived and communicated to citizens. When reforms are perceived as unequal or unclear, public skepticism may increase, even if the policy is legally justified. In the case of PPPK, although the policy aims to address workforce shortages and professionalize contractual public employment, many members of the public perceive PPPK as a less secure and less prestigious form of public service compared to PNS (Fajarwati et al., 2024). These perceptions often emerge strongly in social media narratives, where emotional and personal experiences are frequently shared.

Several studies have shown that social media is not merely a communication tool but also a space where public sentiment is constructed and amplified. Research from Permana and Dt Maani (2024) contributes to the recent trend of public sentiment on social media toward government policy in Indonesia. Public sentiment toward government policies on social media is shaped by issue framing, repetition, and interaction among users. As a result, opinions expressed online may spread rapidly and influence public understanding, regardless of whether the information is complete or accurate. In discussions related to PPPK and PNS, social media users often compare salaries, benefits, job security, and retirement rights, which can intensify perceptions of inequality between the two employment statuses.

Research on social media sentiment analysis in Indonesia indicates that public responses to government policies tend to be polarized. Sarumpaet and Suryono (2025) found that online discussions about the PPPK program on platform X contained a significant proportion of negative sentiment, mainly related to concerns about contract duration, career advancement, and long-term welfare. These findings suggest that public dissatisfaction is not only related to the policy itself but also to how it is understood and experienced by citizens. Therefore, examining social media discussions provides valuable insight into public concerns that may not be fully captured through formal surveys.

In addition to sentiment, public perception is influenced by the level of trust in government communication. Marpianta and Hendriyani (2019) argue that government use of social media can positively affect public trust when communication is transparent, responsive,

and informative. However, when official information is perceived as inconsistent or insufficient, public speculation and negative narratives may dominate online discussions. In the case of PNS and PPPK, unclear explanations regarding rights, obligations, and long-term career prospects may contribute to misunderstanding and negative perception among the public.

The distinction between PNS and PPPK also has socio-legal implications. From a legal perspective, both categories are part of the ASN system and are expected to contribute equally to public service delivery. However, from a social perspective, differences in employment status may lead to perceived hierarchy and inequality (Fajarwati et al., 2024). These perceptions are often reinforced through social media, where personal stories and comparisons are shared widely. As a result, public perception may diverge from the legal framework, creating tension between policy objectives and societal acceptance.

Furthermore, the quality of public services is closely linked to how civil servants are perceived. Sudrajat (2025) emphasizes that effective public service requires not only competent personnel but also public confidence in government institutions. If PPPK employees are perceived as less valued or less secure, this perception may indirectly affect public trust in the bureaucracy as a whole. Social media discussions, therefore, function as a mirror reflecting public confidence or lack thereof toward civil service reforms.

Despite the growing number of studies on social media and public opinion, research that specifically compares public perceptions of PNS and PPPK through social media discussions remains limited. Most existing studies focus on general sentiment toward government policies or analyze PPPK as a single subject without comparative analysis. This gap highlights the need for research that systematically examines how public perceptions of both employment categories are constructed, contrasted, and disseminated in digital spaces.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze public perceptions of PNS and PPPK in Indonesia by examining social media discussions. By focusing on content analysis of social media discussions, this research seeks to identify dominant narratives, public sentiment, and key issues raised by citizens regarding civil service employment. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on public administration, digital governance, and social media studies, as well as provide practical insights for policymakers in improving communication strategies and policy implementation related to ASN reforms.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employed a qualitative content analysis approach to examine public perceptions of PNS and PPPK as expressed through social media discussions. Content analysis was chosen because it allows researchers to systematically analyze textual data in order to identify recurring themes, patterns, and meanings within communication content (Krippendorff, 2019). This method is particularly suitable for studying public opinion in digital environments where large amounts of user-generated text are produced and shared.

Qualitative content analysis focuses on interpreting meanings rather than measuring frequencies alone. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), this approach enables researchers to explore how individuals understand social issues through language and communication. In the context of this study, content analysis was used to understand how citizens perceive civil service employment, especially the similarities and differences between PNS and PPPK, as reflected in social media narratives.

### Data Source and Data Collection

The data for this study were collected from public posts and comments on social media platforms that are commonly used in Indonesia for public discussion, particularly platform X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok. Social media was selected as the data source because it functions as an open space where citizens freely express opinions, criticism, and support toward government policies (Abduh & Anwar, 2024).

