



THE HIERARCHY OF INFLUENCE IN RELIGIOUS NEWS COVERAGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR ISLAMIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DURING THE 2019 INDONESIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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Abstract

This study examines the hierarchy of influence in religious news coverage on Republika.co.id and JawaPos.com during the 2019 Indonesian Presidential Election and its implications for Islamic community development. The Hierarchy of Influence model, developed by Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese, is employed to analyze the multi-level factors shaping religious media content. This qualitative research uses text observation, interviews, and documentation to identify the influences affecting religious reporting in both online media platforms. The findings reveal that Republika.co.id actively highlighted particular religious issues during the election, while JawaPos.com presented religious coverage in a more sporadic manner. Religious news production in both media outlets was shaped by influences at the individual, routine, organizational, extra-media, and ideological levels. At the individual level, journalists were influenced by Islamic values, professional norms, and worker orientations. At the organizational level, Republika.co.id was influenced by media ownership involvement in political networks, while JawaPos.com demonstrated limited ownership intervention. Extra-media influences, particularly political interest groups, were more visible in Republika.co.id. At the ideological level, both media outlets maintained hegemonic narratives that shaped public perception and religious discourse. This study highlights the strategic role of media in constructing religious narratives within Muslim society and emphasizes the importance of responsible religious reporting to foster social cohesion, democratic participation, and sustainable Islamic community development.

Keywords: Islamic Community Development; Islamic Society; Religious Media Discourse; Hierarchy of Influence; Political Communication; Democratic Participation.

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji *Hierarchy of Influence* dalam pemberitaan keagamaan pada *Republika.co.id* dan *JawaPos.com* selama Pemilihan Presiden Indonesia 2019 serta implikasinya terhadap pembangunan komunitas Islam. Model *Hierarchy of Influence* dari Pamela J. Shoemaker dan Stephen D. Reese digunakan untuk menganalisis faktor-faktor berlapis yang memengaruhi isi pemberitaan keagamaan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui observasi teks, wawancara, dan dokumentasi untuk mengidentifikasi pengaruh yang membentuk produksi berita keagamaan pada kedua media daring tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Republika.co.id* secara aktif menonjolkan isu-isu keagamaan tertentu selama pemilu, sementara *JawaPos.com* cenderung menyajikan pemberitaan keagamaan secara lebih sporadis. Produksi berita keagamaan pada kedua media dipengaruhi oleh faktor pada tingkat individu, rutinitas, organisasi, ekstra-media, dan ideologi. Pada tingkat individu, jurnalis dipengaruhi oleh nilai-nilai keislaman, norma profesional, dan orientasi kerja. Pada tingkat organisasi, *Republika.co.id* dipengaruhi oleh keterlibatan pemilik media dalam jaringan politik, sedangkan *JawaPos.com* menunjukkan intervensi kepemilikan yang lebih terbatas. Pada tingkat ekstra-media, pengaruh kelompok kepentingan politik lebih tampak pada *Republika.co.id*. Pada tingkat ideologi, kedua media membangun narasi hegemonik yang membentuk persepsi publik dan wacana keagamaan. Penelitian ini menegaskan peran strategis media dalam membentuk narasi keagamaan dalam masyarakat Muslim serta pentingnya praktik pemberitaan keagamaan yang bertanggung jawab guna memperkuat kohesi sosial, partisipasi demokratis, dan pembangunan komunitas Islam yang berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Pembangunan Komunitas Islam; Masyarakat Islam; Wacana Media Keagamaan; Hierarki Pengaruh; Komunikasi Politik; Partisipasi Demokratis.

INTRODUCTION

The 2019 presidential election (Pemilu Presiden/Pilpres 2019) was characterized by the strong presence of identity politics, particularly religious issues that dominated mass media discourse. For example, *Republika.co.id* published a statement from Dedi Mulyadi, a member of the Jokowi-Ma'ruf campaign team, asserting that the exploitation of religious issues during the 2019 election was the most severe in Indonesia's democratic history.¹ Furthermore, the Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI) reported that 80.7 percent of respondents considered religious background when choosing legislative candidates

¹Ita Nina Winarsih, "Gorengan" Isu Agama Di Pemilu 2019, Paling Parah | *Republika Online*, 1 January 2019 <<https://news.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/umum/19/01/01/pknbjn396-gorengan-isu-agama-di-pemilu-2019-paling-parah?>>.

(*caleg*), a figure even higher than those considering ethnic background (73.9 percent).² These findings indicate the centrality of religion in electoral considerations.

Religious dynamics were already visible during the candidate selection process. In three rounds of ulama gatherings (*ijtima' ulama*), discussions focused on leadership criteria for Indonesia and recommended two religious figures as potential vice-presidential candidates to accompany Prabowo Subianto: Abdul Somad and Salim Segaf Al-Jufri, Chairman of the Syuro Council of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). On the other hand, Ma'ruf Amin—who at that time served as Chairman of the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) and Rais Aam of the Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU)—was selected by Jokowi as his running mate. His nomination was widely perceived as reflecting the strengthening of identity politics in Indonesian political contestation.³ The prominence of religious issues in Indonesian politics is not a new phenomenon.⁴ Considering that the majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim and that religion and politics have historically been intertwined in Islamic political thought, religious legitimacy often becomes entangled with political interests.

Data from Global Religious Futures indicate that Indonesia's Muslim population reached 209.12 million in 2010 (approximately 87 percent of the total population) and increased to 229.62 million by 2020.⁵ Of the 192.8 million registered voters in the 2019 election, the majority were Muslims. It is therefore unsurprising that religion—particularly Islam—was closely linked to political mobilization. From a sociological perspective on voting behavior, electoral choices are influenced by demographic and socio-economic variables, including religion.⁶ Thus, religious affiliation became a strategic resource in political competition.

Both presidential camps explicitly employed religion-based political strategies to enhance their electoral prospects.⁷ According to Hasanuddin Ali, Executive Director of Alvara Research Center, votes from members of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) were regarded as a “sweet cake” and a decisive factor contested by both candidates. An Alvara survey conducted in December 2018 found that 60 percent of NU voters supported Jokowi-Ma'ruf, nearly 30 percent supported Prabowo-Sandi, and around 10 percent remained undecided.⁸ Similarly, Burhanuddin Muhtadi of the Indonesian Political Indicator argued that NU's consolidated support for Jokowi was closely linked to Ma'ruf Amin's

²Arfianto Purbolaksono, 'Evaluasi Pemilu Serentak 2019 | The Indonesian Institute', 29 April 2019 <<https://www.theindonesianinstitute.com/evaluasi-pemilu-serentak-2019/>>.

³Laylia Farida and Muhammad Gafar Yoedjadi, 'Politik Identitas Dalam Pemilihan Presiden 2019 (Analisis Framing Pemberitaan Kampanye Pilpres 2019 Pada Medcom. Id)', *Koneksi*, 3.2 (2019), pp. 358–65.

⁴Komaruddin Hidayat, *Agama Untuk Peradaban: Membumikan Etos Agama Dalam Kehidupan* (Pustaka Alvabet, 2019).

⁵Heri Budiarto, *Kontestasi Politik Dalam Ruang Media Perspektif Critical Discourse Analysis* (Prenada Media, 2019).

⁶Andi Faisal Bakti and others, 'Literasi Politik Dan Kampanye Pemilu', *Churia (Center for Human Rights in Action)*, 2017.

