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Dehumanizing Politics through Object Metaphors: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Facebook Discourse in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how metaphorical language in Malaysian Facebook comments constructs negative portrayals of political figures through object-based metaphors. Grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and the Great Chain of Being Metaphor (GCBM), it identifies HUMAN IS OBJECT as a dominant conceptual schema that demotes political actors to inanimate or degraded matter. A 916,000-word Malay-language Facebook corpus was compiled from public pages of news outlets and political forums (2022–2024) and analyzed using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) and #LancsBox X. Five salient object metaphors were selected: *kencing* (urine), *sampah* (garbage), *mangkuk* (bowl), *kayu* (wood), and *tahi* (feces), based on their frequency and cultural salience. Collocational analysis and semantic clustering revealed how these lexical items metaphorically signify deception, worthlessness, foolishness, stagnation, and moral decay. Findings demonstrate that these metaphors are not isolated insults but systematically embedded within cognitive, cultural, and metonymic structures. For instance, *kencing* collocates with habitual deception (*kaki kencing*), while *sampah* aligns with imagery of waste management (*tong sampah*, *angkat*), framing political actors as disposable. These mappings illustrate how object metaphors interact with GCBM and GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy to reinforce symbolic exclusion and ideological polarization. The study contributes theoretically by expanding the metaphor typology beyond war or animal

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metaphors, and by situating the analysis in a Southeast Asian context. Practically, it underscores the strategic role of metaphors in online political communication, where repetition and memetic uptake amplify ideological effects.

Keywords: Conceptual Metaphor Theory; HUMAN IS OBJECT; Facebook Discourse; Corpus Linguistics; Political Metaphors; Metaphor Identification Procedure; Malaysian Politics; Dehumanization

1. Introduction

Metaphor is a cognitive and communicative tool shaping how individuals conceptualize, evaluate, and respond to the world. As Lakoff and Turner^[1] note, metaphors are not decorative but fundamental to thought, mapping concrete source domains onto abstract targets to express complex experiences in culturally resonant ways. In political discourse, they construct ideological narratives, legitimize or delegitimize authority, and mark social boundaries^[2]. On digital platforms like Facebook, metaphors gain rhetorical force and reach^[3,4].

A notable yet underexamined schema is HUMAN IS OBJECT, where human traits are represented through inanimate or devalued materials. Objects such as garbage, feces, wood, or bowls are common in online critiques of public figures^[5,6]. While animal metaphors are well-studied^[7,8], object metaphors remain theoretically and empirically underdeveloped, despite their role in dehumanization, ontological downgrading, and moral disqualification^[9,10]. These metaphors also interact with visual and cultural discourse, making them central to ideological framing in digital contexts^[11,12].

Theoretically, HUMAN IS OBJECT metaphors align with the Great Chain of Being Metaphor (GCBM), which hierarchically orders existence from divine to inanimate matter^[1]. Mapping humans to objects disrupts this order, symbolizing moral failure, lack of agency, or intellectual inferiority^[14]. When combined with GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy, specific objects, sampah, tahi, kayu, embody traits such as uselessness, corruption, or incompetence^[15,16], enabling indirect yet forceful evaluation^[17,18].

Empirical research on object metaphors is scarce, especially in Southeast Asia, where cultural norms and online political discourse intersect. While corpus-based approaches have advanced metaphor analysis^[19], few studies address Malay-language data or the political salience of object metaphors. Tools like MIP^[20] and collocation met-

rics^[21] are rarely applied to regional languages. This creates a methodological and conceptual gap.

This study addresses that gap through a mixed-method corpus-linguistic approach to Facebook commentary in Malaysia. Using a 916,000-word corpus of comments on political events, it applies MIP and Log Dice collocational analysis to five object terms: kencing, sampah, mangkuk, kayu, and tahi. These are interpreted through CMT, GCBM, and metonymy theory to uncover cognitive and cultural mechanisms of evaluation. This study is guided by the following questions:

1. What lexical items do Facebook users employ to construct object-based metaphors in political discourse?
2. How do these metaphors interact with the Great Chain of Being and GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy to convey social and moral judgments?
3. What are their ideological and evaluative functions in Malaysian online political commentary?

By integrating cognitive metaphor theory, corpus analysis, and cultural interpretation, this study expands the typology of object metaphors in digital political discourse, demonstrates the utility of GCBM and metonymy, and offers localized insight into Malaysian conceptualizations of authority, failure, and public morality.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Metaphor, Conceptual Mapping, and Ideological Functions

Metaphor functions as both a cognitive mechanism and a discursive tool, shaping how individuals conceptualize complex ideas and encode evaluative meanings. Within the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), metaphor involves mapping structure from a concrete or embodied source domain onto an abstract target domain^[13]. These mappings are culturally mediated and strategically mobilized in political discourse to frame competing perspectives,

promote narratives, and delegitimize opponents^[2,10]. As Adams^[5] observes, metaphors such as “monsters,” “trash,” or “parasites” operate as ideological weapons, eliciting fear, disgust, or ridicule, and positioning subjects within a moral hierarchy.

Metonymy, particularly the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC subtype, plays a complementary role by linking specific physical referents to specific human traits or behaviours^[15,16]. For example, tahi (feces) denotes moral corruption and systemic decay, while kayu (wood) signifies incompetence or rigidity. Goatly^[16] notes that metaphor operates on similarity, whereas metonymy relies on contiguity; their interaction produces compact yet potent evaluative meanings. This interaction is especially salient in political discourse, where metaphor-metonymy clusters create condensed images that reinforce collective attitudes^[9].

The ideological power of metaphors depends on their alignment with culturally shared schemas. As Bolognesi and Horvat^[14] argue, metaphors not only reflect individual cognition but also function as tools of social cognition, enabling audiences to recognise and adopt specific affective stances. In Malay political discourse, metaphors such as mangkuk (bowl) for foolishness or sampah (garbage) for worthlessness tap into familiar symbolic associations, compressing complex political critique into easily recognisable expressions^[12,17]. These forms of evaluative shorthand circulate rapidly in social media environments, where repetition and networked uptake intensify their ideological force^[3,11].

Despite the sophistication of metaphor theory, empirical studies have underrepresented object metaphors, favouring domains such as war, journey, or animal imagery^[7,8]. Yet, recent research in digital political discourse has shown that object metaphors are powerful resources for expressing political disillusionment, dissent, and collective frustration^[4,6]. For instance, labelling a political party as sampah or a leader as kencing activates metaphorical and metonymic schemas that both cognitively devalue and morally condemn the target.

2.2. Ontological Hierarchies and the Great Chain of Being Metaphor

The Great Chain of Being Metaphor (GCBM) offers a hierarchical cognitive schema ordering existence from divine entities to inanimate matter^[13]. In this hierarchy, humans

rank above animals, plants, and objects, representing higher agency, intellect, and moral capacity. Mapping humans onto entities lower in the chain, especially waste objects such as sampah or tahi, constitutes an ontological demotion, signalling moral failure or social unworthiness^[18].

In contexts where authority and respect are reinforced through hierarchy, such demotions are especially powerful. Calling a politician mangkuk or kayu is not merely insulting but symbolically strips them of human moral status, associating them with emptiness, passivity, or rigidity^[5,16]. Cultural knowledge and folk cognition reinforce these associations, as objects are viewed as lacking autonomy, consciousness, or value. This explains why GCBM-grounded object metaphors are rhetorically potent tools for expressing scorn, frustration, and political alienation^[9,10].

Metonymic triggers often intensify these mappings. For example, tahi connotes not only filth but, metonymically, institutional collapse. When expressed as A POLITICIAN IS FECES, the metaphor invokes the lowest form of organic waste, amplifying contempt through cognitive and cultural schemas^[15,17]. In Southeast Asian online political discourse, such metaphors intersect with humour, satire, and vernacular speech^[4,6].

Research has traditionally prioritised metaphors of war, animals, or bodily harm^[7,8], overlooking degradation metaphors grounded in inanimacy. This is a significant omission because these metaphors frequently encode deeper ideological meanings, especially in constructing in-group/out-group distinctions^[22,23]. Therefore, integrating GCBM into metaphor research therefore provides a theoretical lens for examining how ontological hierarchies are leveraged to delegitimize authority in digital political rhetoric.

2.3. Object Metaphors in Political and Social Media Discourse

In political communication, especially on social media, object metaphors are used to ridicule, exclude, and delegitimize. Unlike animal metaphors, which stress instinctual or uncivilised behaviour^[7,8], object metaphors reduce human subjects to inert or degraded matter. In Malay political discourse, kayu, mangkuk, sampah, and tahi are frequently deployed to signal incompetence, foolishness, worthlessness, and moral decay^[5,10].

