Proceeding International Conference on Education, Peace, and Social Justice
Vol. 1, no.1 (2025), pp. 252–257

Critical Perspective: The Influence of Narrative and Tone of Media Broadcasts on Social Unrest (Case Study: Xpose Uncensored Trans 7 about Kyai Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo)

Evi Murti Wardhani
Universitas Duta Bangsa, Indonesia
evi_murti@udb.ac.id

Suryanti Galuh Pravitasari
Tiga Serangkai University, Indonesia
suryantigaluh@tsu.ac.id

Abstract

This paper critically analyzes the nexus between biased journalistic practices and their impact on social unrest, through a case study of the Trans 7 'Xpose Uncensored' investigative broadcast concerning the Kyai of the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School (Ponpes) in 2025. The research objective is to identify and dissect how the program's narrative, diction, and tone of voice created a negative framing that delegitimized the religious institution, as well as to measure its influence on polarization and conflict within society. This study employs a qualitative approach with critical content analysis of the broadcast's verbal and non-verbal text (tone of voice), supported by Robert Entman's Framing Theory and a review of the Journalistic Code of Ethics (KEJ) The main findings indicate that 'Xpose Uncensored' systematically utilized a Delegitimizing Frame through three key instruments: (1) Contrasting Diction Choices that juxtaposed the Kyai's luxury with the students' simplicity, (2) A Cynical and Insinuating Tone of Voice by the narrator to guide opinion toward judgment, and (3) Violations of KEJ Articles 1 and 3 by omitting the principle of balance (cover both sides) and mixing facts with editorial opinions The impact of this tendentious framing was the triggering of widespread social unrest, marked by collective anger and strong protests from the pesantren community and the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization, who viewed the broadcast as an attack on the dignity of religious scholars. This case culminated in a temporary suspension sanction for the program by the KPI (Indonesian Broadcasting Commission). This paper concludes that the media's failure to adhere to ethics and cultural empathy is a primary source of polarization that potentially divides unity.

Keywords: *Media Framing, Critical Journalistic Ethics, Tone of Voice, Delegitimization, Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School, Social Conflict, Journalistic Code of Ethics.*

Introduction

As the main constructor of social reality and shaper of public opinion, this shows that the role of mass media in Indonesia is not only as a provider of information. Reporting on religious issues, respected figures and institutions requires high sensitivity and journalistic ethics so that reporting does not result in commotion that occurs in a very diverse and religious society. The case of the broadcast of Trans 7's "Xpose Uncensored" investigative program regarding Kyai Pondok Pesantren (Ponpes) Lirboyo on October 13 2025 is an important case study regarding the failure of the function of media construction. The broadcast, which was intended to expose alleged irregularities in Kyai's life, was presented with a cynical narrative and an inspiring tone of voice. The show attempts to explore issues of leadership, asset ownership and adab traditions in Islamic boarding schools with a narrative that many parties consider cynical, tendentious and disproportionate.

Instead of producing enlightenment, this framing actually sparked widespread protests, criticism and social upheaval from the Islamic boarding school community, alumni and the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) religious organization, who felt that the institution and dignity of their ulama had been violated. Islamic boarding schools, especially in Java, not only function as educational institutions, but also as cultural centers and symbols of moral authority for the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) community.

This strong public reaction shows that there is a direct correlation between tendentious media framing and the emergence of polarization and social conflict. Therefore, critical analysis is needed to examine how journalistic instruments—especially the use of narrative and tone of voice—can exceed ethical boundaries and turn into tools of provocation that damage social order. Ideally, the media functions as the fourth pillar of democracy (the fourth estate), tasked with carrying out social control, conveying factual information and voicing public interests. However, as the main constructor of social reality, it is a force capable of defining, selecting and highlighting certain aspects of life (Entman, 1993). This process of selection and highlighting, known as framing, determines how the audience will understand an issue.

