

Speech-act analysis of teacher welfare in Indonesian presidential speeches

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ABSTRACT

Indonesian presidential speeches shape public expectations about teacher welfare, yet few studies examine how specific speech acts (promises, praise, apologies) rhetorically sustain or obscure policy shortfalls. This study compares speech-act strategies across three administrations to reveal how presidential rhetoric reproduces or challenges welfare inequalities. Combining speech-act theory with discourse analysis, the current study conducts a thematic qualitative analysis of presidential speech transcripts from Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), Joko Widodo (JW), and Prabowo Subianto (PS), coding for speech-act types (assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, declaratives) and discursive strategies (modalization, repetition, applause markers). Cross-case comparison identifies recurring patterns and their political-functional effects. Findings show SBY foregrounded commissives about certification and skills, JW emphasized emergency measures such as contract-status conversions and school operational assistance, and PS paired anti-corruption framing with pay-increase rhetoric; only two presidents (SBY & JW) relied heavily on expressives (praise, gratitude, national-hero labels) to raise morale amid stalled promotions and workload–pay imbalances. These speech acts shape public perceptions of government responsiveness, reduce immediate dissent, and reshape accountability expectations while obscuring gaps between rhetorical commitments and policy implementation. The present study recommends mixed-method follow-ups (interviews, policy audits) to assess the effects of speech on material welfare and to inform more equitable teacher-welfare policy in Indonesia.

Keywords: Indonesia; presidential speech; speech-act; teacher welfare

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher welfare in Indonesia remains a pressing policy problem: many teachers perform extensive classroom, administrative, and extracurricular duties while receiving pay that often fails to cover basic living costs, contributing to burnout, attrition, and declines in educational quality (Fata et al., 2020; Yasin et al., 2025; Amalia et al., 2025). Presidential speech moments—formal addresses in which leaders publicly recognize educators and signal government priorities—play an important role in

shaping public expectations about responsibility for teacher welfare. Yet such speeches can also function rhetorically: speech acts—promises, praise, apologies, and other performative moves—help shape how the public interprets whether and how material welfare is addressed. Preliminary evidence suggests a persistent disjunction between expressive political language and concrete welfare outcomes, but systematic analysis of how speech acts operate across administrations is limited.

Existing studies of Indonesian political and media discourse illuminate how political communication frames education and public policy (Fareh et al., 2025; Fifelola & Unuabonah, 2025; Hanifah et al., 2024; Garnes-Tarazona, 2025). However, some of these works focused on media representations, single-leader case studies, or inauguration rhetoric rather than on the specific speech acts contained in presidential speeches about teacher welfare (Khotimah et al., 2025; Tungkup et al., 2026; Purwaningrum & Harmoko, 2025). Research that addresses political ethics or public engagement by teachers (Nurdin et al., 2023) likewise tends to underexamine structural economic dimensions and the original presidential performative moves that might sustain those structures. Consequently, cross-administrational, speech-act-focused evidence linking presidential rhetoric to patterns of policy delivery and teacher experience remains scarce.

Speech-act theory (Yule, 2006; Randour et al., 2020) offers an analytical toolbox for addressing this gap. Speech acts—assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives—perform social work by making claims, issuing commitments, expressing attitudes, or instituting changes. In political contexts, expressives such as praise or gratitude can raise morale without producing material change, while commissives (promises) may generate expectations that remain unfulfilled. Analyzing the distribution and form of these speech acts within presidential speech allows us to see how rhetorical strategies may stabilize public perceptions of responsiveness even when policy implementation lags.

This study fills an empirical and methodological gap by comparing presidential speeches across three administrations—Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (hereafter, SBY), Joko Widodo (JW), and Prabowo Subianto (PS)—to trace continuities and divergences in speech-act strategies related to teacher welfare. Unlike prior single-case studies, the research systematically codes speech-act types (assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives) in original speech transcripts and links these discursive patterns to secondary indicators of teacher welfare (pay structures, reports of burnout, and policy implementation records). Randour et al. (2020) noted that, ideologically, gaps in welfare reflect the language strategies employed by Presidents, and without a more profound critical examination of these strategies in discussions of drought, the ideology remains intact and unchallenged. In Indonesia, teacher welfare is an area that is consistently poor in teacher pay, professionalism, and implementation of teacher welfare policies in the context of political changes over the last decade (Fareh et al., 2025; Fifelola & Unuabonah, 2025).