These metaphors are effective because they are cultur-

ally embedded, affectively charged, and easily recognisable to audiences^[9,12]. Facebook's affordances for immediacy, anonymity, and amplification make it a fertile space for such metaphors to spread, often functioning as tools for symbolic punishment and public shaming^[2,4].

Cross-cultural studies show that such metaphors are not unique to Southeast Asia. In Spanish political discourse, waste imagery like "basura" is used to delegitimize opponents^[10], while Nigerian discourse often employs disposability metaphors to condemn corruption^[6]. In European contexts, Musolff^[23] documents how leaders are portrayed through metaphors of decay and material degradation, echoing Southeast Asian uses of *sampah* or *tahi*. Similarly, Charteris-Black^[2] demonstrates how metaphors of contagion and decay shaped pandemic communication worldwide, revealing the global salience of dehumanizing imagery. Methodologically, Liang et al.^[24] illustrate how AI-driven approaches can enhance metaphor detection across languages, offering insights that complement traditional corpus methods and extend applicability to non-Western data.

Object metaphors also differ from other conceptual mappings in their finality: war or journey metaphors allow for transformation, but calling a leader *tahi* or *sampah* implies irredeemable contamination^[16,25]. Such metaphors operate within cultural and emotional scripts, drawing on collective experiences of political disillusionment and moral outrage. When repeated in digital discourse, they accumulate symbolic weight, shaping collective perceptions and reinforcing ideological divisions^[9,11].

Despite their ubiquity, object metaphors remain underexplored in Southeast Asian political contexts. Most studies focus on dominant metaphorical domains, neglecting the specific rhetorical and ideological work of object-based dehumanization. This study responds to calls for more culturally and contextually grounded analyses^[24,26], while situating Malaysian Facebook discourse within a broader global pattern of metaphorical demotion and exclusion.

2.4. Corpus-Based Methodologies in Metaphor Analysis

Corpus linguistics has advanced metaphor research by enabling systematic identification, quantification, and interpretation of figurative language in authentic discourse^[21]. The integration of corpus methods with CMT grounds ab-

stract mappings in observable linguistic patterns. Techniques such as keyword analysis, collocation mapping, and frequency profiling reveal metaphorical regularities that intuition alone might overlook^[19].

The Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) developed by the Pragglejaz Group^[20] provides a replicable framework for identifying metaphorically used words by contrasting their contextual and basic meanings. When combined with Log Dice collocation metrics, MIP enables both qualitative interpretation and quantitative validation, allowing researchers to identify metaphor clusters and associated evaluative frames. For instance, *mangkuk* co-occurring with *bodoh* ("stupid") reinforces its metaphorical function as a marker of incompetence^[2,24].

Corpus-based metaphor research also facilitates the exploration of ideological and evaluative functions beyond frequency counts. Mapping collocational networks reveals how metaphors cluster around political themes, target specific actors, and express public sentiment^[23,25]. In the case of object metaphors, this approach highlights entrenched evaluative patterns, such as *kencing* linked with deception-related verbs, showing how figurative language becomes a rhetorical tool for political critique^[3,26].

However, few studies have applied these methods to Southeast Asian languages or to object metaphors in political discourse. By building a Malay-language Facebook corpus and integrating MIP, collocation analysis, and theoretical interpretation, this study addresses both methodological and empirical gaps, offering a model for culturally sensitive, corpus-driven metaphor research.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a corpus-based qualitative design grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)^[13], the Great Chain of Being Metaphor (GCBM)^[1], and GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy^[15,16]. These frameworks conceptualize metaphor both as a cognitive mapping process and as an evaluative strategy in political discourse. The analysis focuses on five culturally salient object metaphors: *tahi* (feces), *sampah* (garbage), *mangkuk* (bowl), *kayu* (wood), and *kencing* (urine) to examine how Facebook users discursively demote political figures.

The study integrates qualitative interpretation with corpus-driven methods to ensure theoretical depth and empirical robustness^[19,21]. The Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP)^[20] was used to detect metaphorical expressions, while Log Dice collocational analysis identified statistically significant semantic associations. This combination enables an examination of how metaphors encode evaluative and ideological meanings in Malaysian online political discourse.

3.2. Corpus Compilation and Data Sources

The dataset comprises a purpose-built corpus of Malay-language Facebook comments collected from publicly accessible pages of news outlets, political commentators, and official government accounts. Covering the period from January 2022 to February 2024, it reflects a politically charged phase marked by elections, corruption scandals, and public unrest. The corpus totals 916,384 words, compiled using automated scraping tools and manually cleaned to remove duplicates, spam, and non-linguistic items.

To maintain focus, five high-frequency object metaphor terms, *tahi*, *sampah*, *mangkuk*, *kayu*, and *kencing*, were selected based on their metaphorical productivity and cultural salience^[4,5]. These keywords served as anchors for extracting concordance lines for further analysis. Corpus processing was conducted using #LancsBox X, enabling collocation extraction, keyword profiling, and semantic clustering based on Log Dice metrics^[21].

The selection of these terms is discussed in **Table 1** (Frequency of Metaphorical Object Terms in Facebook Comments), which also provides baseline frequency patterns used to guide the analysis in Section 4.1.

3.3. Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP)

Metaphors were identified using the MIP developed by the Pragglejaz Group^[20]. This method compares a word's contextual meaning with its basic, literal meaning; if a contrast exists and the basic meaning aids interpretation, the usage is coded as metaphorical. This systematic approach ensures intersubjective reliability and aligns with the cognitive linguistic orientation of the study^[16].

The five focal metaphor terms yielded 4,312 concordance lines, manually coded by two trained analysts, achieving 92.4% intercoder agreement. Disagreements were re-

solved through discussion. Contextual cues such as intensifiers, irony, and evaluative expressions were considered to capture figurative intent, particularly in culturally embedded or sarcastic usage^[9,27].

Illustrative examples for each metaphor category are presented in Section 4.2 and referenced alongside **Table 2** to **Table 10**, which contain representative metaphorical expressions extracted from the corpus.

3.4. Collocational and Statistical Analysis

To explore semantic associations, collocational analysis was conducted using #LancsBox X for each metaphor keyword within a ± 4 -word span. The Log Dice statistic was selected to measure lexical association strength without skew from high-frequency function words^[21]. A minimum frequency threshold of five ensured statistical reliability.

Collocates were categorised into semantic domains such as evaluative adjectives, institutional referents, and behavioural descriptors, mapping the attitudinal and ideological frames surrounding each metaphor^[2,24]. For instance, *mangkuk* frequently co-occurred with *bodoh* (“stupid”), underscoring its function as a marker of incompetence.

3.5. Analytical Framework and Coding Strategy

An integrated analytical framework combining CMT^[13], GCBM^[1], and GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy^[15,16] was used to interpret how object metaphors frame political actors. Each identified expression was coded along three dimensions:

1. Conceptual Mapping – Assigning source–target schemas (e.g., HUMAN IS TRASH).
2. Ontological Hierarchy – Locating the target within GCBM, emphasising demotions to inanimate or waste categories.
3. Evaluative and Ideological Function – Analysing affective polarity and ideological focus, particularly when targeting institutions or moral values.

Coding was conducted in NVivo 14 with annotations for frequency, context, and discourse function. Thematic clusters, such as “corruption,” “incompetence,” and “dehumanization,” informed the thematic presentation in Section 4. Intercoder reliability for this stage was 91.6%.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

The study complied with ethical standards for digital discourse research, analysing only publicly accessible comments on verified Facebook pages. User identifiers were removed, and illustrative examples were anonymised or paraphrased to prevent traceability. Ethical approval was obtained from the author’s institutional ethics committee. The treatment of illustrative data in Sections 4.1–4.2 follows Thompson’s^[28] recommendation for cultural sensitivity and transparency in digital discourse studies, with all examples drawn from public discourse rather than private communications.

4. Findings

4.1. Identifying Object-Based Metaphors in Facebook Discourse

This study identifies five object-based lexical items: *kencing* (urine), *sampah* (garbage), *mangkuk* (bowl), *kayu* (wood), and *tahi* (feces) as dominant metaphorical expressions used by Facebook users to evaluate human referents, particularly in political discourse. These metaphors function within the conceptual schema HUMAN IS OBJECT, projecting attributes of undesirable or degraded material entities

onto politicians, parties, and ideologies. This mapping resonates with the logic of the Great Chain of Being Metaphor (GCBM), in which humans, as rational and moral agents, rank above objects and waste^[1,26].