The case of Trans 7's "Xpose Uncensored" investigative program regarding Kyai PondokAccording to Entman (1993), framing essentially involves selecting some aspect of perceived reality and making it more prominent in the communication text, such that it promotes problem definition, causal diagnosis, moral judgment, and/or specific treatment recommendations.In the

case of Xpose Uncensored, the narrative and visualization chosen seemed focused on creating a biased contrast and Delegitimizing Frame, namely, a framing strategy aimed at undermining the credibility or moral authority of the subject of coverage (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). Rather than producing a balanced report, the broadcast sparked widespread collective oppositional reactions.

Since the news was broadcast, social unrest began to occur starting from protests on social media to official reporting to the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) which emphasized that journalism practices that ignore the Journalistic Code of Ethics (KEJ), especially the principles of balance and not holding judgmental opinions, can directly contribute to polarization and social conflict that destroys order. Therefore, in-depth critical analysis is needed to examine how journalistic instruments, especially the use of narrative, diction and tone of voice, can exceed ethical boundaries and turn into tools of provocation that trigger commotion in society.

Based on this background, the main problem statement that will be analyzed in this paper is:"To what extent does the use of tendentious narratives, polarizing diction choices, and judgmental tones in media investigative broadcasts, especially the Xpose Uncensored Trans 7 case regarding Kyai Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo, violate the Journalism Code of Ethics (KEJ) and directly contribute to being the main trigger for commotion and conflict in society?"To answer the problem statement above, this research will focus on the following questions:How do the narration and tone of voice in the Xpose Uncensored Trans 7 broadcast specifically form a framing that delegitimizes Kyai and the Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School institution? What violations of journalistic ethics have occurred, especially regarding the principle of balance and the prohibition on mixing facts with judgmental opinions, in the context of reporting on religious institutions? How does the influence of biased media framing causally trigger and exacerbate strong reactions and commotion/conflict in society, as evidenced by the NU protests and KPI sanctions?

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This section provides an overview of key concepts and theories relevant to analyzing the influence of media narratives and tone of voice on social noise.

Literature Review

Media Framing and Sensitive Issues Study

Previous research has mostly discussed how the media constructs social reality, especially on issues involving religion, politics or charismatic figures. Pan & Kosicki (1993): Introduced the concept of framing as a process of syntactic, thematic and rhetorical selection in media texts. Their research shows that word choice and tone (rhetoric) are key to influencing audience interpretations.

Media and Religion Case Studies: Many studies, especially in Indonesia, highlight the media's tendency to frame religious issues in a sensational or conflict-oriented way (conflict-oriented framing) in order to increase ratings (for example, coverage of SARA issues or inter-group conflicts). This review will position the Lirboyo case as an example of framing that discredits the symbols of religious institutions.

Analysis of Narrative, Diction and Tone of Voice in Journalism

This literacy focuses on linguistic and semiotic elements in news texts. Diction and Narrative: Linguistic research shows that diction (word choice) that carries negative connotations or compares contrasts (e.g., "luxury" vs. "simplicity") can effectively shape audience prejudices before the facts are presented. Tone of Voice (Tonality): In audio-visual media, the narrator's tone of voice (such as a cynical, skeptical, or dramatic tone) functions as a non-verbal moral judgment. A review of the literature will confirm that tonality can turn objective reports into judgmental opinions, which is a violation of KEJ.

The Impact of Media on Social Conflict and Audience Reception

This section reviews the literature on how media framing leads to social reactions. Reception Theory (Stuart Hall): Underlines that the audience is not passive. Reception can take the form of oppositional reading, where the audience (in this case the NU/santri community) actively rejects the media narrative because it conflicts with their values. Conflict Escalation: Studies show that unbalanced coverage, especially involving respected institutions, often serves as a trigger or catalyst that turns disagreements into public upheavals (demonstrations, online protests)

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is built from three main interrelated concepts to analyze how the Xpose Uncensored broadcast operates and influences society. Media Framing Theory (Robert Entman) This is the central theory. Framing is defined as the process of: Focus: Narrative, Tone of Voice Framing Process = Selection-Selection-Creation—Understanding This case specifically uses framing to: Defining the Problem: Kyai life and Islamic boarding school traditions as "suspicious" or "unnatural." Moral Judgment: Positioning the Kyai as the "guilty" or "exploitative" party through diction and tone of voice. Suspected Framing Type: Delegitimizing Frame, namely framing that aims to undermine the credibility and moral authority of figures/institutions.