The importance of this study lies in its comparative focus. Instead of focusing on a single presidency, it places three administrations side by side to show how presidential speech can shape public expectations and frame teacher welfare in different ways. Previous studies have shown that presidential speeches often highlight education priorities and support for teachers, yet official reports continue to suggest that teacher welfare remains a concern in Indonesia. By bringing these two sides together, the study helps explain how presidential speech may build public confidence, manage expectations, or draw attention away from unresolved welfare problems. In this way, the research offers a clearer picture of the relationship between political language and teacher welfare in Indonesia.

This cross-case approach addresses the lack of comparative evidence that directly connects expressive moves in presidential speech to recurring policy shortfalls. The current study has two objectives: (1) to analyze how speech acts concerning teacher welfare are performed in presidential speeches by SBY, JW, and PS; and (2) to assess the implications of those performative strategies for public perceptions and the material realities of teacher welfare. Thus, the research questions are:

1. How are speech acts on teacher welfare performed by SBY, JW, and PS in the presidential speech?
2. What are the implications of teachers' welfare in the Indonesian presidential speech?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speech-act

Speech act theory remains a central framework in pragmatics because it conceptualizes language as action rather than solely as grammar or meaning; however, its explanatory power is often overstated in academic writing (Austin, 1962; Randour et al., 2020). A further limitation is that speech act studies frequently emphasize classification over analysis. Numerous articles categorize utterances as representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, or declaratives, yet this approach risks becoming merely descriptive and repetitive if it fails to explain why identical utterances may function differently across social and cultural contexts (Searle 1979; Hidayat et al, 2022). Searle's (1979) theory is also frequently criticized for presuming that illocutionary force can be readily identified from linguistic form, whereas authentic interaction often involves indirectness, overlapping intentions, and multiple meanings within a single utterance. The representative point involves describing the status of the world. The directive point seeks to persuade listeners to take action. The commissive point entails making a commitment to act. The declarative point is realized when individuals effect changes in the world by making a proclamation. The expressive point is present when speakers convey their attitudes or feelings about entities and realities in the world.

Recent critical discussions highlight several conceptual weaknesses in speech act theory, including ambiguity surrounding locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, as well as uncertainty regarding the application of felicity conditions in authentic communication (Fifelola & Unuabonah, 2025). Many literature reviews treat these categories as stable and universally applicable; however, this assumption is problematic because actual utterances are influenced by context, intention, and interpretation in ways that the taxonomy does not always address. Therefore, a more comprehensive review should not only recognize the utility of speech act theory but also critically evaluate whether its categories are sufficient for analyzing naturally occurring discourse across diverse contexts.

Teacher welfare

Teacher welfare is widely acknowledged as a significant factor influencing job satisfaction, professional commitment, and educational quality. Previous studies indicate that improvements in welfare contribute to enhanced educational outcomes, although this relationship is frequently discussed in general terms rather than through detailed analysis of teachers' lived experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2020). Additional research demonstrates that workplace spirituality and professional competence can improve job satisfaction, indicating that welfare includes not only salary but also the overall quality of the work environment (Wibowo & Solihah, 2025). Moreover, increased workload has been shown to reduce teachers' job satisfaction, supporting the view that welfare should be understood as a multidimensional construct encompassing compensation, workload, and emotional support (Qadus et al., 2025).

The present study offers a novel contribution by examining teacher welfare in context, specifically by linking welfare to particular school conditions, work demands, and teachers' lived experiences. The identified research gap is that many previous studies address compensation or job satisfaction in isolation, while fewer investigate how welfare relates to the practical realities teachers face in their daily work (Zou & Wu, 2022; Tungkup et al., 2026). This study is significant because it extends prior findings by demonstrating that welfare is a multidimensional concept rather than limited to financial considerations.