Data collection focused on posts and comments related to PNS and PPPK published in 2024-2025 within a specific time frame when discussions about civil service recruitment and policy implementation were highly active. Keywords such as *P3K*, *PPPK*, *PNS*, *ASN*, and *status kepegawaian* were used to identify relevant posts and comments. Only publicly accessible content was included to ensure ethical compliance. Posts that were irrelevant, duplicated, or purely promotional were excluded from the dataset.

### Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study consisted of individual social media posts and user comments that explicitly discussed PNS and PPPK. Each post or comment was treated as a single unit of analysis, allowing the researcher to examine how perceptions were expressed at the individual level. This approach is consistent with qualitative content analysis, which emphasizes contextual interpretation of textual units (Krippendorff, 2019).

By analyzing individual posts or comments, the study was able to capture variations in opinion, sentiment, and narrative framing among social media users. This unit of analysis also made it possible to identify contrasts in how PNS and PPPK were discussed within the same digital environment.

### **Coding and Categorization Process**

The coding process followed a thematic qualitative content analysis procedure. Initially, all collected data were read repeatedly to gain a general understanding of the content. During this stage, meaningful words, phrases, or sentences related to perceptions of PNS and PPPK were highlighted. These textual segments were then assigned initial codes based on their apparent meaning (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

After initial coding, similar codes were grouped into broader categories. These categories represented key themes such as *job security*, *fairness*, *welfare*, *professional status*, and *government policy implementation*. The categorization process was conducted manually to maintain close engagement with the data and to ensure accurate interpretation of context. This thematic organization allowed the researcher to identify dominant narratives and recurring issues discussed by social media users.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

Data analysis focused on interpreting the content within each category to understand how public perceptions were constructed. Rather than counting the frequency of words, the analysis emphasized meaning, tone, and context of the statements. According to Krippendorff (2019), this interpretive process is central to qualitative content analysis, as it enables researchers to link textual data with social and institutional contexts.

The analysis also considered whether perceptions toward PNS and PPPK were expressed positively, negatively, or neutrally. This helped to provide a clearer picture of public sentiment without reducing the analysis to purely quantitative measures. Findings from the analysis were then connected to existing literature on public administration and digital governance to strengthen analytical interpretation.

### **Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations**

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the study applied consistent coding procedures and maintained clear documentation of analytical steps. Transparency in the coding and categorization process helps reduce researcher bias and increases the credibility of qualitative findings (Krippendorff, 2019).

Ethical considerations were also carefully addressed. All data were obtained from publicly available social media content and no private or identifiable personal information was disclosed. Usernames and personal details were anonymized to protect user privacy. This approach aligns with ethical standards for social media research, which emphasize respect for user consent and data protection (Townsend & Wallace, 2016).

### 3. RESULTS

#### Perceptions of Fairness and Inequality

Several social media posts reflect perceptions of unfairness related to PPPK employment status. One of posts from Instagram states that *“Still trying to be grateful even though I am a part-time PPPK employee. Even though I have achieved two Olympic participations, two SEA Games, two Asian Games, three PON gold medals, and many others. Those who understand will understand. But this is the result.”*

The caption reflected a strong sense of perceived unfairness and inequality related to employment status within the Indonesian civil service system. The social media user expresses gratitude, but this gratitude is accompanied by disappointment and implicit criticism. Despite significant professional achievements and national-level contributions, the individual is employed as a part-time PPPK which is perceived as not proportional to their accomplishments. Similar findings are reported in studies on PPPK which show that contractual status often leads to perceptions of unequal treatment compared to permanent civil servants, even when responsibilities and contributions are similar (Fajarwati et al., 2024).

The comment in X or Twitter also showed a perception of inequality based on unequal workload and responsibility between PPPK and PNS employees. *“The problem is that in my institution, PPPK employees are actually very comfortable and feel secure. They are given easy tasks, even though their salaries are higher, but they do not seem to have strong responsibility. They have been warned many times without effect. Honestly, it feels unfair. Why should PNS not feel angry about this?”* The user compares PPPK employees who are described as receiving higher salaries and lighter tasks, with PNS employees who are perceived to carry heavier responsibilities. This comparison leads to feelings of unfairness and frustration, especially from the perspective of permanent civil servants.

One of X or Twitter account also commented on a post related to PPPK and PNS. *“There is only a formality test, the salary is higher than that of PNS, it is immediately full without the 80% probation period, there is no basic training (Latsar), and with a five-year contract, it is possible to be transferred anywhere.”* This user post highlights perceptions of

unfairness related to recruitment procedures, salary differences, and employment benefits between PPPK and PNS. The user emphasizes that PPPK recruitment is seen as less demanding, described as a “formality test,” while offering higher salaries and immediate full employment status. In contrast, PNS recruitment is commonly associated with probation periods and mandatory training requirements.