As summarized in **Table 1**, *kencing* was the most frequently used object metaphor, followed by *sampah* and *mangkuk*. These frequency patterns underscore the metaphorical salience of physical objects in constructing negative political judgments in the digital public sphere.

Table 1. Frequency of Metaphorical Object Terms in Facebook Comments.

Object Metaphor	Frequency (Metaphorical Context)
<i>kencing</i>	75
<i>sampah</i>	24
<i>mangkuk</i>	11
<i>kayu</i>	8
<i>tahi</i>	5

To provide a conceptual orientation before examining each metaphor in detail, two figures are also included in this section. **Figure 1**, presented immediately below **Table 1**, contrasts the literal and metaphorical meanings of the five object terms. This figure illustrates how everyday vocabulary is extended into political evaluation, visually highlighting the semantic shift from literal to figurative use.

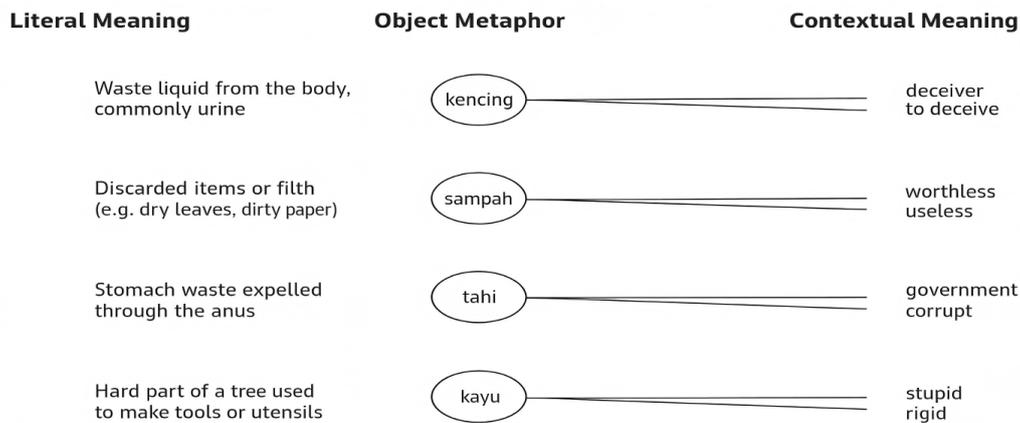


Figure 1. Contrasting literal and metaphorical meanings of object terms.

Following this, **Figure 2** is provided to present an integrative roadmap of the HUMAN IS OBJECT schema. This overview figure, positioned directly after **Figure 1**, demonstrates how the five key metaphors branch into distinct evaluative domains: *kencing* denotes deception, *sampah* connotes

worthlessness, *mangkuk* represents foolishness, *kayu* signals stagnation, and *tahi* embodies moral decay. By consolidating the five metaphors into a single schema, **Figure 2** offers a visual guide for interpreting the analyses in Sections 4.2.1–4.2.5.

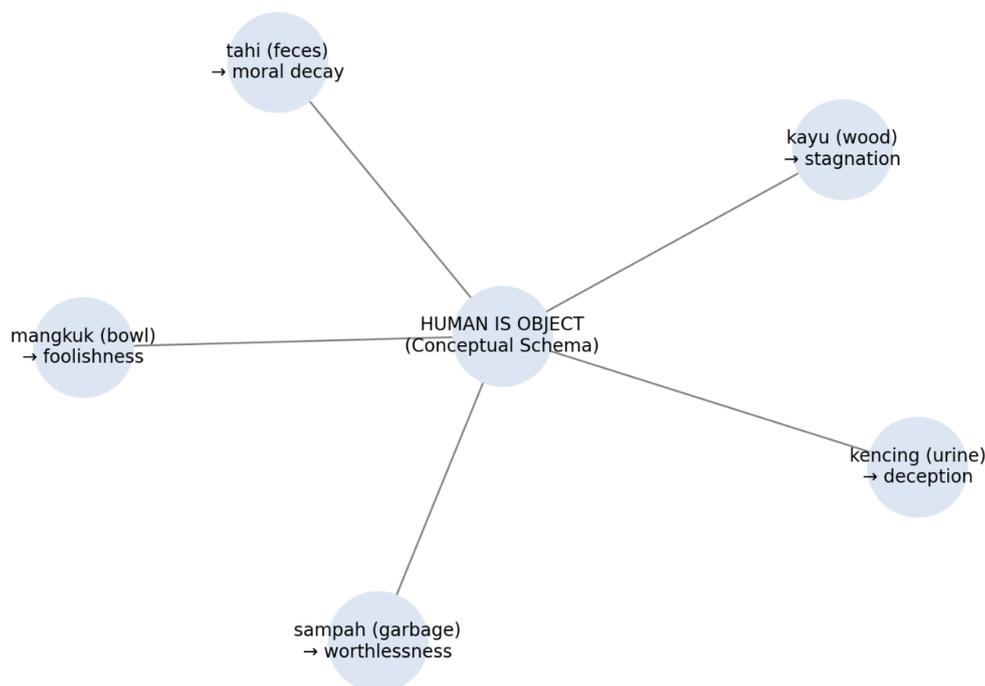


Figure 2. Overview roadmap of HUMAN IS OBJECT metaphors in Malaysian political discourse.

The metaphorical meanings of these terms diverge sharply from their literal referents. For example, while *kencing* literally denotes urine, in discourse it becomes a metaphor for deception; *sampah* shifts from physical waste to signify uselessness or moral corruption. Such transitions signal a broader metaphorical logic in which object properties foulness, such as emptiness, rigidity, or decay, are mapped onto human subjects. These mappings reveal how language encodes contempt and political satire through metaphor^[14,28].

The integration of Table 1, Figure 1, and Figure 2, all presented within this section, provides a coherent overview of both the quantitative frequencies and the conceptual dimensions of object metaphors. This overview serves as a foundation for the subsequent detailed analyses of each metaphor, beginning with *kencing* (urine) in Section 4.2.1.

4.2. Kencing (Urine) as Deceiver

Among the identified object metaphors, *kencing* (urine) emerged as the most frequently used in political discourse, functioning metaphorically to represent deceitful individuals or actions. The term collocates with high-profile subjects such as political leaders (*Mr.X*, *menteri*, *raja*), institutions (*kerajaan*, *parti*), and ideological targets (*Parti A*, *BB*), in-

dicating that the metaphor operates at both personal and systemic levels. Its metaphorical use transforms a physical function, urination, into a symbol of dishonesty, thus constructing the conceptual metaphors A DECEIVER IS URINE and DECEIVING IS URINE.

In these examples (Table 2), *kencing* functions metaphorically as both noun and verb, depending on syntactic context. As a noun, it labels individuals (e.g., *Mr. Kencing*, *raja kencing*) as deceivers; as a verb (e.g., *dah kencing bersepah*), it attributes the action of deceiving to institutions. The collocation *kaki pusing* (habitual deceiver) further intensifies the metaphor by evoking cunning, repetitive behavior, underscoring the entrenchment of dishonesty in the political persona. Similarly, the phrase *hidup air kencing hancing* employs olfactory imagery to construct contempt through sensory repulsion, while *senyap Parti A kencing* implies secrecy in betrayal.

This metaphor's degrading force is rooted in its violation of the GCBM: equating humans with foul bodily waste inverts the expected hierarchy. The metaphor projects an ontological demotion where urine, symbolizing filth and dishonesty, becomes the source domain mapped onto moral deviance in the target domain^[19,28]. The mapping is visualized in Figure 3.

Table 2. Linguistic Metaphors Involving the Word Kencing.

Example	Metaphorical Expression
a	Hahahahaaa Mr. Kencing . <i>Hahahahaaa Mr. Pee.</i>
b	Menteri kencing seorang ni. <i>This minister pees.</i>
c	AA Raja Kencing . <i>AA, the King of Pee.</i>
d	Bagi kaw-kaw punya kat kerajaan kencing ni. <i>Give it real hard to this peeing government.</i>
e	Parti kencing rakyat. <i>The party pees on the people.</i>
f	BB kencing kaki pusing. <i>BB is a pee habitual deceiver.</i>
g	Hidup air kencing hancing! <i>Long live stinking pee.</i>
h	Senyap Parti A kencing . <i>Quietly, PARTY A pees.</i>
i	Baru 60 hari dah kencing bersepah. <i>In just 60 days, already peeing everywhere</i>

Quantitative evidence from corpus analysis further supports this metaphor. As shown in **Table 3**, the most significant collocates of *kencing* include *kaki*, *kuat*, *kena*, and *hancing*, all terms that reinforce the act and consequence of deception. Particularly, *kaki* (habitual actor) appears with high statistical strength, revealing the metaphor’s lexical entrenchment.