Presidential speech

Presidential speeches have been examined as platforms where political leaders construct ideology, identity, and public persuasion. Previous research shows that JW's speeches frequently embody national values and ideological meanings. Additional studies utilize critical discourse and self-presentation frameworks to analyze presidential discourse, revealing underlying power relations and political positioning (Emha & Mubarok, 2026; Parasian et al., 2025). However, much of the existing

literature remains descriptive, focusing primarily on content rather than critically analyzing how rhetorical choices influence legitimacy, audience alignment, and ideological control within specific speech contexts (Khotimah et al., 2025; Nurdin et al., 2023).

The novelty of the present study is its focus on a specific analytical perspective, particularly in examining a particular president, event, or rhetorical strategy within presidential speech. The identified research gap is that ideology, structure, and self-image are often analyzed independently, with fewer studies integrating these elements in relation to the broader communicative purpose and contextual demands of the speech (Parasian et al., 2025; Dridi, 2020). This study demonstrates that presidential speech functions not only as a political text but also as a strategic discourse shaped by audience, context, and persuasive intent.

METHOD

Qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena from participants' perspectives within their natural contexts (Ravitch & Carl, 2020; Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This study adopts this approach to examine representations of teacher welfare in Indonesian presidential speeches. Speeches were selected from official presidential archives and public addresses delivered during the study period. Thematic and discourse analysis were employed to reveal meanings, rhetorical strategies, and framing that are not accessible through quantitative methods (Tisdell & Merriam, 2025).

Limitations of this study include the potential for researcher bias inherent in interpretive analysis and the exclusive reliance on publicly available speeches, which may not capture private policymaking processes. While statistical generalizability is not claimed, the study aims to provide analytical transferability. Future research may triangulate findings through interviews, expand the temporal or political scope, or employ mixed methods to investigate the influence of presidential rhetoric on teacher welfare policy.

Technique of data collection and data source

Purposive sampling selected Teachers' Day speeches by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY, 28 Nov 2011), Joko Widodo (JW, 28 Nov 2020), and Prabowo Subianto (PS, 28 Nov 2024) for a diachronic critical discourse analysis of education-related statements (Tempo, 2025; World Bank, 2010). Speech of SBY could be found on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbI-gUzmjeQ&t=422s>, then JW <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90TddEkghAQ&list=LL&index=2> and PS <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvczeLLx8I&list=LL&index=3>. Speeches were obtained from official presidential archives, government websites, reputable media transcripts, and government TV uploads on YouTube to ensure authenticity; selection prioritized addresses, policy statements, and remarks explicitly dealing with education, teacher policy, welfare, certification, or budgets.

Transcripts were checked for completeness, standardized, organized chronologically, and annotated with metadata (date, event, source); Indonesian texts were translated and verified by a professional translator. Data were analyzed thematically and through critical discourse techniques, and utterances were classified using Searle's five speech-act categories (assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, declaratives). Purposive sampling is justified by the period's economic and political shifts and consequential education reforms that shaped teacher-welfare debates; treating speeches as political texts enables examination of how presidential rhetoric constructs and legitimates particular positions on teacher welfare.

Figure 1
SBY Presidential speech in 2011



Figure 2
JW Presidential speech in 2020



Figure 3
PS Presidential speech in 2024



Research ethics and trustworthiness

This study uses the official YouTube channels of Indonesian presidential speeches as its primary data source and thus adheres to key research-ethics principles. Even though the content is publicly accessible, the speeches are treated as constructed texts rather than neutral “facts,” and the analysis avoids misrepresenting context or selectively editing excerpts that could distort meaning or unfairly criticize the institution behind the channel. The official presidential YouTube accounts are acknowledged by name and clearly framed as institutional outputs, not as raw personal testimony, and identifiable details beyond the public discourse (such as audience faces or comments) are not used or, where relevant, are anonymized or generalized. Ethically, the research complies with institutional review guidelines for analyzing public social-media content, prioritizing transparency and minimizing potential harm through careful contextualization. The trustworthiness of these YouTube accounts is grounded in their institutional backing, clear authorship, and consistent alignment with official policy narratives; their credibility is further strengthened by triangulation with formal transcripts, government documents, and policy statements, as well as by maintaining an explicit audit trail of video selection, coding procedures, and reflexive awareness of the researcher’s position regarding the presidential discourse on teacher welfare.