### **Government Policy**

The Government Policy theme by revealing public skepticism toward employment policies that are perceived as reactive and populist rather than data-driven and financially sustainable. The narrative reflects broader concerns that government recruitment policies lack coherence, transparency, and long-term planning which may undermine public trust in state governance.

A social media post in X reflected public concern regarding government employment policies, particularly related to fiscal capacity, workforce planning, and recruitment control. *“The government should not seek popularity only; it should consider budget capacity. There should be a moratorium on PPPK or, if necessary, a moratorium on CPNS. Yesterday, I saw on TikTok that the number of honorary workers in one region exceeded 20,000. It is unbelievable how so many people could be recruited.”* The user criticizes the government for prioritizing political popularity over realistic budget considerations, especially in the recruitment of PPPK and CPNS.

Social media platforms function as spaces where policy decisions are simplified, compared, and emotionally evaluated, often amplifying criticism when policies are perceived as irrational or politically motivated (Mergel, 2013). The post from X demonstrates how citizens evaluate government policies not only based on legal frameworks but also on their perceived economic consequences.

Furthermore, a comment from Instagram said that *“Honorary workers, especially in provincial government offices are mostly relatives, family members, or members of the campaign team of the elected governor and deputy governor. A clear example can be seen in the South Kalimantan Provincial Government where almost all family members, relatives, and campaign teams were appointed as honorary workers. During the PPPK selection, they were assisted to pass and were then appointed as PPPK employees. This includes not only the governor’s campaign team, but also the families of senior officials, such as the regional secretary and department heads. As a result of political favoritism, all of them passed and were appointed as PPPK.”*

This comment reflected strong public criticism of government employment policy, particularly regarding the implementation of the PPPK recruitment system. The user perceived the policy as being influenced by political favoritism and nepotism, rather than merit-based selection. The narrative suggested that recruitment outcomes were shaped by personal connections with political elites, including elected leaders and senior bureaucrats.

The same user further reinforced their criticism through an additional comment on Instagram by saying *“Isn’t this the local government’s fault? They just pass everyone who registers for PPPK without considering the region’s financial capacity. PPPK recruitment should be based on how much salary the local government is actually able to pay, not by appointing everyone as PPPK employees.”* This additional comment strengthened the perception that government policy implementation was fiscally irresponsible. By repeating the argument across platforms, the user emphasized that the core problem lay not in the existence of the PPPK policy itself, but in how local governments implemented it without adequate financial planning. The repetition suggested a strong belief that recruitment decisions were made without proper budget assessment.

### **Social Comparison and Stigma**

According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), social comparison can lead to in-group and out-group distinctions, which may result in stereotyping and social tension. Social comparison emerged as a strong theme in social media discussions regarding PNS and PPPK. Many users compared the two employment statuses by highlighting differences in salary, workload, benefits, and job security. These comparisons were often framed in a way that positioned one group as more advantaged than the other, which gradually created stigma toward certain categories of civil servants.

A comment from TikTok described a clear form of social comparison between PPPK and PNS where recruitment difficulty becomes the main basis for judgment *“Getting into PPPK is easier than becoming a PNS.”* This statement suggests that PPPK positions are perceived as less competitive and less demanding than PNS positions. This comparison places PPPK employees in a lower professional category which contributes to social stigma within the public service system. The perception that PPPK recruitment is *“easier”* implies that PPPK employees may not possess the same level of competence or merit as PNS employees. Such framing does not only compare employment pathways but also questions the legitimacy and professional value of PPPK workers.

Then, another comment on TikTok also showed that social comparison between PPPK and PNS extends beyond professional settings and into personal and social life. *“PPPK is still considered inferior; the highest status in the eyes of future in-laws is still PNS.”* The reference to “future in-laws” indicates that employment status is used as a social marker to judge personal worth, respectability, and long-term security. In this discourse, PNS is positioned as the most prestigious status, while PPPK is seen as less desirable.

## **Discussion**

This study explored public perceptions of PNS and PPPK in Indonesia through social media discussions by applying qualitative content analysis. The findings reveal that public perceptions are largely shaped by feelings of fairness, interpretations of government policy, and social comparison between employment statuses. These perceptions are not formed in isolation but are continuously constructed and reinforced through digital interactions.

The findings show that perceptions of fairness and inequality are a central concern in discussions about PPPK and PNS. Social media users frequently compare employment status with professional achievement, workload, and responsibility. The Instagram post from a part-time PPPK employee with significant national and international achievements highlights a strong sense of mismatch between contribution and employment status. This perception reflects distributive injustice, where individuals feel that rewards and recognition are not proportional to their performance or achievements.