⁷Irhadhad Taqwa Sihidi, Ali Roziqin, and Dedi Fitrah Suhermanto, 'Pertarungan Populisme Islam Dalam Pemilihan Presiden 2019', *Jiip: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pemerintahan; Vol 5, No 2 (2020)* DOI - 10.14710/Jiip.V5i2.8516, 2020 <<https://ejournal2.undip.ac.id/index.php/jiip/article/view/8516>>.

⁸Sihidi, Roziqin, and Suhermanto, 'Pertarungan Populisme Islam Dalam Pemilihan Presiden 2019'.

representation of NU within the ticket.⁹ Such patterns demonstrate how religious populism influenced voter alignment during the election.

In contemporary democratic systems, mass media play a crucial role in connecting political actors and society, especially as conventional forms of communication become insufficient.¹⁰ Although the persuasive power of mass communication may be weaker than interpersonal communication¹¹, media nonetheless function as a public sphere that enables political participation. Media exposure can intensify political momentum, particularly in shaping political branding and marketing strategies.¹² Through sensational or tendentious reporting that highlights antagonistic narratives, media can also escalate social tensions and conflict.

News does not emerge in a social vacuum; rather, it is constructed within a reality shaped by competing interests and meaning-making processes. As Nazaruddin (2008) argues, news constitutes an “arena of contestation among subjects”.¹³ From a critical perspective, media institutions are embedded within economic, political, and ideological structures that influence how issues are framed and presented. Reality, therefore, is not merely a collection of objective facts but an ideological construction continuously produced through language and discourse.¹⁴ When such ideological constructions become widely accepted, they generate hegemony—a condition in which certain viewpoints are normalized without overt coercion. In this regard, religiously framed reporting during the 2019 presidential election can be interpreted as part of broader media strategies serving particular political interests.

Historically, the relationship between media, power, and public interest in Indonesia has rarely been neutral. During the New Order era, mass media—especially television and radio—were tightly controlled by the state and functioned as instruments of political authority.¹⁵ In the post-reformasi period, however, media ownership increasingly shifted to political elites, transforming some media outlets into tools of political campaigns and giving rise to what has been termed “partisan journalism”.¹⁶ This development has raised concerns about declining media independence.¹⁷ Media are often utilized as instruments of propaganda, shaping political images through selective framing.¹⁸ Such processes may produce information hegemony, limiting the public’s access to balanced and truthful

⁹Burhanuddin Muhtadi: *Nahdlatul Ulama Jadi Penentu Kemenangan Jokowi?* <<https://www.merdeka.com/politik/burhanuddin-muhtadi-nahdlatul-ulama-jadi-penentu-kemenangan-jokowi.html>> [accessed 4 March 2026].

¹⁰Salvatore Simarmata, *Media Dan Politik: Sikap Pers Terhadap Pemerintahan Koalisi Di Indonesia* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2014) <https://books.google.com/books/about/Media_dan_Politik.html?hl=id&id=Fe9hDAAAQBAJ>.

¹¹Tommy Suprpto, *Pengantar Teori & Manajemen Komunikasi* (Media Pressindo, 2009).

¹²Gun Gun Heryanto, *Media Komunikasi Politik* (IRCiSoD, 2018).

¹³Muzayin Nazaruddin, *Media, Jurnalisme, Dan Budaya Populer* (Program Studi Ilmu Komunikasi, Universitas Islam Indonesia dan UII Press, 2008).

¹⁴Budianto, *Kontestasi Politik Dalam Ruang Media Perspektif Critical Discourse Analysis*.

¹⁵Heryanto, *Media Komunikasi Politik*.

¹⁶Jalan Hang Lekir, ‘Partisan Journalism: Review of the Behavior of Mass Media in Legislative Election and Indonesia Presidential Election of 2014’, *International Journal of U-and e-Service, Science and Technology*, 9.12 (2016), pp. 109–22.

¹⁷Wasisto Raharjo Jati, ‘Politik Persuasif Media: Peran Media Dalam Pemilu Presiden Indonesia 2001-2009 Media And Political Persuasion: The Role Of Media In Indonesia Presidential Campaign 2001-2009’, *EJournal LIPI*, 10 (2), 15 (2013).

¹⁸Heryanto, *Media Komunikasi Politik*.

reporting.¹⁹ Consequently, the relationship between media institutions and political power remains inherently problematic, as journalistic practices are frequently entangled with capital interests and political patronage.²⁰

The convergence of mass media and social media has further intensified political communication strategies since the 2014 presidential election (Pilpres 2014).²¹ During that election, political actors extensively utilized print, broadcast, and online platforms—including social media networks—to secure electoral advantage²², sometimes through the dissemination of hoaxes.²³ A similar pattern re-emerged in 2019, particularly when media owners themselves became directly involved in campaign teams. Erick Thohir, Chairman of Mahaka Group and owner of *Republika*, served as head of the Jokowi–Ma’ruf national campaign team, while Dahlan Iskan, a prominent figure associated with *Jawa Pos* Group, publicly shifted his political support from Jokowi in 2014 to Prabowo–Sandi in 2019.

Such involvement illustrates how media ownership can shape political narratives and align editorial agendas with specific candidates, thereby posing potential threats to press independence through direct or indirect intervention.²⁴ Nevertheless, ownership is only one among several factors influencing media content. According to Shoemaker and Reese (2013), media messages are shaped by five hierarchical levels of influence: individual, media routines, organizational structures, extra-media factors, and ideology.²⁵ Therefore, it is essential to examine how these hierarchical influences operate in religious news reporting on *Republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com*. Beyond identifying patterns of coverage, this study aims to analyze how these layered influences shaped religious news constructions within the context of political support for the presidential and vice-presidential candidates during the 2019 election.

METHOD

This study employs a constructivist paradigm, which posits that individual interpretations and actions are shaped by conceptual categories embedded in their cognitive frameworks. Within this perspective, reality is not understood as an objective and fixed entity; rather, it is socially constructed and filtered through subjective interpretation.²⁶ In the context of media studies, journalists and media institutions construct events through

¹⁹Jaduk Gilang Pembayun, ‘Konglomerasi Media Dan Dampaknya Pada Pilpres 2014’, *Interaksi: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, Vol 4, No 2 (2015): July 2015 DO - 10.14710/Interaksi.4.2.109-116, 2015 <<https://ejournal.undip.ac.id/index.php/interaksi/article/view/9753>>.

²⁰Jati, ‘Politik Persuasif Media: Peran Media Dalam Pemilu Presiden Indonesia 2001-2009 Media And Political Persuasion: The Role Of Media In Indonesia Presidential Campaign 2001-2009’.

²¹Ike Atikah Ratnamulyani and Beddy Iriawan Maksudi, ‘Peran Media Sosial Dalam Peningkatan Partisipasi Pemilih Pemula Di Kalangan Pelajar Di Kabupaten Bogor’, *Sosiohumaniora*, 20.2 (2018), pp. 154-61, doi:10.24198/sosiohumaniora.v20i2.13965.

²²Lekir, ‘Partisan Journalism: Review of the Behavior of Mass Media in Legislative Election and Indonesia Presidential Election of 2014’.

²³Intan Permata Sari, ‘Media Partiality in the Presidential Election 2014’, *Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi*, 21.1 (2018), pp. 73-86, doi:10.20422/jpk.v21i1.488.