FINDINGS

Speech act of teacher welfare by three presidents SBY, JW, and PS (RQ1)

Teacher welfare by SBY

In total, there are three utterances by SBY revealing teacher welfare. Data 1 expressive, data 2 commissive, data 3 assertive. The three SBY utterances present teacher welfare as both a moral aim and an outcome of professionalization, but they rely on optimistic assumptions and rhetorical devices that deserve scrutiny. All three use broad, aspirational language (“more professional, more dignified, and more prosperous”) without specifying concrete policies, timelines, metrics, or responsibilities, which obscures accountability and makes promises hard to evaluate. The repeated hortative and religious modality (“hopefully, God willing”) frames welfare as a desirable future while softening commitment, functioning more to reassure audiences than to bind the speaker to enforceable actions. Data 2’s commissive framing links improved teacher ability to increase welfare via allowances “Professional and special allowances”, but this causal claim overlooks structural constraints such as limited budgets, exclusionary eligibility rules, and bureaucratic barriers that can prevent allowances from producing sustained material gains. The mixed speech acts across the three utterances—expressive encouragement in data 1, a weak commissive in data 2, and an assertive national prognosis in data 3—create a pragmatic mismatch: what sounds like a promise often reads as intention or rhetorical positioning rather than concrete policy commitment.

Finally, these statements enact an ideological framing that ties teacher welfare to national development, which risks depoliticizing labor issues by presenting them as components of patriotic progress rather than matters of rights or redistribution. They also treat teachers as a homogeneous

category, ignoring regional, contractual, and gendered differences that shape access to benefits. To assess the real impact of these utterances, compare them with budgetary data, policy documents, and teacher union responses; doing so would reveal whether the rhetoric translated into material change or remained performative.

Data 1 (08:59)

*Semoga saudara-saudara semua, para guru, semakin profesional, semakin bermartabat, dan **semakin sejahtera***

[May all of you, the teachers, become more professional, more dignified, and more prosperous]

Data 2 (16:50)

*Kalau itu kita tingkatkan, bukan hanya kemampuan saudara yang meningkat, tetapi **kesejahteraan pun akan mengikuti**. Ada tunjangan profesi dan tunjangan khusus*

[Your welfare will rise along with your abilities if we make the improvement. Professional and special allowances are available]

Data 3 (12:32)

*Bangsa yang unggul dan berdaya saing, masa depan negeri ini akan makin cerah dan rakyat insyaallah akan **semakin sejahtera***

[As a superior and competitive nation, this country's future will be more promising, and its citizens will, hopefully, enjoy greater prosperity]

Teacher welfare by JW

In total, there are four utterances by JW revealing teacher welfare. Data 4 commissive, data 5 commissive, data 6 directive, data 7 expressive. The four JW utterances frame the government as responsive and proactive about teacher welfare, but they rest on claims that need closer scrutiny. Data 4 invokes broad governmental awareness and a suite of supportive policies introduced during the pandemic, yet it fails to specify which policies, how they were implemented, or how their effectiveness was evaluated. Without evidence—implementation timelines, coverage rates, or monitoring data—this rhetoric risks functioning as political reassurance rather than an accountable account of measurable support.

Data 5 and data 6 emphasize the recruitment of government employees through work agreements and the legal parity of pay and benefits with civil servants' staff, which, on the surface, address precarity and unequal treatment. However, the commissive claims assume that formal status and legal provisions automatically translate to equitable welfare in practice. Critical questions remain: how many government employees with work agreement positions were actually opened; were recruitment processes transparent and regionally equitable; do budget allocations ensure timely payment of salaries and allowances; and do employment terms (job security, access to professional development, promotion pathways) truly match those of long-standing civil servants? Past studies and reports often show gaps between statutory entitlements and on-the-ground access, especially for teachers in remote or underfunded districts.

Finally, the directive/expressive blend across these utterances masks important heterogeneity among teachers and structural constraints, such as fiscal limits, bureaucratic delays, and local-level implementation disparities. Citing Presidential Regulation No. 98/2020 (data 6) provides a legal anchor, but assessing real welfare gains requires comparing it with budget execution, payroll records, and teachers' lived experiences (surveys, union statements, case studies). In short, JW's statements are promising in principle but need empirical verification and attention to implementation, inclusion, and accountability to move from performative assurance to substantiated improvement.