Table 3. Collocation Frequency for the Word Kencing in the Corpus.

Collocate	Frequency	Log Dice
kaki	72	11.0
kuat	70	10.9
kencing	75	10.6
kena	120	10.5
hancing	50	10.3
Party A	116	9.7

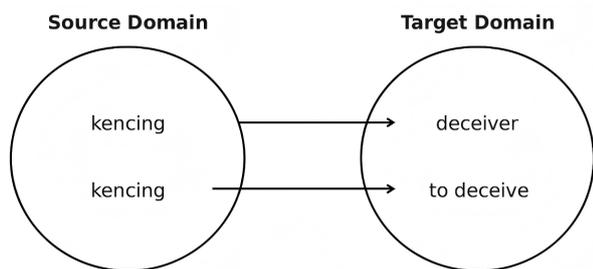


Figure 3. Conceptual Mapping Involving the Metaphor of Kencing.

The semantic relations among these collocates are visualized in **Figure 4**, which displays the *kencing–kaki* collocation network. Here, lexical nodes such as *tipu* (lie), *penipu* (liar), and *fitnah* (slander) appear within the same semantic field, confirming the metaphor’s alignment with themes of betrayal, deception, and ideological dissatisfaction.

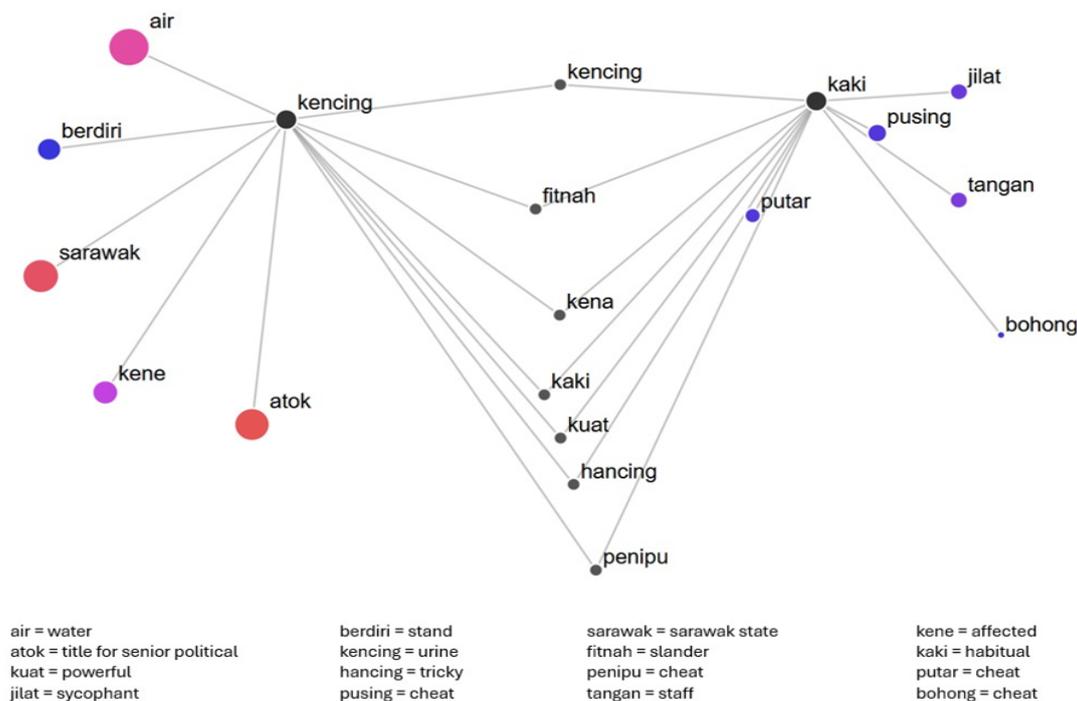


Figure 4. Collocational Network Graph of “Kencing” and “Kaki”.

The inclusion of ideological terms like *Party X* and references to figures such as *BB* in collocational structures (e.g., *Party X kencing, kaki kencing Party X*) demonstrates how the metaphor is not only linguistic but also discursively political. These metaphorical constructions are situated within broader patterns of resistance, criticism, and evaluative discourse, validating the interaction between GCBM and GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy^[9,24].

4.3. Sampah (Garbage) as Worthless

The lexical item *sampah* (garbage) (Table 4) emerged as the second most frequent metaphorical term in the corpus, serving as a powerful linguistic tool to articulate political disdain, moral rejection, and ideological discredit. Its metaphorical use constructs the conceptual mappings CABINET MEMBER IS GARBAGE and WORTHLESS IS GARBAGE, aligning with the ontological framework of the Great Chain of Being Metaphor (GCBM), where humans outrank inanimate and discarded matter. Equating a person or political entity with garbage expresses extreme devaluation and symbolic disposability^[2,23].

Table 4. Linguistic Metaphors Involving the Word *Sampah*.

Example	Metaphorical Expression
a	Jangan undi sampah macam ni. <i>Don't vote for garbage like this.</i>
b	Menteri XX sampah. <i>XX minister is garbage.</i>
c	Sampah lah menteri ni. <i>This minister is truly garbage.</i>
d	AK tu sampah mabuk tadi. <i>Mr. AK is a drunk garbage.</i>
e	JL ni adalah sampah dalam parlimen. <i>JL is garbage in parliament.</i>
f	Sampah betul PS. <i>PS is really garbage.</i>
g	Parti sampah. <i>Garbage party.</i>
h	Sebab bangsa DD sampah. <i>Because DD are garbage.</i>
i	Bila kalah jadi sampah. <i>When they lose, they become garbage.</i>

In these examples, *sampah* is used to insult political figures (e.g., *menteri XX, AK*), constituencies (*JL, PS*), political parties, and even ethnic identities. The phrase *jadi sampah* (to become garbage) conveys electoral failure or moral degradation, while *parti sampah* and *sampah masyarakat* indicate institutional decay and social rejection. These expressions

reflect both emotional intensity and political commentary, aligning closely with patterns of metaphorical vilification identified in political discourse^[6,10].

The metaphor operates through an affective projection: the repulsiveness and uselessness of garbage are mapped onto political actors perceived as corrupt, unqualified, or ideologically toxic. This metaphor reflects a moral hierarchy where worth is tied to function and cleanliness, and those deemed “sampah” are cast outside the moral and political order. This projection is illustrated in Figure 5.

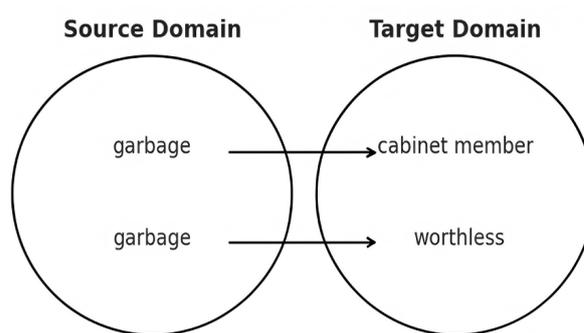


Figure 5. Conceptual Mapping – WORTHLESS IS GARBAGE.

The metaphor is reinforced by collocational data. As shown in Table 5, words like *sarap* (trash), *kutip* (pick up), and *tong* (bin) frequently appear near *sampah*, evoking imagery of refuse management. These associations indicate that the metaphor is not merely derogatory but deeply entrenched in cultural scripts of cleansing and discarding.

Table 5. Collocation Frequency for the Word *Sampah* in the Corpus.

Collocate	Frequency	Log Dice
sampah	24	11.3
sarap	6	10.3
kutip	7	10.2
tong	6	10.1
angkat	5	9.2

The semantic proximity of *sampah* to institutional referents is further demonstrated in Figure 6, which visualizes the *sampah-sampah* network. Terms like *JL*, *speaker*, *arau*, *ko* (you), and *kuasa* (power) appear within the collocational field, confirming that the metaphor is deployed to comment on political performance, legitimacy, and leadership.

This metaphor aligns with both GCBM and SPECIFIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy, wherein *sampah* symbolizes the failure of individuals or groups to fulfill social and political

expectations. As a linguistic tool, *sampah* effectively conveys symbolic elimination and moral judgement, making it a salient metaphor in political critique on Malaysian social media^[4,19].