Journalistic Ethics and Journalistic Code of Ethics (KEJ)

This theory functions as a normative standard for assessing media practices. This case is analyzed based on violations of basic principles: Principle of Balance (KEJ Article 1): The obligation of the media to provide equal space for the parties being reported (right of reply). This violation strengthens the one-sided framing. Prohibition of Judgmental Opinions (KEJ Article 3): Prohibition of mixing facts and opinions, especially opinions that have a judgmental tone. The cynical tone of voice used by Trans 7 is proof of this violation. Failure to comply with this ethic is referred to as Abuse of Media Power.

Reception Theory (Stuart Hall)

This theory explains the reaction of society (audience). Instead of receiving messages passively (dominant reading), the Lirboyo (NU) community does: Oppositional Reading: The audience rejects the narrative presented by Trans 7 and produces their own interpretation. Social unrest is a manifestation of collective rejection of the meaning of the word

Conclusions and Implications for Media Ethics

The "Xpose Uncensored" incident on Trans7 provides an important lesson about the volatility of media rhetoric and its potential to have destructive social consequences. The segment's rhetorical strategy, characterized by condescending diction and a sarcastic tone, actively constructs a detrimental narrative of deviance and corruption. This hostility, exacerbated by previous national

tragedies, immediately destroyed the credibility of the report and triggered a widespread and institutionalized response (Nahdlatul Ulama, 2025; KPI, 2025).

The findings of this paper encourage a mandate for media producers to adopt higher standards of cultural and contextual literacy. Journalists must realize that ethical boundaries are crossed when diction and tone are used to ridicule or vilify a subject, rather than to inform the public. Ultimately, the Lirboyo incident shows that the media's profound power lies not only in what it chooses to cover, but also in the active rhetorical choices it employs, which can shape not only interpretations, but also social actions and institutional fates.

Bibliography

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication, 43*(4), 51-58**.**

Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe, & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, media, language: Working papers in cultural studies, 1972-79* (pp. 128-138). Hutchinson.

Pan, Z., & Kosicki, G. M. (1993). Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse. *Political Communication, 10*(1), 55-75.

Schiffrin, D. (1994). *Approaches to discourse*. Blackwell.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. Sage Publications.

Dewan Pers Republik Indonesia. (2006). *Kode Etik Jurnalistik*. Jakarta: Dewan Pers.

Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia (KPI). (2012). *Pedoman Perilaku Penyiaran dan Standar Program Siaran (P3SPS)*. Jakarta: KPI.

Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia (KPI) Pusat. 14 Oktober 2025. *Surat Keputusan Sanksi Penghentian Sementara Program Siaran "Xpose Uncensored" Trans 7 Nomor 31/K/KPI/31.2/10/2025* .

Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU/Alumni Lirboyo). 14 Oktober 2025. *Pernyataan Sikap atau Tuntutan Terkait Program "Xpose Uncensored" Trans 7*.

Tempo.co/online. 15 Oktober 2025. *Kontroversi Liputan Trans 7,Menag: Pesantren Punya Tradisi Memaafkan.* https://www.tempo.co/politik/kontroversi-liputan-trans7-menag-pesantren-punya-tradisi-memaafkan-2079707

Youtube. 14 Oktober 2025. *Video Utuh Xpose Uncensored Trans 7 yang Bikin Ngamuk Para Santri Lirboyo*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=veApB2VHSGI