Data 4 (04:04)

*Pemerintah sepenuhnya menyadari berbagai kesulitan yang dihadapi para guru di era pandemi. Oleh sebab itu, pemerintah telah mengeluarkan berbagai kebijakan untuk mendukung guru agar tetap dapat menjalankan pendidikan dengan baik serta **meningkatkan kesejahteraan mereka**.*

[The government is well aware of the hardships that teachers encountered during the pandemic. As a result, the government has implemented several laws to help teachers continue to provide high-quality education while also improving their well-being]

Data 5 (05:16)

*Oleh karena itu, percepatan penambahan guru dilakukan melalui rekrutmen guru berstatus PPPK yang sama-sama berstatus ASN seperti PNS, dengan **kesejahteraan dan jenjang karier yang setara**.*

[Therefore, the acceleration of teacher recruitment is carried out through the recruitment of teachers with government employee with a work agreement status, who are also like civil servants, with equivalent welfare and career paths]

Data 6 (05:22)

*Berdasarkan Peraturan Presiden Nomor 98 Tahun 2020, guru PPPK akan menerima **gaji dan tunjangan yang setara dengan PNS lainnya***

[Based on Presidential Regulation Number 98 of 2020, government employees with a work agreement will receive salaries and allowances equivalent to those of other civil servants]

Data 7 (07:08)

*Saya berharap kebijakan ini memberikan **dampak signifikan terhadap kesejahteraan guru di seluruh Indonesia serta meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan nasional**.*

[Based on Presidential Regulation Number 98 of 2020, government employees with a work agreement will receive salaries and allowances equivalent to those of other civil servants. I hope this policy will have a significant impact on the welfare of teachers throughout Indonesia and improve the quality of national education]

Teacher welfare by PS

There was one utterance of teacher welfare by PS, which was data 8 assertive. PS asserts, “We must improve the lives of all Indonesian people.” This statement situates teacher welfare within a broad social justice framework. However, such broad inclusivity may obscure the specific needs of teachers and the practical measures necessary to address them. As an isolated statement, it functions more as a moral exhortation than as a concrete policy commitment. The statement does not specify which institutions bear responsibility, what resources will be allocated, or what accountability mechanisms will ensure implementation. The universal nature of the claim diminishes recognition of important group differences.

Teachers encounter distinct challenges, including certification requirements, uneven staffing distribution, contractual insecurity, and subject- or grade-level shortages. Addressing these issues requires tailored interventions, such as targeted recruitment, differentiated allowances, or localized professional development. By categorizing teachers alongside workers, farmers, and fishermen, the statement may reduce political impetus for education-specific reforms and redirect attention and resources toward broadly defined programs that fail to resolve sector-specific problems. The statement also lacks specific temporal and financial details. This weakens its evaluative power. Promises to “improve lives” require concrete tools—budget changes, legal reforms, evaluation systems, and clear timelines. Without these, the claim can act performatively, adding political legitimacy while avoiding hard policy choices. A useful next step is to compare this rhetoric with policy outputs like budgets, legislation, and programs. It is also important to consult teacher surveys or union reports to see if living conditions match the rhetoric.

Data 8 (04:20)

*Saudara-saudara sekalian, kita harus **memperbaiki kehidupan seluruh rakyat Indonesia: para guru, pekerja, petani, nelayan, dan seluruh lapisan masyarakat**.*

[Ladies and gentlemen, we must improve the lives of all Indonesian people: teachers, workers, farmers, fishermen, and all layers of society]

The implication of the Presidential speeches (RQ2)