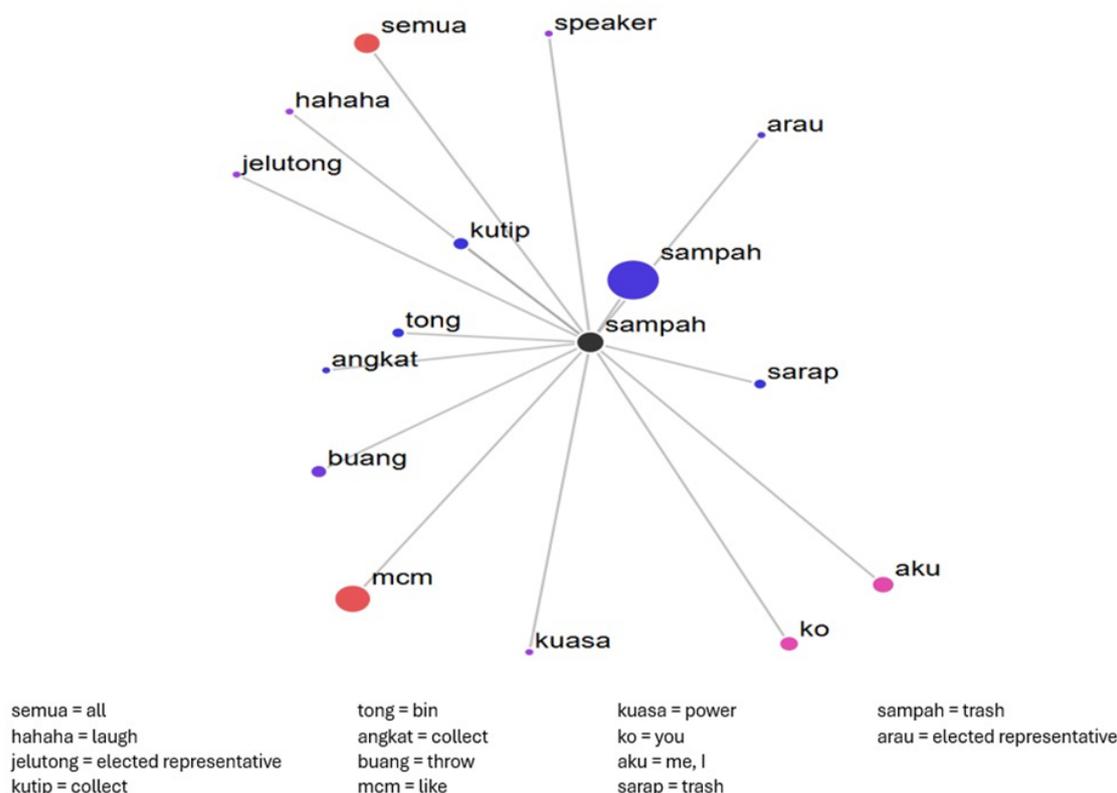


Figure 6. Collocational Network Graph of “Garbage”.

4.4. Mangkuk (Bowl) as Foolish/Incompetent

The metaphorical use of *mangkuk* (bowl) in this dataset reflects a discursive strategy of intellectual insult, targeting individuals and institutions perceived as incompetent, foolish, or devoid of substance. This usage forms the conceptual mappings FOOLISH IS BOWL and CABINET MEMBER IS BOWL, reflecting an evaluative degradation through the projection of an empty, passive object onto political actors. The metaphor interacts with the Great Chain of Being Metaphor (GCBM) by reversing expected ontological hierarchies: those expected to exercise intelligence and leadership are depicted as hollow or absurd^[1,23].

These expressions reflect various intensities of ridicule (Table 6). Examples (a) and (b) critique the recycling of old cabinet members as metaphorical *pinggan mangkuk* (plates and bowls), suggesting political redundancy. Example (c)

uses *jilat mangkuk* (lick the bowl) as a metaphor for excessive flattery, while *angkat mangkuk* (lift the bowl) in (d) implies sycophantic elevation of a political cause. In (e), *dendam mangkuk* conveys an exaggerated sense of revenge, intensifying the characterisation of irrational behaviour.

Examples (f) to (k) shift from indirect critique to direct insult, where *mangkuk* becomes a derogatory label for individuals deemed mentally deficient, lazy, or irrelevant. Such metaphors resonate with Malay idioms like *mangkuk hayun* (an idiot) or *mangkuk sabun* (a soft-headed person), deeply rooted in sociolinguistic traditions of satire and humiliation^[7].

In each case, the metaphor maps the perceived hollowness or absurdity of a bowl onto human cognition and institutional competence. These mappings are presented conceptually in Figure 7.

Table 6. Linguistic Metaphors Involving the Word “Mangkuk” (bowl).

Example	Metaphorical Expression
a	Betul la tu kabinet...banyak mangkuk . <i>That's true... the cabinet is full of bowls.</i>
b	Kabinet baru tapi pinggan mangkuk kitar semula. <i>New cabinet, but the same recycled plates and bowls.</i>
c	Kalau isi dah tak ada, jilat mangkuk pun boleh lah...janji jilat kan. <i>If there's nothing left inside, licking the bowl will do... as long as there's licking.</i>
d	Siapa angkat mangkuk ni, ibarat melancarkan lagi program-program Parti D. <i>Whoever lifts this bowl is basically promoting Party D.</i>
e	Nampak tak, dendam mangkuk sampai macam tu sekali. <i>Can't you see? That's how deep the bowl of vengeance goes.</i>
f	Hoi mangkuk , cakap fakta dan bincang hal rakyat lah. <i>Hey bowl, speak with facts and discuss people's issues.</i>
g	'Resign' lah mangkuk ayun. <i>Resign already, you spinning bowl.</i>
h	Kah! Kah! Kah! Geng mangkuk berucap. <i>Hah! Hah! Hah! The bowl gang is giving a speech.</i>
i	Budak tadika lebih bijak dari mangkuk sabun ni. <i>A kindergarten kid is smarter than this soap bowl.</i>
j	Macam mana boleh jadi menteri pun tak tau mangkuk tua ni. <i>How did this old bowl even become a minister?</i>
k	Mangkuk punya BB. <i>Bowl-headed BB.</i>

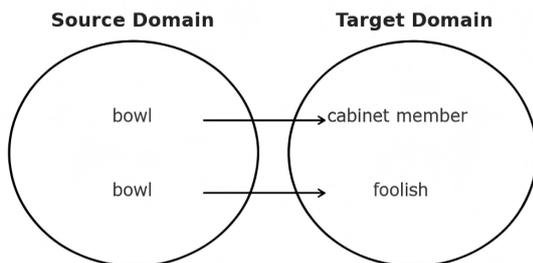


Figure 7. Conceptual Mapping – FOOLISH IS BOWL.

This metaphor is not merely decorative but ideologically potent. It delegitimizes political leaders by reducing their intellect and authority to that of an inanimate container: empty, circular, and functionless without content. The symbolic hollowness of *mangkuk* serves as a metaphorical stand-in for lack of competence, originality, or moral weight^[14,16].

Collocational analysis supports these meanings. As presented in **Table 7**, *mangkuk* most commonly collocates with *punya* and *boleh*, terms that amplify ridicule or disbelief when paired with political referents.

Table 7. Collocation Frequency for the Word Mangkuk in the Corpus.

Collocate	Frequency	Log Dice
punya	8	8.5
boleh	5	6.1

In **Figure 8**, the *mangkuk-punya* network links to phrases like *mangkuk punya menteri*, *mangkuk punya BB*, and *baghal punya mangkuk*, all of which target public figures with contempt. Though smaller in scope compared to *kencing* or *sampah*, the metaphor's precision lies in its emotional and cognitive insult.

As with previous metaphors, *mangkuk* operates through both the GCBM and GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy, where specific objects index specific human shortcomings, namely, foolishness, irrationality, or incompetence. Its presence in digital discourse reveals how Facebook users creatively use everyday items to deconstruct political credibility and assert ideological resistance^[5,19].

4.5. Kayu (Wood) as Emotionless/Stagnant

The metaphorical use of *kayu* (wood) in this study exemplifies how physical qualities of rigidity, lifelessness, and deterioration are projected onto political figures or ideologies perceived as inactive, ineffective, or intellectually stagnant. The metaphor supports the conceptual mappings FOOLISH IS WOOD and CABINET MEMBER IS WOOD, revealing evaluative strategies grounded in social perception and cognitive disapproval. In terms of ontological hierarchy,

the metaphor signals an epistemic demotion where animate subjects are conceptualised as inert matter violating their

normative position in the Great Chain of Being Metaphor (GCBM)^[18,23].