²⁴Amrullah Amrullah, Umar Umar, and Lili Suharli, ‘Pengaruh Strategi Komunikasi Politik Terhadap Partisipasi Politik Masyarakat Dengan Perilaku Pemilih Sebagai Variabel Moderasi Dalam Pemilihan Gubernur Nusa Tenggara Barat Tahun 2018 Di Kota Sumbawa’, *JIIIP - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 6.5 SE- (2023), pp. 2922-30, doi:10.54371/jiip.v6i5.1984.

²⁵Pamela J Shoemaker and Stephen D Reese, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective* (Routledge, 2013).

²⁶M A Morissan and Andy Wardhani, ‘Teori Komunikasi’, *Bogor: Ghalia Indonesia*, 2009.

particular frameworks of meaning, selecting, organizing, and framing reality according to their perspectives.²⁷ Consequently, religious news published by *Republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com* is assumed to be influenced by the interpretations of journalists, media owners, and other relevant actors operating within their respective ideological and institutional contexts.

This research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at examining social phenomena holistically and contextually.²⁸ The analysis is conducted inductively, using Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchy of influences model as the analytical framework to explore the meanings and layered factors shaping media content. The subjects of this study consist of journalists and editorial personnel from *Republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com*, while the objects of analysis are religious news articles related to the 2019 presidential election (Pilpres 2019).

At *Republika.co.id*, the selected news themes include: "Radical Groups," "Ma'ruf Amin and NU," "Support from Mbah Moen: Jokowi or Prabowo?," "Prabowo's Islam," "Jokowi's Islam," and "Sandiaga and the Rejection by Buntet Islamic Boarding School." Meanwhile, at *JawaPos.com*, the analyzed themes include: "Ma'ruf Amin's Pilgrimage," "Sandiaga Refutes Hoax News," "Support for Jokowi," "Ulama and Prabowo," "Jokowi Removes Religious Class," and "Prabowo Wins." These themes were selected to represent the dominant patterns of religious framing during the electoral period.

Data were collected through three techniques: participatory observation, in which researchers engaged intersubjectively with media texts; in-depth interviews with journalists and media personnel; and documentation of relevant materials. To ensure data validity, triangulation of both sources and methods was conducted. The triangulation process involved: (a) comparing interview findings with observational data, (b) cross-checking information among different informants, and (c) comparing interview results with relevant documents and textual evidence.

Data analysis was carried out through a systematic process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming data derived from field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials. The analyzed data were then interpreted using Shoemaker and Reese's hierarchy of influences model, examining five interconnected levels: the individual level, media routines level, organizational level, extra-media level, and ideological level. The findings were subsequently organized into a coherent and systematic narrative to facilitate analytical clarity and support the formulation of research conclusions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Online Media: *Republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com*

Republika.co.id or *Republika Online (ROL)* is an integral part of the long journey of the *Koran Republika*, a national newspaper initiated by Indonesian Muslim community groups. *ROL* first appeared on the internet in early 1995, approximately two years after the *Republika* newspaper was launched. At that time, *ROL*'s content was merely a complete duplication of the printed *Republika* newspaper. The main purpose of launching

²⁷D R Deddy Mulyana, *Analisis Framing Konstruksi, Ideologi, Dan Politik Media* (Lkis Pelangi Aksara, 2002).

²⁸Eko Sugiarto, *Menyusun Proposal Penelitian Kualitatif: Skripsi Dan Tesis: Suaka Media* (Diandra Kreatif, 2017) <<https://openlibrary.telkomuniversity.ac.id/home/catalog/id/101258/slug/menyusun-proposal-penelitian-kualitatif-skripsi-dan-tesis.html>>.

Republika's internet version was to serve readers who were unreachable through print distribution, as well as readers abroad. Gradually, ROL evolved in line with advances in information technology. Its web design, services, and news content grew richer. Besides providing information, ROL also became a home for communities. In addition to the Indonesian version, ROL exists in an English format as well.²⁹

By the end of 2000, Mahaka Group purchased a majority stake in PT Abdi Bangsa Tbk, the publisher of Republika. Mahaka Group is a parent company focused on media and entertainment businesses, founded by Erick Thohir, who served as the chief of the Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin campaign team after the pair was announced on September 7, 2018. On October 23, 2019, Erick was inaugurated as the 9th Minister of State-Owned Enterprises in President Joko Widodo's Kabinet Indonesia Maju. Upon his ministerial appointment in the second working cabinet, Erick resigned as President Commissioner of PT Mahaka Media Tbk. (ABBA) on October 22, 2019. Subsequently, during an extraordinary shareholders meeting (RUKSLB), R. Harry Zulnardy was appointed to replace Erick Thohir as President Commissioner until 2024.

Meanwhile, JawaPos.com is part of Jawa Pos Group, the largest media network in Indonesia, overseeing over 200 media outlets, including the flagship Jawa Pos newspaper, as well as several tabloids, magazines, and regional TV stations from Sabang to Merauke. Jawa Pos Group started as a small newspaper in Surabaya, established on July 1, 1949. Now, the media business has expanded into television, events, and digital media. Around 2014, Jawa Pos entered the digital business by launching JawaPos.com. Relatively shortly after, in 2016, JawaPos.com began offering various online features in multimedia formats such as text, photos, videos, and other multi-platform formats like website, mobile site, and mobile app. The news categories offered by JawaPos.com are diverse, featuring intelligent and in-depth articles supported by innovative and integrated marketing strategies. JawaPos.com presents itself as a megaportal—including news portal, e-commerce portal (*Iklan Jitu*), events portal (JP Sportainment), and an interactive portal for Jawa Pos.

Dahlan Iskan is regarded as a major figure in advancing Jawa Pos Group. His hard work helped Jawa Pos achieve remarkable progress, making Jawa Pos Group the largest media network in Indonesia. For this reason, Dahlan Iskan earned the nickname "King of Newspapers." However, since 2011, Dahlan no longer actively engaged in managing Jawa Pos. Leadership passed to his son, Azrul Ananda. After roughly six years at the helm, in 2017 Azrul Ananda resigned from the top position. Since then, Dahlan Iskan's influence within Jawa Pos reportedly declined amid internal upheavals. Dahlan was even said to want to sell a 15% share ownership in 2017, though the plan was ultimately canceled.

B. Participation in Covering the 2019 Presidential Election (Pilpres 2019)

The level of media participation between *republika.co.id* and JawaPos.com during the Pilpres 2019 contest appeared significantly different. The participation of *republika.co.id* in covering the political activities of the Pilpres 2019 can be considered quite high, given the large volume of news produced by *republika.co.id*. Over time, as the Pilpres 2019 approached, the production of election-related news by *republika.co.id* showed an increasing trend, becoming more abundant and intensive.

From January 1 to April 17, 2019, researchers identified approximately 1,276 news articles on *republika.co.id* about the Pilpres. Of these, 208 were religious news articles,

²⁹Winarsih, "Gorengan" Isu Agama Di Pemilu 2019, Paling Parah | Republika Online'.

equivalent to 16.3 percent. This monthly increasing trend in election news production, especially those related to religion, at *republika.co.id* contrasts with the news production trend on *JawaPos.com*. In the same period, *JawaPos.com* produced at least 183 news articles about the Pilpres, of which 19 were religious news, or 10.38 percent. From the volume and nature of news produced, it appears that *JawaPos.com* showed less enthusiasm in covering the Pilpres 2019, particularly regarding religious news. It is not excessive to conclude that their coverage of the Pilpres 2019 was more of a formality.