Previous studies have shown that contractual public employees often experience feelings of inequality when compared to permanent civil servants, particularly in terms of job security and recognition (Fajarwati et al., 2024). Even when PPPK employees perform similar tasks or possess high qualifications, their contractual status may lead to lower perceived value. This finding supports the argument that employment status plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of fairness within the public sector (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008).

The perception of inequality is not limited to PPPK employees. Comments from PNS users also reveal frustration, particularly when PPPK employees are perceived to receive higher salaries or lighter workloads. This suggests that feelings of unfairness operate in both directions. Instead of promoting equality, differences in policy implementation may create tension between groups, which can negatively affect organizational cohesion and morale.

Then, the theme of government policy reveals strong public skepticism toward the implementation of PPPK and PNS recruitment. Social media users often frame government policy as reactive, politically motivated, and lacking long-term planning. Criticism related to

fiscal capacity, recruitment control, and transparency suggests that public trust is closely linked to how policies are implemented rather than to the policy objectives themselves.

This finding aligns with previous research which states that public trust in government is influenced by clarity, consistency, and transparency in policy communication (Mergel, 2013; Sudrajat, 2025). When citizens perceive policies as poorly planned or financially irresponsible, skepticism increases, even if the policy is legally justified. In the case of PPPK recruitment, concerns about budget capacity and mass recruitment indicate that citizens evaluate policy effectiveness based on practical outcomes rather than formal regulations.

Moreover, allegations of favoritism and nepotism in recruitment processes further weaken public trust. The Instagram comments describing political connections in PPPK appointments reflect concerns about procedural injustice. When such narratives are repeated across platforms, they gain credibility and influence public opinion.

Social comparison also plays a significant role in shaping stigma toward PPPK employees. Comparisons based on recruitment difficulty, salary, and social prestige position PNS as the dominant in-group and PPPK as the out-group. Comments suggesting that “PPPK is easier to enter” or that PNS holds higher social value in family contexts demonstrate how employment status becomes a marker of identity and social worth.

This finding supports Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) theory of social identity which explains how individuals categorize themselves and others into groups to enhance self-esteem. In this context, PNS status is associated with stability, prestige, and long-term security, while PPPK is associated with uncertainty and lower status. These symbolic distinctions contribute to stigma, even though both groups formally belong to the ASN system.

The stigma is further reinforced through everyday language and humor on social media. Although such comments may appear casual, they normalize inequality by presenting it as common sense. As Van Dijk (2018) argues, repeated discourse in digital spaces plays a powerful role in reproducing social hierarchies. Over time, these narratives may influence not only public perception but also workplace relationships and self-identity among PPPK employees.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study examined public perceptions of PNS and PPPK in Indonesia by analyzing social media discussions using qualitative content analysis. The findings show that public perceptions are strongly shaped by issues of fairness, government policy implementation, and

social comparison. Social media functions as an important space where citizens express experiences, emotions, and judgments related to civil service employment.

First, perceptions of fairness and inequality emerged as a dominant concern. Both PPPK and PNS employees expressed feelings of injustice, although from different perspectives. PPPK employees often felt that their contractual status did not reflect their professional achievements and contributions, while PNS employees expressed frustration when they perceived unequal workload and responsibility. These findings indicate that differences in employment status can create dissatisfaction and tension if they are not accompanied by clear and fair policy implementation.

Second, public responses to government policy revealed skepticism toward the implementation of PPPK recruitment. Social media users questioned the government's consideration of fiscal capacity, transparency, and long-term planning. Criticism related to mass recruitment, budget limitations, and alleged favoritism suggests that public trust is closely linked to how policies are executed at the local level. This study highlights that policy acceptance depends not only on legal frameworks but also on perceived fairness and accountability.

Third, social comparison between PNS and PPPK contributed to stigma and symbolic inequality. Employment status was used as a marker of prestige, competence, and social value, extending beyond professional contexts into personal and social life. These comparisons positioned PNS as a higher-status group and PPPK as a less desirable category, reinforcing stereotypes and social division within the ASN system.

Overall, this study suggests that public sector reform in Indonesia should address not only administrative efficiency but also public perception and social impact. Clear communication, transparent recruitment processes, and fair recognition of professional contributions are essential to reduce misunderstanding and stigma. By understanding how public perceptions are formed and expressed in digital spaces, policymakers can design more inclusive and trusted civil service reforms. Future research is encouraged to combine social media analysis with other methods to gain a broader understanding of public attitudes toward ASN employment systems.

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