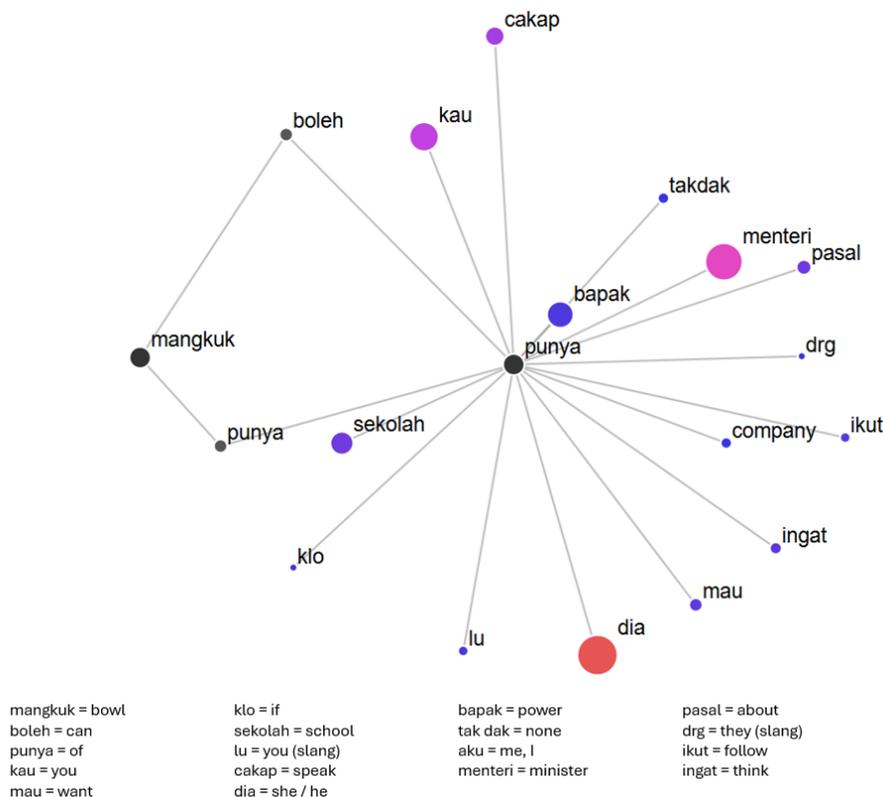


Figure 8. Collocational Network Graph of “Bowl-of”.

As shown in Table 8, in examples (a) and (b), *kayu* metaphorically refers to someone who is mentally unresponsive or educationally lacking, particularly in (b) where *baca buku teks sekolah* (reading school textbooks) becomes a sarcastic jab. In (c), *kayu buruk* and *dimakan anai-anai* (rotten wood eaten by termites) evoke imagery of decay and uselessness, transforming the metaphor into one of institutional erosion.

Examples (d), (e), and (f) target governmental actors (*menteri, pembangkang, speaker*), suggesting they are intellectually rigid or politically inactive. The phrase *jadi kayu* (becoming wood) critiques the absence of critical agency and emotional resonance in leadership. This metaphor is underpinned by GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy, where *kayu* symbolizes specific character traits like silence, stagnation, and irrelevance. These mappings are conceptually illustrated in Figure 9.

Table 8. Linguistic Metaphors Involving the Word “Kayu”.

Example	Metaphorical Expression
a	Sebelah tu kayu ke? <i>Is that person next to you a piece of wood?</i>
b	Kayu baca buku teks sekolah ke, nyonya? <i>A wooden person reading a school textbook, nyonya?</i>
c	Kayu buruk, kayu dimakan anai-anai betul. <i>Rotten wood, truly termite-eaten wood.</i>
d	Dah tu, mu nak suruh menteri jadi kayu ? <i>So, you want the minister to become wood?</i>
e	Pembangkang kayu ! <i>Wooden opposition!</i>
f	Speaker kayu . <i>Wooden speaker.</i>

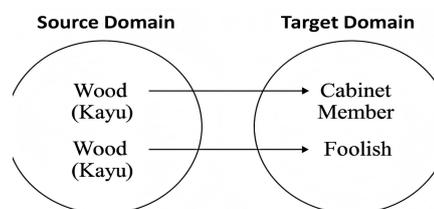


Figure 9. Conceptual Mapping Involving the Metaphor of Kayu (Wood).

The metaphor draws on physical attributes of *kayu*, its rigidity, silence, and vulnerability to decay to articulate societal critique. As in Malay idioms such as *golok kayu* (a blunt machete, or a useless person), or *ditetak tak makan, dijual tak laku* (useless no matter how it's used), *kayu* metaphorically captures immobility and mental dullness^[19] his metaphor reinforces the perception that these individuals lack cognitive vitality or responsive leadership.

Quantitative corpus data further affirms this reading. As shown in **Table 9**, the collocate *menteri* (minister) is the most statistically significant term appearing with *kayu*, suggesting a strong association between political authority and

cognitive stagnation.

Table 9. Collocation Frequency for the Word Kayu in the Corpus.

Collocate	Frequency	Log Dice
menteri	8	6.7

This metaphor is further visualised in **Figure 10**, which shows how *kayu* appears in phrases such as *menteri kayu*, *speaker kayu*, and *kasut kayu*. These collocations reinforce the metaphor's evaluative function and highlight the prevalence of objectification strategies aimed at dismantling political credibility^[11,25].

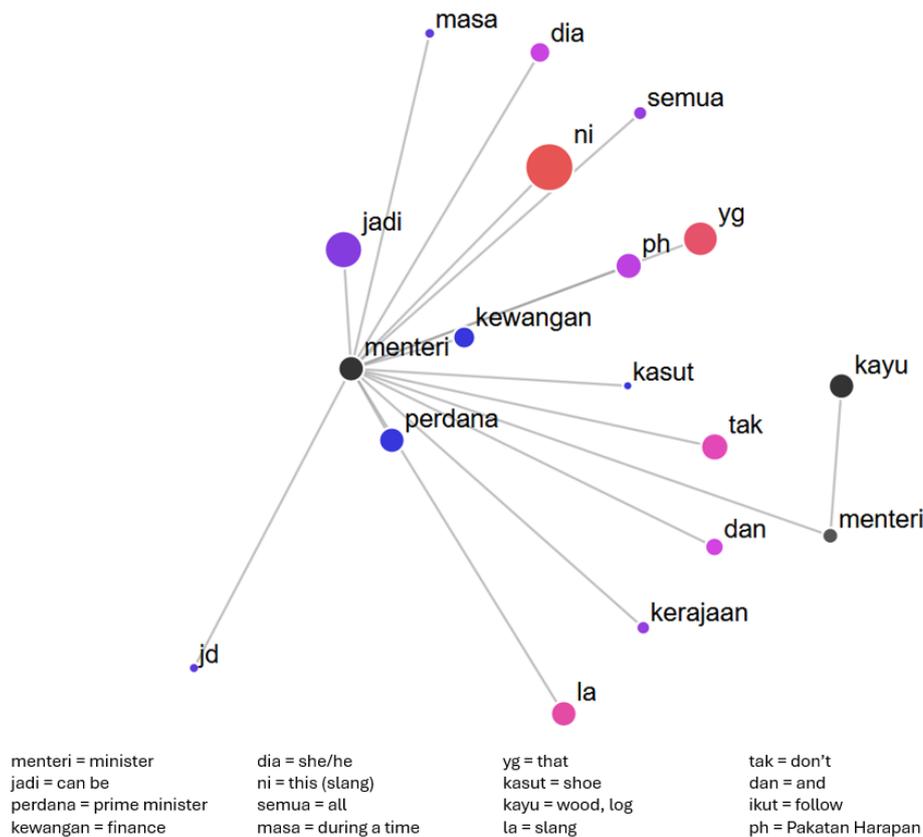


Figure 10. Collocational Network Graph of Kayu–Menteri.

The *kayu* metaphor operates at the nexus of cognitive dullness and moral rigidity. By invoking wood's symbolic lifelessness, Facebook users metaphorically reduce political subjects to inanimate, outdated, or decomposing matter. This affirms the metaphor HUMAN IS OBJECT, where wood becomes a symbolic referent for inefficacy, stupidity, or inflexibility, concepts that resonate deeply in political critique within digital discourse^[21,29].