The significant difference in participation levels is understandable considering that *republika.co.id* is known as a media outlet with an Islamic mission. It is natural that its religious news production is relatively high. On the other hand, *JawaPos.com* is a general information media outlet. Therefore, it may be surprising that *JawaPos.com* also publishes religious news. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that *JawaPos.com* does include religious-related news. According to interviews, when *JawaPos.com* covers religious news, it usually attempts to frame such news from alternative perspectives. This can be seen, for example, in the article titled “Prabowo Promises to Bring Rizieq Home, this is What the Police Say,” published on April 7, 2019. Habib Rizieq is a religious figure and leader of a very prominent Islamic organization in Indonesia. However, *JawaPos.com* did not reference his religious or leadership role, simply referring to him as “Rizieq” and focusing on his legal issues, suggesting that *JawaPos.com* reported the news from a legal perspective.

Besides the differing backgrounds—*republika.co.id* known as an Islamic media and *JawaPos.com* as general information media—another substantial factor causing significant differences in their reporting participation during the Pilpres 2019 is their differing perspective on the election. For *republika.co.id*, the Pilpres is a special event and is therefore treated with unusual attention and policies. Meanwhile, for *JawaPos.com*, based on interviews, the Pilpres 2019 was considered an ordinary event, no different from other moments, and thus was treated in the same usual manner.

C. Hierarchy of Influence in Religious Reporting

It is interesting to discuss the Hierarki Pengaruh that influenced religious news coverage during the Pilpres 2019 on the online media *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com*. Although these two media institutions differ in nature, there are several common threads between them, as explained below:

1. Individual Level

At this level, factors influencing media content include demographic characteristics, attitudes, values, personal beliefs, background, role, professional orientation, and individual ethical frameworks. The influence can be direct or indirect, but becomes significant when individuals hold power within the media organizational structure.

One important factor is religious orientation. At *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com*, most employees are Muslim, although there is no formal rule specifying this. A notable difference appears in position distribution: at *republika.co.id*, non-Muslim workers occupy only reporter positions, whereas *JawaPos.com* has three non-Muslim editors. This shows that an individual’s position in the organization determines the degree of influence on media content, since the higher the communicator’s rank, the greater their power to set the news agenda.³⁰

³⁰Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective*; Rulli Nasrullah, *Teori Dan Riset Khalayak Media* (Prenada Media, 2019).

Interviews reveal that the majority of Muslim employees at *republika.co.id* come from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah backgrounds, two moderate Islamic organizations that are trendsetters of Islamic moderation in Indonesia.³¹ This aligns with *republika.co.id*'s official profile emphasizing its mission as a "home for the Muslim community" committed to building a moderate, intelligent, and empowered Muslim society.³²

The second factor influencing media content at the individual level concerns the values held by workers. Journalists' perceptions of social reality affect journalistic work processes, from news assessment, source selection to language use, all reflecting their worldview. Thus, journalists' subjectivity becomes an essential element in shaping news content. These values are usually implicit, conveyed through the selection of actors, activities, and their portrayal.³³

Content analysis of *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com* suggests both uphold relatively similar values of goodness. *republika.co.id* journalists emphasize nationalism, moderate Islam, respect for national founders, and verification of information truthfulness. Meanwhile, *JawaPos.com* journalists uphold religiosity, honesty, legal compliance, political participation, and appreciation for diversity. However, one potentially unethical value identified is primordialism—a form of emotional attachment to ethnicity, religion, or origin. In electoral politics, primordialism is often exploited to build exclusive identities such as "local sons" or "followers of a certain religion," which can provoke aggression and undermine appreciation of diversity.³⁴ If massively reproduced and always linked to elections, it risks lowering respect for diversity and complicating conflict management.

The third factor at the individual level is political orientation. Journalists' political attitudes help explain the individual political roles behind news production. These attitudes often manifest as opinions aligned with the journalist's expressed ideas and are frequently associated with strategies to create market niches for specific demographics.³⁵ Based on interviews, journalists at both *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com* generally maintain neutrality and do not side with particular political parties or figures. Both institutions do not restrict individual political choices, although *republika.co.id* advises its employees to refrain from expressing political views on social media to preserve professional image and institutional independence. Journalist neutrality is a key principle for media credibility and preventing political polarization, as neutral media serve as moderators in political contests.

But is this neutrality reflected in the religious news they produce? Analysis of religious news subject of this research clearly shows that framing in *republika.co.id* tends to focus on certain topics. *republika.co.id* discusses these topics in multiple articles, emphasizing their importance to the public. For example, the topic "Prabowo's Islamic Identity" includes at least two articles: "Chat Yusril-HRS Questions Prabowo's Islam, this is BPN's

³¹Zakiya Darajat, 'Muhammadiyah Dan NU: Penjaga Moderatisme Islam Di Indonesia', *Hayula: Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Studies*, 1.1 SE-Articles (2017), pp. 79-94, doi:10.21009/hayula.001.1.05.

³²Winarsih, "Gorengan" Isu Agama Di Pemilu 2019, Paling Parah | *Republika Online*'.

³³Stephen D Reese, 'Hierarchy of Influences', *The International Encyclopedia of Journalism Studies*, 1 (2019), pp. 1-5.

³⁴Amartya Sen, 'Kekerasan Dan Identitas', *Jakarta: Marjin Kiri*, 2016 <https://perpustakaan.komnasham.go.id/opackomnas/index.php?p=show_detail&id=11703&keywords=>.

³⁵Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective*.

Reaction” and “Jokowi-Ma'ruf Ready for Quran Test, Prabowo-Sandi in Deliberation.” These imply that *republika.co.id* portrays Prabowo as a candidate whose Islamic identity is doubted, even by his own supporters. This doubt also emerges from coverage of the challenge to take a Quran-reading test to assess the religious competence of each presidential and vice-presidential candidate. Prabowo-Sandi are portrayed as reluctant or unwilling to participate. In contrast, the topic of “Jokowi’s Islam” features three articles: “Ustaz Yusuf Mansyur Talks about Jokowi’s Islamic Side,” “This is Abdul Qarim’s Testimony on Jokowi’s Islam,” and “Teacher’s Testimony on Jokowi’s Islam.” These depict *republika.co.id* as seeking to construct a positive image of Jokowi’s Islam as sincere and consistent in fulfilling religious obligations, such as obligatory and sunnah prayers. Jokowi’s genuine Islam is also illustrated during his time as mayor of Solo, where he was active in religious study groups and pro-Muslim policies. These two topic clusters suggest that online media independence, neutrality, and balance—and thus the independence of their personnel—lean either toward both candidates or toward a particular one.

Meanwhile, religious news on *JawaPos.com* appears sporadic and does not direct the audience toward certain topics as *republika.co.id* does. Both camps are covered well, without negative portrayals, be it the Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin team or the Prabowo-Sandi camp. Coverage favoring Jokowi-Ma'ruf is visible in the topic “Ma'ruf Amin’s Pilgrimage,” especially regarding visiting the Makam Mbah Empang. *JawaPos.com* seems to simplify or highlight this pilgrimage activity. Although Ma'ruf Amin also undertook a silaturahmi visit to Habib Abdullah bin Husein Alatas, *JawaPos.com* presents both events fully, indicating their importance to the public.

