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Journal

**ISSN**

01285157

**DOI**

10.17576/3L-2023-2904-10

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# Negotiating Racism in Online Apologia: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Comments on 'Locked Up in Malaysia's Lockdown' Al-Jazeera's (2020, July 3) Documentary

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[Save all to author list](#)<sup>a</sup> Department of English Language and Literature, Abdul Hamid A. AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia[View PDF](#) [Full text options](#) [Export](#) **Abstract**

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**Abstract**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Malaysia's vast migrant workforce, with a notably larger undocumented segment, grappled with dire conditions due to their predominantly low-skilled and semi-skilled employment. These challenges were compounded by cramped and unsanitary living conditions, exacerbated by limited access to healthcare services, especially for those lacking proper documentation. The Al-Jazeera's 101 East 'Locked Up in Malaysia's Lockdown' (2020, July 3) documentary starkly portrayed these hardships, illuminating the harsh realities faced by these workers. However, the documentary prompted a contentious response from the Malaysian government, accusing it of tarnishing the country's image. This paper delves into the responses to the documentary, particularly the counter-narratives presented by Malaysian netizens. Employing the critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework, this paper examines the discourse of defence (apologia) in the responses, focusing on the discursive strategies, namely nomination, predication, and argumentation. The findings reveal the strategic manoeuvres employed by Malaysian netizens as they sought to restore the nation's image and reputation, shedding light on how they repositioned themselves in relation to the 'Other'. Inadvertently, these led to a nuanced negotiation process that perpetuated and reinforced discrimination and racism, widening the gap between Malaysians (in-group) and the migrant community (out-group) during challenging times like the pandemic. This

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paper's significance lies in its dual contribution: understanding apologetics strategies and their linguistic construction's role in perpetuating racism and discrimination while also laying the groundwork for more inclusive language use that fosters empathy, combats subtle bias and prejudice, and promotes unity within Malaysia's diverse socio-political landscape. © 2023 Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. All rights reserved.

## Author keywords

Apologia strategies; argumentation; critical discourse analysis; positive self-negative others; racism and discrimination





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