The Presidential speeches by SBY, JW, and PS on teacher welfare reveal rhetorical patterns that prioritize symbolic morale-boosting over structural reforms, perpetuating neoliberal inequities in Indonesia's education system. Speech acts—dominated by expressives (gratitude, "heroes" framing) and conditional declarations/commissives—extend Searle's framework to diachronic political discourse to expose ideological silences, such as unaddressed pay-workload gaps. Declarations legitimize elite-driven policies (SBY certification, JW on government employees with a work agreement, and PS anti-corruption hikes) as "national commitments," masking power imbalances and sustaining austerity as shared responsibility. Rhetoric fosters teacher resilience and public buy-in (e.g., applause cues, modals like "must"), but widens disparities, with stalled promotions/honorary status exemplifying the talk-vs-action divide; urges policymakers to prioritize an equitable rollout via direct funding over performative praise. Highlights the need for multi-method probes (e.g., impact audits) to bridge gaps and inform education governance amid welfare pressures (World Bank, 2010). Shift from vague pledges to measurable equity: e.g., full civil servants' parity, burnout metrics; future research track post-speech outcomes like PS's 2025 salary commitments.

DISCUSSION

Presidents SBY, and JW show notable similarities in their speech acts, declarations, and commitments that manifest during the commemoration and celebration of teachers' day or in the speeches during Association of Teachers of the Republic Indonesia, where they touch on the teacher welfare and profess policy commitments in the act of speech, considering them as facts, following the definition of [Searle \(1979\)](#) in speech acts. SBY mentions that for one to enjoy quality service, there are fundamental components, including professionalization and prosperity. SBY cites the certification laws that elevated 1.1 million honorary teachers to the status of civil servants and quadrupled their salaries and also describes teachers as key determinants of educational progress. JW also has a similar declaration in his P.P No. 98 of 2020 where JW talks about the alignment of salaries and allowances of Government Employees with a work agreement with the salaries of civil servants, and in the same breath, he talks about the flexibility of the school operational assistance funds subsidy of up to IDR 600.000 per month, to 1.8 million staff, and in addition, expressing welfare.

[Tuti et al. \(2025\)](#) argue that in JW's speech, declarations are almost always the dominant illocutionary act that commits him to policies regarding the recruitment of Government Employees with a work agreement and the flexibility of the school operational assistance funds, similar to the speech acts of two presidents in committing to make salary and subsidy equality a national policy (Tuti et al., 2025). In the same light, [Wibowo and Solihah \(2025\)](#) also analysed Biden's speeches and identified declarations that welfare commitments, such as crisis aid, are framed as a change of status. This resembles PS's statements about salary increases for civil servants and Government Employees with a work agreement, teachers, and SBY's law on the certification of educators, which elevated honorary educators to the level of civil servants in terms of welfare. The similarities demonstrate a shared pattern in political rhetoric: the use of presidential speech acts to elevate welfare commitments from political rhetoric to policy deflection, thereby providing a sense of legitimacy and reassurance to the electorate. [Dridi \(2020\)](#) also analyses politeness in American-Israel public affairs community speeches. There, face-threatening assertions about enforcement policies, such as anti-corruption ones similar to PS's, must stop, are balanced with the status quo and welfare. This is akin to SBY, JW, and PS expressing gratitude while juxtaposing anti-corruption claims to deflect criticism of the austerity. [Gurevich \(2022\)](#) examine further combinations of the expressive and the declarative and find that emotionally charged messages, as in SBY's linkage with teachers and JW's recognition of the resilience during the pandemic, declaration is reinforced, as SBY did when tying professionalism with salary increase ([Gurevich, 2022](#)). These studies illustrate a dominant neoliberalism; the combination of

declarations and expressions of teacher equity situates Indonesian presidents within the global rationalization of governance through verbal pledges (Wibowo & Solihah, 2025). JW declares that there will be salary increases, stating that one month's basic pay and allowances of IDR 2 million will be given to certified teachers who are not civil servants, as part of the government's action within 2025. These acts are declarations and promises to teachers and require presidential or ministerial approval to initiate economic reforms for honorary teachers and Government Employees with a work agreement.

The rhetorical focus on resilience and symbolic redistribution generates public support through applause cues and performative language. However, it widens disparities when actual policies do not reach the most vulnerable teachers. Outcomes such as stalled promotions, persistent honorarium gaps, and uneven certification impacts illustrate the gap between words and action. They also show the limits of expressive rhetoric in fixing structural inequity. International comparisons highlight gaps between Indonesia and developed countries—Japan: IDR 38 million vs. Indonesia: IDR 800.000–2.000.000 in teacher salary (Parasian et al., 2025). Policy implementation also struggles with regional disparities, employment status inequality, and excessive workload. To shift from rhetoric to equity, policymakers should prioritize direct actions. These could include parity for full civil servant status, transparent funding, and the addition of burnout and workload metrics to welfare audits. Policymakers should commission audits and track outcomes using both numbers and targeted interviews. This will help show whether speech commitments lead to real improvements.