In the topic “Support for Jokowi,” the article “Pesilat and Santri Declare Support for Jokowi” indicates that Jokowi-Ma'ruf enjoys widespread backing among pesilat and santri. However, the piece refers to thousands from Pagar Nusa branch Sragen. Here, *JawaPos.com* generalizes. It also stresses that santri should defend the ulama by coming to vote, implying that supporting Jokowi-Ma'ruf is akin to defending the ulama. Support for Prabowo-Sandi is evident in the article “Refuting Hoax News, Sandi Holds Ustadz Arifin Ilham’s Hand.” *JawaPos.com* seeks to convey that Sandi’s actions counter hoax reports about Ustadz Arifin’s death, describing UAI’s stable condition even though he still needs rest. The close handholding illustrates intimacy between Sandi and UAI.

The fourth factor is professional orientation. Journalist professionalism is essential as journalistic products are intellectual works demanding factual and ethical responsibility. Interviews show that *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com* are committed to enhancing their journalists’ professionalism via training, certification, and adherence to codes of ethics and regulations. *republika.co.id* has two main guidelines: *Ragam Jurnalistik Republika* and *Prinsip, Kode Etik, dan Standar Perilaku Republika* (2013), governing writing style, professional conduct, and social media ethics. *JawaPos.com* also holds internal guidelines affirming its vision, mission, and distinct writing style. Both emphasize non-partisanship, objectivity, fairness, and social responsibility in journalism practice.

Adhering to journalistic codes and regulations is a hallmark of professional journalists. Ethically, widely recognized principles summarized by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel in *The Elements of Journalism: Revised and Updated* guide journalistic conduct.³⁶ Professionalism also manifests in subordinates following established bureaucracy rules and

³⁶Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism, Revised and Updated 3rd Edition* (Three Rivers Press, 2014).

standards, reflecting work professionalism required by bureaucratic systems for journalists.³⁷

2. Routine Level

At this level, factors influencing media content relate to journalistic work mechanisms and procedures, including source selection and news production flow. As mainstream media, both *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com* have established and standardized routines in each stage of news reporting. In this context, media routines can be examined through three main aspects: suppliers, organization as processor, and audience orientation.

The first aspect, news suppliers: both media heavily depend on information sources as the foundation for news creation. They emphasize that news should not be reporter's subjective opinions but must be supported by credible sources. Even when reporters witness events firsthand, *republika.co.id* requires inclusion of sources' opinions to maintain validity. In sourcing, *republika.co.id* prefers official sources with institutional legitimacy, be it organizations or individuals affiliated with formal institutions. Conversely, *JawaPos.com* is more flexible, prioritizing the competence and closeness of sources to the event, provided they have adequate authority and knowledge. This orientation difference reflects each media's editorial character and segmentation in building credibility and public trust.

Besides primary sources, both *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com* use experts or observers to enrich coverage. These experts serve as sparring partners for journalists in interpreting phenomena or events, so their choice significantly influences the meaning shaped in the news. *republika.co.id* tends to emphasize experts' backgrounds and affiliations, preferring well-known, credible authorities. By contrast, *JawaPos.com* applies a more flexible criterion without restricting expert selection.

The internet also plays a vital role supporting journalistic work for both media. It is used for information gathering, issue monitoring, and competitor content research to produce relevant and engaging news. This aligns with Shoemaker and Reese's statement that when news media moved online, the internet and browsers became routine research channels to discover everything from small to large topics. Internet-based media organizations make their content widely accessible, and journalists can routinely check competitors' activities.³⁸

The second aspect, media organization as processor: before news production, media organizations apply their own mechanisms to collect, evaluate, and process raw materials efficiently. These routines are standardized and institutionalized for consistent execution by all staff. As major media, *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com* have clear frameworks from material collection, information control, to publication. An important routine is conducting editorial meetings to set coverage agendas. Before meetings, journalists list activities to be covered, then finalize these lists through editorial team discussions. These meetings also serve as vehicles for socializing and internalizing rights, obligations, norms, and media values. If an issue receives special emphasis, it is thoroughly discussed—from

³⁷Ristin Ristiani and Suyanto Suyanto, 'Profesionalisme Wartawan Dalam Peliputan Berita Radio Di RRI Pekanbaru', *Jurnal Online Mahasiswa Fakultas Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik Universitas Riau*, 5.1 (2018), pp. 1-15.

³⁸Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective*.

angle determination to source selection. Then, journalists conduct interviews and follow-ups, write articles, and submit them to the newsroom for editorial review.

Editors hold strategic roles in this routine by deciding whether to publish news or not. Editorial routines at both media are similar, focusing on news value, source validity, and balance. However, *republika.co.id* has a special routine concerning lead writing, which is mandatory in every news piece. The lead acts as an opening that offers the news viewpoint, provides a general overview, and attracts readers. Meanwhile, *JawaPos.com* tends not to write leads, presenting news directly without prominent openings.

Additionally, *republika.co.id* editors pay close attention to news presentation performance, including photos, videos, tagging, embedding, etc., aiming for multimedia content such as videos and music on the website. They also focus heavily on search engine optimization (SEO). This last role differentiates *republika.co.id* editors from those in conventional media, recalling Donohue, Tichenor, and Olien's (1972) perspective that network gatekeeping includes more than selection—it covers all information control in decisions on message coding, such as choosing, forming, displaying, timing, cutting, or repeating messages or components.³⁹

Both media subscribe to news agencies. *republika.co.id* subscribes to foreign agencies like APA, Reuters, EPA, Anadolu, ABC, and syndicates with others such as *Viva.co.id* to display interesting third-party news. *JawaPos.com* subscribes to Antara, AFP, Reuters, and utilizes news portals within the Jawa Pos group. News agency subscriptions facilitate reporting from various locations, reducing their own reporting burdens. Despite relying on news agencies, both media maintain full content control. Editors can edit or decide to publish news, confirming Shoemaker and Reese's view that news organization routines shape perspectives on what defines news and how it's presented.⁴⁰

Moreover, *republika.co.id* does not have a routine dependent on other media's ideas. With no strong external benchmark for product evaluation, journalists can maintain consistency independent of other news organizations. *republika.co.id* possesses a unique characteristic as an Islamic media outlet, fostering distinctiveness that minimizes dependence on other media ideas or pack journalism. Conversely, *JawaPos.com* shows some dependence on other media ideas, allowing some pack journalism phenomena, though plagiarism is disallowed. Even if content overlaps, *JawaPos.com* emphasizes quality and strives for different perspectives, as mentioned earlier.

The third aspect, audience orientation, is central to influencing media routines because audience information is crucial for media and advertisers to place ads reaching target audiences. Audience orientation focuses on news value, which media must consider in every news production routine. News value indicates alignment with reader targets and media interest affiliations.⁴¹ It also guides editors in consistently and regularly selecting stories (routine selection).

Regarding news value, *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com* share relatively similar values, such as timeliness, event impact or uniqueness, proximity, prominence, and human

³⁹Karine Barzilai-Nahon and Seev Neumann, 'Gatekeeping in Networks: A Meta-Theoretical Framework for Exploring Information Control', in *Journal of Association of Information Systemes Sponsored Theory Development Workshop in ICIS, Las Vegas*, 2005.