4.6. Tahi (Feces) as Disgust/Rejection

Among the object metaphors identified in the corpus, *tahi* (feces) carries the most intense emotional and moral charge. It is used to signify disgust, rejection, and moral revulsion toward individuals, political ideologies, or institutional failures. The metaphor constructs conceptual mappings such as CABINET MEMBER IS FECES, GOVERN-

MENT IS FECES, and WORTHLESS IS FECES, drawing from deeply rooted cognitive associations between filth and moral depravity. This reflects a deliberate downward projection within the Great Chain of Being Metaphor (GCBM),

where humans, especially political elites, are relegated below objects to the lowest rung of waste and excretion^[1,2] Illustrative linguistic realisations are presented in **Table 10** below.

Table 10. Linguistic Metaphors Involving the Word *Tahi*.

Example	Metaphorical Expression
a	Dah jadi pembangkang, baru keluar tahi bercakap. <i>Now in opposition, only then the feces of speech came out.</i>
b	Duduk bawah tahi selama 60 tahun. <i>Sat under feces for 60 years.</i>
c	Yang <i>otai</i> tu, dah jadi tahi . <i>That senior figure has now become feces.</i>
d	Abaikan pembangkang tahi . <i>Ignore the feces opposition.</i>
e	Jangan terpedaya dengan manifesto tahi mereka. <i>Don't be deceived by their feces manifesto.</i>

These metaphorical expressions target various figures: *pembangkang* (opposition), *otai* (veteran leaders), and even *manifesto* by equating them with waste. In example (a), *tahi bercakap* implies that speech itself is defiled and worthless. In (b), *duduk bawah tahi selama 60 tahun* references long-term political oppression and accumulated filth. In (c) and (d), both individuals and institutions are characterised as excrement, a metaphorical strategy that intensifies public denunciation. These metaphors align closely with those found in online offensive discourse, where fecal metaphors serve to symbolically obliterate the social status of the referent^[11,30]. These conceptual mappings are visualised in **Figure 11** below.

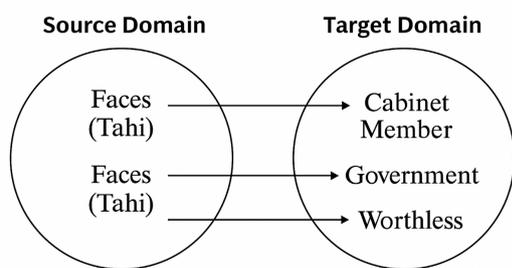


Figure 11. Conceptual Mapping Involving the Metaphor of *Tahi*.

The metaphor is powered by a cultural and cognitive schema where feces represent not only impurity but active social pollution. Through GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy, *tahi* comes to symbolise betrayal, incompetence,

and deception. The use of *tahi* serves as a strategy of extreme delegitimation, one that reclassifies political actors as toxic waste, suitable only for exclusion or elimination^[24,29]. The collocational profile supporting this reading is summarised in **Table 11** below.

Table 11. Collocation Frequency for the Word *Tahi* in the Corpus.

Collocate	Frequency	Log Dice
woimakan	162	14.0
taik	89	12.3
kucing	12	10.3
palat	9	9.9
la	202	9.9

These collocates construct an emotional network of disdain, particularly around expressions like *manifesto tahi*, *pembangkang tahi*, and *jadi tahi*. As shown in **Figure 12** below, the *tahi*–*woimakan* collocational network demonstrates the frequent use of fecal metaphors in emotionally charged political criticism.

This metaphor confirms the expressive capacity of linguistic violence in online spaces, where metaphor becomes a mode of ideological purification, labelling certain figures or ideas as figuratively unclean and therefore socially illegitimate^[4,31]. Within the broader framework of HUMAN IS OBJECT, *tahi* serves as the ultimate metaphor of expulsion, encoding discourses of moral judgment and social elimination.

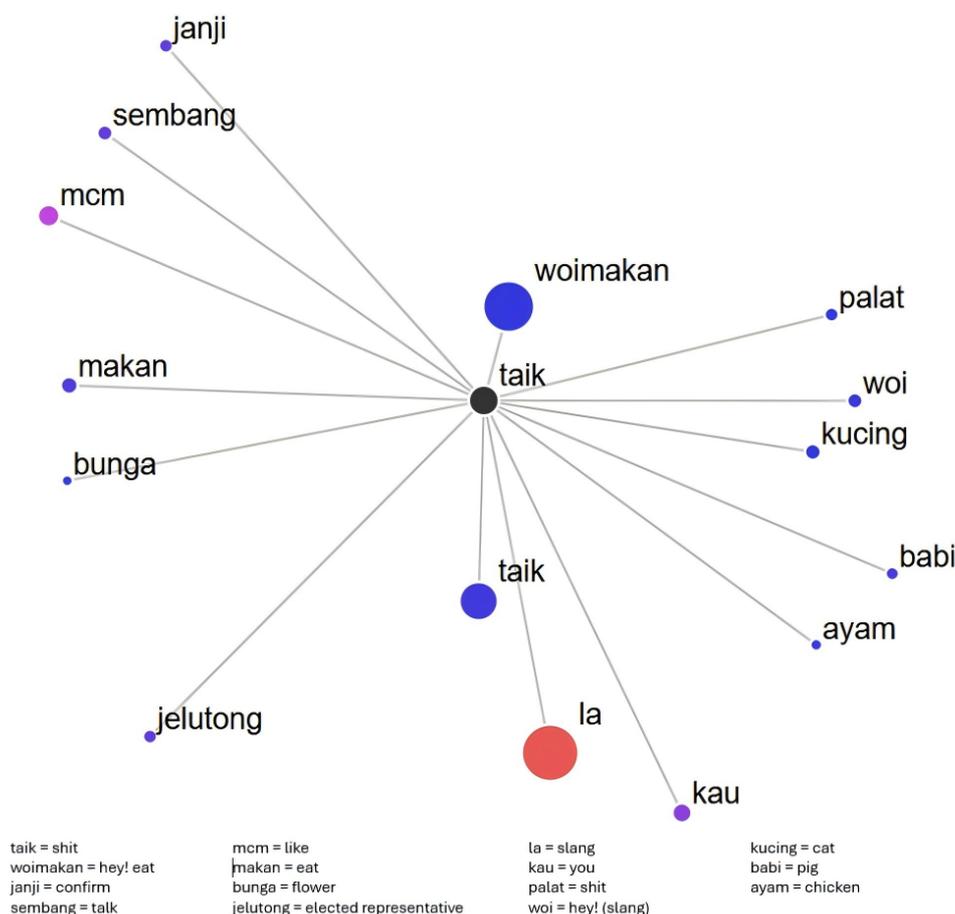


Figure 12. Collocational Network Graph of Tahi–Woimakan.

5. Discussion

This study examined how Malaysian Facebook users employ object-based metaphors to conceptualise political actors and ideologies, focusing on the overarching schema HUMAN IS OBJECT. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory^[1] and the Great Chain of Being Metaphor (GCBM), the analysis demonstrated that lexical items such as kencing (urine), sampah (garbage), mangkuk (bowl), kayu (wood), and tahi (feces) function as potent vehicles for ideological demotion. These metaphors enact conceptual mappings such as A DECEIVER IS URINE, WORTHLESS IS GARBAGE, FOOLISH IS BOWL, and WORTHLESS IS FECES, projecting attributes of animacy, foulness, or disposability onto human referents, thereby violating their hierarchical position in GCBM^[16].

Addressing RQ1, the findings reveal that Facebook users consistently select object-based terms with high cultural salience and negative affective charge. While previous

political metaphor research has largely focused on animal metaphors or bodily imagery^[6,7], this study establishes that everyday objects, especially those associated with waste, emptiness, or rigidity, serve as equally effective tools for political devaluation. This aligns with recent observations by Satvoldiyevna & Ergashboyevna^[4] that metaphor selection in online discourse reflects culturally embedded symbolic repertoires.

Addressing RQ2, the collocational and network analyses confirmed that these metaphors are not isolated insults but systematically embedded within the conceptual and metonymic structures of GCBM and GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC mappings. For instance, kencing frequently co-occurs with kaki (“habitual”), kuat (“strong”), and party acronyms, reinforcing the metaphor’s association with systemic deception (see Table 3 and Figure 3). Similarly, sampah clusters with waste-management lexicon (tong, kutip) (Table 5, Figure 6), framing political actors as refuse to be discarded. This supports Abdul Malik et al.’s^[19] argument that corpus-

assisted methods can uncover deep evaluative patterns in political language, but extends their findings by applying these tools to vernacular, user-generated discourse.