The two presidents of Indonesia (SBY and JW) made these statements, expressing gratitude and recognizing teachers' heroism. SBY praises behaviourism, JW gestures to the pandemic's resilience, and PS references parents and historical figures. SBY, JW, and PS fuse appreciation with policy to boost morale and create legitimacy (Randour et al. 2020). Their plea for partnership, parents together for SBY and JW, emphasizes collective responsibility. The louder the applause, the stronger the commitment to equitable welfare, regardless of the numbers. This aligns with welfare that focuses on certification, recruitment, and wage parity as the nation's goals (Emha & Mubarok, 2026), suggesting the persistence of this narrative in Indonesian education.

The results regarding similarities in declaration speech acts between SBY, JW, and PS, and regarding firm policy commitments such as equal pay, government employees with a work agreement recruitment, and subsidies, are the opposite of those found by Qadus et al. (2025). Qadus et al focused on the negative, predatory, and manipulative use of declarations in political speech to demonstrate ideological possession and control, as opposed to welfare equality. While the declarations made by the aforementioned Indonesian presidents undoubtedly support reforms such as SBY's certification law, JW's flexibility on school operational assistance funds, and PS's planned increases in 2025. Qadus et al. (2025) noted that these declaration provisions mostly benefit the elite, do not support reframing teacher welfare austerity as shared responsibility, and do not support the explanation of neoliberal arbitrary rationing. This sort of gap, in the case of SBY, JW, and PS, in the case of the presidents, the combining of declarations and expressions, shows that even more so, morale, particularly for teachers, is enhanced, and the broader critique aligned with Qadus et al. is the imbalanced and uneven distribution of power, more so where proclamations mask neoliberal predation.

Zou and Wu (2022) go a step further to examine speech act theory and the evolution towards contextual multiplicity. They point out that the models developed post-Searle are said to value cultural context over mere classifications. In contrast to SBY, JW, and PS, who purportedly try to make the declarations with no consideration for the soft, polite, and humble in the welfare (Zou & Wu, 2022). Randour et al. (2020) argue that a different time frame is needed for analysing political discourse and suggest a multimodal approach that goes beyond the spoken word. The president's focus on the applauding audience only reinforces their empty promises and diverts attention from unaddressed issues, such as the absence of honorary teachers (Randour et al., 2020). If taken together, these criticisms suggest a more pessimistic view of the findings and argue that Indonesian discourse on teachers' welfare is rhetorically and, on the practical side, limited to issues of power and the scope of the methodology employed.

CONCLUSION

This comparative analysis demonstrates that presidential rhetoric significantly shapes public expectations and political accountability for teacher welfare in Indonesia. Each president uses distinct speech strategies: SBY focuses on commitments to certification and professionalization, JW emphasizes emergency measures and status upgrades for contract teachers, and PS connects anti-corruption language with promises of pay increases. Despite these differences, all three presidents use praise, gratitude, and national-hero themes to boost morale and divert attention from policy gaps. These patterns reduce immediate dissent and shift perceptions of accountability, but risk normalizing persistent inequalities, such as regional disparities, insecure contracts, and pay-for-work imbalances, by substituting moral appeals for concrete policy commitments. This study recommends employing mixed-method follow-ups, including interviews and policy audits, to assess the impact of presidential rhetoric on teachers' welfare and to inform the development of equitable policies. It further suggests implementing longitudinal, disaggregated teacher surveys to monitor income, job security, and perceptions over time, thereby establishing connections between rhetoric and measurable outcomes. Comparative budget tracking at both national and district levels is also proposed to identify discrepancies between legal entitlements and actual payments. Such an approach can inform fiscal or administrative reforms to ensure that promised benefits are delivered to the intended recipients.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT:

There is no conflict of interest among authors.

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