⁴⁰Reese, 'Hierarchy of Influences'.

⁴¹Abdul Wahid and Dhinar Aji Pratomo, *Masyarakat Dan Teks Media: Membangun Nalar Kritis Atas Hegemoni Media* (Universitas Brawijaya Press, 2017).

interest. These news value routines shape media perspectives in defining news, actively constructing media reality through story selection based on these criteria. Additionally, *republika.co.id* applies defensive routines to prevent audience offense, including maintaining news validity and balance. This objectivity routine is vital in building and preserving public trust (taken for granted) in the media, so news is regarded as credible and trustworthy.

3. Media Organization Level

From an organizational perspective, media content is produced within organizational and bureaucratic settings. This perspective emphasizes how organizational factors influence media content, including ownership, policies, goals, bureaucratic structure, and other internal procedures. Media organizations play roles in creating, modifying, producing, and distributing content to a broad audience.

First, media ownership. At *republika.co.id*, the most dominant organizational influence on content is ownership. The majority of shares in *republika.co.id* are held by PT Beyond Media under the Mahaka Group, which is owned by Erick Thohir. During Pilpres 2019, Erick was chairman of the Tim Kampanye Nasional (TKN) Jokowi-Ma'ruf and also served as president commissioner at *Republika*. This condition significantly affected the media institution and its workers. Ideologically, Erick's involvement in the TKN raised concerns about media support for Jokowi, potentially reducing journalistic independence. Pragmatically, concerns arose about loss of trust and readership due to perceived political bias affecting media credibility.

These concerns proved valid. The *republika.co.id* media institution was directly instructed to support Erick's political stance. However, this support was not implemented openly or blindly. Ownership and institutions still respected the individual political views of media workers. The media *republika.co.id* or *Koran Republika* were not prohibited from covering or reporting political rivals of the owner. Erick's support also affected influence from interest groups, specifically the TKN, which pressured *Republika* to influence its news coverage. The TKN often reprimanded *Republika*'s owners and reporters, especially when *Republika* published content deemed critical of Jokowi-Ma'ruf. Such reprimands were then forwarded to the editorial board.

Meanwhile, at *JawaPos.com*, media owners could not directly intervene in editorial rooms. Interventions were limited to visions and missions. Owners did not engage in decision-making domains such as hiring or firing staff. Interviews revealed that Dahlan Iskan is only a shareholder in Jawa Pos Holding with no direct relation to *JawaPos.com*, never serving on its board. Thus, Dahlan's support for the Prabowo-Sandi pair did not influence *JawaPos.com*. This is understandable given that Jawa Pos entered digital media with *JawaPos.com* in 2014. Since Jawa Pos leadership passed to his son Azrul Ananda in 2011, Dahlan has refrained from management involvement. After about six years in leadership, Azrul resigned in 2017, replaced by Leak Kustiyo, a Jawa Pos board member and former editor-in-chief. According to *wartaekonomi.co.id*, Azrul's removal was linked to Dahlan's increasing dominance at Jawa Pos despite not being a majority shareholder.⁴² Dahlan's power weakened amid internal troubles, and he reportedly intended to sell 15% of shares in 2017, which was ultimately canceled.

⁴²Cahyo Prayogo, 'Dahlan Batal Jual Jawa Pos Ke Taipan Properti Ciputra', 16 November 2017 <<https://wartaekonomi.co.id/read161215/dahlan-batal-jual-jawa-pos-ke-taipan-properti-ciputra.html>>.

Second, organizational goals. *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com* have different goals. *republika.co.id*'s primary aim specifically emphasizes an ideological goal of Islamic community development, wrapped in overarching objectives of producing quality output, providing public service, and achieving professional recognition. In contrast, *JawaPos.com* aims to produce quality content, offer public service, and obtain professional recognition without targeting a specific community, unlike *republika.co.id*, which emphasizes the Islamic group. However, aligned with Erick's political involvement, *republika.co.id*'s community service goal may be questioned as the media does not maintain an independent position. The non-revenue goal of community service risks changing into goals seeking prestige and exerting influence or power in society. Organizationally, *JawaPos.com*'s goals do not yet reflect such orientation shifts.

Third, media structure. From the structural perspective, *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com* are similar. Both have established structures with clear roles. Each individual or media worker has clear duties, responsibilities, and specialized roles. Their media structures are not complex, thus easy to understand. However, at *republika.co.id*, the highest organizational power lies in ownership, which also participates in management. Meanwhile, at *JawaPos.com*, top management is part of the board or those accountable to owners.

Fourth, policies. Regarding policies, an interesting contrast exists about the election. As mentioned earlier, *republika.co.id* views the election moment as an extraordinary event. Therefore, during such moments, it usually holds editorial meetings to provide special attention and coverage. This view contrasts sharply with *JawaPos.com*, which sees the election as ordinary and no different from other events. This differing view has produced divergent results, clearly reflected in the intensity of news production between both media. *republika.co.id*'s production was massive, whereas *JawaPos.com*'s was minimal.

Fifth, bias. Another important organizational aspect is bias—the disproportionate tendency to support or oppose certain ideas or issues. Bias can occur when factors intentionally favor or oppose a person or topic, often related to large-scale corporate political views and support. This is a special concern for news media, where objective reporting can easily be manipulated.⁴³ Erick's position as campaign head while still active in media management potentially makes *republika.co.id* partisan with the highest involvement. According to Dzięciołowski, the highest involvement happens when parties directly participate in media company operations, including ownership, financial provision, or membership on management or editorial boards.⁴⁴ Erick's involvement as campaign leader implied institutional instructions to support his political stance, clearly making *republika.co.id* potentially a partisan media. Within William R. Bradt's framework, partisan media work within a political party context: performing organizational tasks, supporting platforms, backing candidates, and contributing to candidates. Such media tend to report more on supportive topics and downplay those threatening their views.⁴⁵

⁴³Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective*.

⁴⁴Krzysztof Dzięciołowski, 'Is There a Chance for Non-partisan Media in Poland', *Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper*, 20 (2017).

⁴⁵William R Bradt, 'Organizing for Effective Public Affairs: How Companies Structure the Corporate Unit', (*No Title*), 1969.

Accordingly, *republika.co.id* shows potential for three biases as explained by Kaye and Johnson: gatekeeper bias, coverage bias, and statement bias.⁴⁶ First, gatekeeper bias arises when journalists and editors allow their ideological biases to influence which issues are covered and how stories are presented. In Pilpres 2019, this is evident from Erick's joining and leading TKN, ideologically influencing media independence. As expressed by Ratna in an interview, this caused turmoil among media workers and readers. Second, coverage bias, where one side of an issue receives more attention, can be seen in coverage of topics like Kyai Ma'ruf and NU, highlighting Ma'ruf's NU affiliation with numerous *Republika* articles. Third, statement bias happens when issues are presented unfairly, such as the story about Romi alleging Prabowo-Sandi group defamed ulama by editing a video of Mbah Mun and a photo of Ma'ruf Amin wearing a Santa Claus costume. *republika.co.id* did not present opposing views, especially from the rival team, denying balanced commentary and potentially leading the public to accept Romi's claim as true.