Addressing RQ3, the ideological and evaluative functions of these metaphors reflect a pattern of symbolic exclusion. Unlike war or journey metaphors, which can imply eventual transformation, object metaphors such as *tahi* or *sampah* convey irredeemable contamination, effectively expelling the target from the moral community. This echoes Musolf's^[23] view of metaphors as ideological acts that demarcate in-groups and out-groups, but in the Malaysian context, the effect is intensified by culturally specific idioms and satirical registers. The results also parallel Combei & Reggi's^[11] findings that repetition and networked uptake in social media amplify metaphorical framing into memetic discourse.

Comparatively, the present study advances the field in three ways. First, it documents a typology of object metaphors in Malaysian online political discourse, expanding metaphor scholarship beyond traditional domains^[17,25]. Second, it demonstrates how GCBM, when combined with metonymy theory, explains the evaluative potency of these metaphors, offering a more nuanced model than metaphor-only frameworks^[14]. Third, it situates metaphor analysis in a culturally specific, non-Western social media context, contributing to calls for more localized and multilingual metaphor research^[12,24].

While similarities exist with previous studies in emotional charge^[9], metonymic interaction^[16], and evaluative framing^[2], the present work diverges by focusing on grassroots political discourse rather than elite rhetoric or institutional texts. The metaphors documented here are culturally embedded, emotionally volatile, and politically pointed, e.g., *tahi* not only expresses disgust but invokes moral damnation tied to collective grievances. This convergence of cognitive mapping, cultural symbolism, and digital immediacy underscores the need to treat metaphor as a dynamic element of political identity-making in online spaces^[3,4].

In sum, object metaphors in Malaysian political Facebook discourse function as strategic linguistic tools for delegitimation, grounded in culturally resonant schemas and reinforced through repetition and networked circulation. By combining cognitive theory with corpus-driven analysis, this study offers a model for examining metaphor as both a cogni-

tive and ideological resource in digitally mediated, culturally situated political communication.

6. Theoretical, Practical, and Policy Implications

This study refines how HUMAN IS OBJECT mappings operate when anchored in hierarchical cognition. We show that the evaluative force of *kencing*, *sampah*, *mangkuk*, *kayu*, and *tahi* is not merely a matter of lexical insult but of ontological demotion within the Great Chain of Being (GCBM), where targets are pushed from human agency toward inanimate or waste categories^[13]. Two theoretical advances follow. First, we propose a degradation continuum that differentiates between *emptiness* (*mangkuk*), *rigidity/inertia* (*kayu*), *instrumental worthlessness* (*sampah*), and *moral contamination* (*tahi*). This continuum clarifies why some object metaphors communicate irredeemability more strongly than others and helps explain their differential clustering in discourse networks^[14,16,23]. Second, we highlight the metaphor–metonymy interface as a generative mechanism: GENERIC-FOR-SPECIFIC metonymies (e.g., “*tahi*” indexing systemic decay) supply culturally familiar cues that stabilize metaphor interpretation in fast-moving online threads^[16]. Methodologically, our corpus-assisted approach demonstrates how collocational profiles and network graphs can be mobilized to test claims from Conceptual Metaphor Theory on real-world, vernacular data in Southeast Asian contexts, addressing long-standing calls for localized evidence beyond Anglophone corpora^[12,19]. In short, we extend CMT by foregrounding hierarchy, irreversibility, and cultural salience as key dimensions of dehumanizing object metaphors.

For researchers and educators in language, media, and communication, the results offer a diagnostic toolkit for identifying dehumanizing drift in everyday commentary. First, the collocational cues we report (e.g., *sampah* with *tong/kutip/angkat*; *kencing* with *kaki/kuat/hancing*) can be operationalized as early-warning indicators of evaluative escalation in comment streams, aiding qualitative coding and classroom critical-discourse exercises^[19–21]. Second, instructors can adapt our five metaphor classes into media-literacy tasks that contrast literal vs. metaphorical senses, map GCBM demotions, and interrogate how repetition “nat-

uralizes” stigma—supporting reflective pedagogy about language, power, and online civility^[2,28]. Third, journalists, moderators, and community managers can use the degradation continuum to calibrate response thresholds: e.g., distinguishing satirical emptiness labels (*mangkuk*) from contamination markers (*tahi*) that more directly license social exclusion and may warrant stronger counter-messaging or intervention^[11]. Finally, corpus workflows combining MIP with LogDice collocation and simple network visualizations provide a reproducible pipeline for newsroom monitoring, academic audits, and platform integrity teams seeking scalable yet interpretable analytics^[20,21].

At the governance layer, the findings point to targeted, speech-compatible measures rather than blunt content bans. Regulators, election bodies, and platforms operating in Malaysia’s multilingual space could: (1) Operationalize risk lexicons based on culturally embedded object metaphors and their collocational “amplifiers,” prioritizing *pattern-plus-context* review over keyword blacklists^[3,11]; (2) Support transparency dashboards that surface aggregate trends in dehumanizing metaphors during sensitive periods (elections, crises), enabling civil-society oversight without exposing users^[23]; (3) Fund local-language NLP for Malay (and code-mixed varieties) to improve detection of metaphor–metonymy clusters and multimodal variants (memes, captions), where evaluative meaning is frequently image-borne^[3,30]; and (4) Embed ethical communication standards for public officials and campaign actors (e.g., voluntary codes discouraging contamination metaphors), coupled with media-literacy initiatives that teach audiences to recognize dehumanizing frames while safeguarding legitimate dissent^[2,11,23]. These policy moves align with platform governance goals to reduce targeted dehumanization while maintaining expressive scope in political debate.

Theoretically, we foreground hierarchy and irreversibility in object metaphors; practically, we translate those insights into diagnostic cues and instructional uses; and in policy, we outline proportional, culturally grounded interventions. Together, these implications recognize metaphor as a cognitive resource, a pedagogical object, and a governance signal—a triad necessary for navigating the emotional and ideological intensities of digitally mediated political talk in Malaysia.

7. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study offers valuable insights into object-based metaphor usage in Malaysian political discourse on Facebook, yet several limitations must be acknowledged. The data source was limited to a single platform, which, while rich in spontaneous and affective language, may not capture patterns on other platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, or WhatsApp, where multimodal communication is more prevalent. The focus on written Malay-language comments also constrains the generalisability of findings to multilingual or non-Malay-speaking populations. Since metaphor is shaped by cultural and linguistic contexts^[12], these results may not represent patterns in English, Chinese, or Tamil discourse.

Methodologically, the emphasis on object metaphors, though novel, excluded other significant domains such as animal, war, or spatial metaphors, which could provide a fuller picture of figurative language in political discourse. While Log Dice scores and #LancsBox ensured robust quantitative validation, the absence of multimodal analysis, such as memes, emojis, or video captions, limits interpretation in the highly visual landscape of social media^[30]. The temporal scope is another constraint: the dataset reflects a specific electoral context and does not track shifts in metaphor usage over time.

These limitations suggest avenues for future research. Expanding to multilingual corpora could reveal how different language communities construct metaphorical evaluations of political actors. Cross-cultural comparisons within Southeast Asia and between Southeast Asian and Western contexts would deepen understanding of metaphor in localised digital ecologies. Longitudinal designs could examine metaphor evolution across political events, tracing changes in frequency, form, and target.

Methodologically, incorporating multimodal analysis of images, gestures, and typography could enhance the explanatory power of metaphor theory in digital contexts. With advances in computational tools, AI-driven metaphor identification (e.g., GPT-4-based classifiers) could streamline large-scale analysis^[24]. Greater attention to the affective dimension of how object metaphors evoke anger, contempt, or ridicule would further illuminate the emotional politics of digital discourse in polarised societies.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, N.J. and S.S.; methodology, N.J.; software, S.A.P.; validation, Z.R., R.I.; formal analysis, N.J.; investigation, S.A.P.; resources, S.A.P.; data curation, N.J.; writing—original draft preparation, N.J.; writing—review and editing, N.J.; visualization, S.A.P.; supervision, N.J.; project administration, S.S.; funding acquisition, R.I. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

This study did not require formal ethical approval because the data were collected from publicly accessible Facebook comments, which are in the public domain. No direct interaction with users was conducted, and no identifiable personal information was disclosed. Furthermore, to ensure confidentiality and minimize potential risks, the actual names of individuals, political parties, and states mentioned in the comments were anonymized and replaced with coded labels such as “Party A,” “AA,” “BB,” and others. This approach is consistent with established ethical guidelines for research using publicly available online data.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

Data can be made available on request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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