Interviews further reveal that bias at *JawaPos.com* is not toward supporting a particular candidate but ideologically aligned with its vision and mission. News bias can be directed at any candidate depending on the degree of support for *JawaPos.com*'s vision. Therefore, *JawaPos.com* practices gatekeeper bias, where journalists and editors allow ideological bias to affect editorial choices. For example, in the article "Advice from Aa Gym if 02 Wins: Don't Celebrate Excessively, The People Are Tired," *JawaPos.com* conveyed recommendations that if Prabowo-Sandi win, celebrations should avoid excess and instead be expressed as collective gratitude across religious groups. Reporting such a victory positions *JawaPos.com* as favoring Prabowo, but this partisan stance is more nuanced. *JawaPos.com* supports favored parties conditionally, with emphasis on qualifications, doubts, and references to their shortcomings. According to Dzięciołowski (2017), such media partisanship falls into the third category, reflecting a more qualified form of bias.⁴⁷

4. Extra-Media Level

Media content is also influenced by factors outside the media organization, such as information sources, economic interests, and relationships with other social institutions like businesses and government. In the context of reporting the Pilpres 2019, both *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com* were not free from the influence of these extra-media factors.

First, news sources. Sources are very important to both media outlets because journalists rarely witness events firsthand, so sources act as guarantors of truth and information validity. Both media acknowledge the potential for distortion or contextualization by sources and the risk of unverifiable statements. Therefore, they emphasize verification and prioritize official sources. This preference can be understood as Paletz & Entman note that official sources are more available for interviews.⁴⁸ What official sources say is easier to assert as fact and makes reporters' work efficient by reducing the need for fact-checking. During Pilpres 2019, official sources included campaign teams, political party leaders, police, and others.

⁴⁶Barbara K Kaye and Thomas J Johnson, 'Across the Great Divide: How Partisanship and Perceptions of Media Bias Influence Changes in Time Spent with Media', *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 60.4 (2016), pp. 604–23, doi:10.1080/08838151.2016.1234477.

⁴⁷Dzięciołowski, 'Is There a Chance for Non-partisan Media in Poland'.

⁴⁸Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective*.

Second, interest groups also play a significant role in influencing media content, especially during Pilpres 2019. Both *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com* were involved in efforts by both candidate camps to gain wide publication space. Each side tried to influence media agendas through press releases, documentation of activities, or packaged information as coverage materials, thus becoming “guidelines” for journalists in selecting news topics considered interesting and relevant. In *republika.co.id*, the influence of interest groups appeared stronger, especially from the Tim Kampanye Nasional (TKN). As detailed earlier, the TKN often directly criticized media owners, namely Erick Thohir, who was also TKN chairman for Jokowi–Ma’ruf. Criticisms were frequently directed at *Republika* reporters, resulting in reprimands passed to editorial management. This shows that pressure from interest groups not only impacts news content and agenda but can also drive changes in editorial policies and practices.

Third, advertisers are an extra-media element influencing content, as advertising is often the main revenue source supporting media operations. This applies to both *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com*, which in addition to ads and AdSense, earn income from events and training collaborations. During Pilpres 2019, candidate campaign ads were strictly regulated by Article 275 paragraph (1) letter f of Law Number 7 Year 2017 on General Elections, allowing print, electronic, and online ads under certain rules. Although legal, neither media served as advertising platforms for candidates, thus complying with the norm. Therefore, the concept of advertisers’ muscle, or “advertiser power,” as Shoemaker and Reese describe the ability of advertisers to pressure media did not apply to *republika.co.id* or *JawaPos.com* during Pilpres 2019.

Fourth, government and business environment influence. According to Shoemaker and Reese, a visible form of social institutional influence includes regulations and other restrictions placed on media. This influence may be exerted not only through coercion and force but also through subtler, less visible means.⁴⁹ In most countries with privately owned media, control is exercised through laws, regulations, licenses, and taxes. In countries where the media is government-owned, control is exerted through media financing. It must be understood that Indonesia is a state based on law, as affirmed in Article 1 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution (Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 1945). Consequently, citizens must respect, obey, and comply with legal rules designed to maintain order and peace in society. As companies operating under a state of law, both *republika.co.id* and *JawaPos.com* must comply with government regulations. Regarding the press, Indonesia enacted Law Number 40 Year 1999 on the Press to guarantee press freedom and improve both quality and quantity of the national press. This law provides legal certainty and protection to the press, enabling it to carry out functions and obligations effectively. Besides the Press Law, Indonesian media are regulated under Law Number 32 Year 2002 on Broadcasting. Media companies also have press organizations that have agreed on journalistic codes of ethics. Initially, journalistic ethics aimed to serve humanity rather than individual journalist interests. Journalism is a way of thinking—about truth and objectivity. It concerns what is ethical, focusing on questions of right or wrong, justice or injustice, care or indifference, good or bad, responsibility or irresponsibility.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective*.

⁵⁰Craig E Johnson, *Organizational Ethics: A Practical Approach* (SAGE Publications, Incorporated, 2020).

In the cyber media context, both media also comply with the Pedoman Media Cyber, signed by the Press Council and media community in Jakarta on February 3, 2012. These guidelines can be seen at <https://www.republika.co.id/page/pedoman> untuk republika.co.id (<https://www.republika.co.id/page/pedoman%20untuk%20republika.co.id>) and <https://www.jawapos.com/pedoman-media-siber/> (<https://www.jawapos.com/pedoman-media-siber/>) for JawaPos.com. The rapid development of cyber media in Indonesia, characterized by speed, interaction, and straightforwardness, has driven the formulation of these guidelines, also prompted by many complaints from media practitioners. The guidelines aim to ensure professional management of cyber media. As media that adhere to these, the guidelines impose limits on journalistic practices.

In the competitive business environment, the market is a crucial factor because it is the meeting place of public supply and demand.⁵¹ Media competition amid the rise of digital platforms demands that both media produce content attracting public attention and advertisers, making market penetration strategies critical⁵² republika.co.id strengthens its Islamic feature identity to maintain reader loyalty, while JawaPos.com pursues content and geographic diversification, offering special local subdomains focused on regional news. It also experiments with developing new channels unlike others, adapting dynamically to market trends to expand its audience reach.

5. Ideology Level

As a major influence on media content, media ideology is apparent not only in editorials but also in how the media portrays reality in every news story. Ideology causes media coverage to bias certain viewpoints, prioritizing some opinions or groups over others. Understanding media news direction is key to grasping its ideology. Hence, paying attention to how journalists see, choose, and write news is important as news reflects the media's ideological or editorial direction.⁵³ This reveals emphasized facts or obscured aspects, as well as opinions the media expresses.

Ideology is understood as the mental framework individuals use to view and respond to reality. However, Reese and Shoemaker define ideology not as an individual belief system but as a societal-level phenomenon⁵⁴, serving as a cohesive, integrated social force. In religious news coverage of Pilpres, reflecting language practice expressing occurrences or information, both republika.co.id and JawaPos.com are ideologically charged. On radical groups, republika.co.id, with a moderate Islamic ideology, defines opposing ideologies clearly: groups aiming to establish a caliphate, Islamic caliphate, or NKRI bersyariat are labeled radical. Communist and separatist groups are also classified as radical. Conversely, the media does not label the 212 group as radical but portrays it as peaceful and democratic.

From JawaPos.com's language practices in news narratives, ideological position favors common interests as social integration and control. It is evident in coverage like "If Prabowo Wins," urging celebrations without excess and emphasizing mutual respect and unity across religions, stressing togetherness to build a better Indonesia. At this ideological level,

⁵¹Hermin Indah Wahyuniil, 'Relasi Media-Negara-Masyarakat Dan Pasar Dalam Era Reformasi', *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik*, 4.2 (2000), pp. 197–220, doi:10.22146/jsp.11120.

⁵²Nasrullah, *Teori Dan Riset Khalayak Media*.

⁵³Eriyanto, *Teknik Sampling; Analisis Opini Publik* (Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Studi (LKIS), 2007) <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=TT8VqNZO_3YC>.

⁵⁴Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective*.

JawaPos.com acts as an extension of strong societal interests. Its routines, values, and organizational structure unite to maintain dominant ideological control and reproduction.

Referring to Daniel Hallin, news media actively maintain ideological boundaries.⁵⁵ Hallin divides journalism into three spheres: legitimate controversy, consensus, and deviance. Legitimate controversy covers formal political debates like elections and legislation, where different views are accepted. Consensus covers socially agreed issues where journalists safeguard common values. Deviance covers ideas and actors considered outside mainstream society, where journalism tends to abandon neutrality by exposing, condemning, or excluding those violating public consensus.

Based on this framework, *republika.co.id*'s coverage suggests a non-neutral position, highlighting illegitimate controversies. It emphasizes election-related Islamic issues favoring certain candidates while downplaying others, as seen in "Jokowi's Islam" and "Prabowo's Islam." One candidate is portrayed positively; the other negatively. *republika.co.id*'s coverage includes identity politics and primordialism, which ideally should not be public agendas. Persisting primordialism risks eroding respect for diversity and complicating conflict management.

During Pilpres 2019, candidates' Islamic identity was sharply spotlighted in public discourse. *republika.co.id*'s coverage reflects a media ideology rooted in Islamic values, nationalism, and populism. However, using Islamic identity as a criterion for presidential suitability is less relevant given the president operates in a state not religious context. While important in religious organizational leadership, Islamic identity has no legal basis as electoral criteria. Thus, emphasizing Islamic identity in coverage reflects media ideological orientation rather than rational democratic electoral needs.

Meanwhile, JawaPos.com tends to operate within "legitimate controversy," trying to maintain objectivity and balance. This is visible in reporting on Prabowo's plan to bring back Habib Rizieq if elected—a potentially controversial issue. JawaPos.com sought official confirmation from the police, showing orientation toward verification and balanced sourcing. Yet, it sometimes operates in the "deviant" sphere by exposing issues outside main public agendas. This appears in coverage of alleged support for Jokowi by Ustaz Yusuf Mansur and Ustaz Abdul Somad. Concerned about rumors, JawaPos.com confirmed with Erick Thohir, who denied the claims, imparting credibility and shaping public perception of validity. Thus, JawaPos.com balances public interest with clarifications while subtly participating in political discourse reproduction.

Further exercising cohesive ideology as unifying power, *republika.co.id* exhibits hegemonic roles as Gramsci described. The media enthusiastically reports on Ma'ruf Amin and NU relations, portraying Ma'ruf positively as a symbol of santri struggle and NU representation worthy of support. Ma'ruf's vice-presidential candidacy symbolizes recognition of NU's historic contribution as a nation pillar. The media builds narratives implying NU members would be morally negligent if they did not support their own kyai in the election. This ideological dissemination occurs without coercion but through public discourse accepted as taken for granted truths.

Republika.co.id also demonstrates Gramsci's hegemonic role in framing Mbah Mun's mispronounced prayer case as a normal human error due to age and religious explanations for verbal slips. It clarifies Mbah Mun's intent targeted Jokowi, not Prabowo, showing media allegiance. Logical, convincing narratives condition public acceptance that

⁵⁵Shoemaker and Reese, *Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective*.

the incident is natural and not problematic—illustrating hegemony working through implicitly accepted false consciousness.

JawaPos.com plays a hegemonic role as well by reinforcing general consensus. In covering Ma'ruf Amin's pilgrimage, it highlights religious (not political) motives. During the pilgrimage, silaturahmi and tabligh attendance also occurred. JawaPos.com openly states the pilgrimage was for blessings and reports Bawaslu's caution about language encouraging direct voting for Ma'ruf Amin, which would be problematic. By emphasizing pilgrimage over mosque visits or tabligh, the media implicitly negates any violation by Ma'ruf Amin, since campaign rules forbid campaigning in places of worship or education per Article 280 paragraph (1) letter h of Law Number 7 Year 2017. The public likely perceives Ma'ruf's pilgrimage as legitimate—a taken for granted reality.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that *Republika.co.id* played a relatively active and intensive role in reporting the dynamics of the 2019 presidential election (Pilpres 2019), particularly in relation to religious issues. In contrast, JawaPos.com demonstrated a lower intensity of coverage on similar themes. Although both media outlets covered the election, they adopted different strategies and interpretative frameworks in presenting political events intertwined with religious dimensions. These differences are reflected in the processes of fact selection, source determination, interview packaging, and news presentation. Moreover, variations in the emphasis placed on presidential and vice-presidential candidates indicate how ideological orientations and editorial policies shaped not only the direction but also the depth of their reporting.

The reporting patterns of *Republika.co.id* and JawaPos.com cannot be separated from the operation of the hierarchy of influences shaping religious news coverage during Pilpres 2019. At the individual level, influences include journalists' Islamic religious orientations, personal values, political attitudes, and professional commitments. Although journalists in both media institutions generally claimed political neutrality, their religious backgrounds and normative values inevitably informed their interpretative lenses in framing news content.

At the media routine level, influences are embedded in standardized journalistic practices, such as news agenda setting, editorial discussions, source selection, the use of experts or observers, editorial gatekeeping mechanisms, subscriptions to news agencies, limited reliance on competitor media, and audience-oriented news values. These routinized practices function as structural filters that determine which issues are highlighted, how they are framed, and which perspectives are legitimized within public discourse.

At the organizational level, ownership structure, institutional goals, internal hierarchy, and potential bias play decisive roles. The most significant organizational influence at *Republika.co.id* is linked to the dominant share ownership of Erick Thohir, who was directly involved in media management while simultaneously serving as chairman of the National Campaign Team (TKN) for one of the presidential candidates. Such dual roles create a structural condition conducive to partisanship, as media ownership intersects with direct political engagement. In this context, editorial independence becomes vulnerable to alignment with the owner's political interests. By contrast, ownership at JawaPos.com did not exert comparable direct intervention in editorial processes. This suggests that JawaPos.com tended to orient itself more toward market considerations,

reflecting a more qualified or conditional partisan stance in which political support is expressed with certain reservations and evaluative framing rather than overt alignment.

At the extra-media level, media content is influenced by external actors and structural forces, including information sources, political interest groups, advertisers, regulatory frameworks, and the broader business environment. During Pilpres 2019, both candidate campaign teams acted as significant interest groups seeking to shape media agendas through press releases, political messaging, and strategic communication efforts. The influence of such groups became particularly pronounced when media ownership was politically affiliated. In the case of *Republika.co.id*, the National Campaign Team (TKN) exerted substantial pressure on editorial dynamics, demonstrating how political networks external to the newsroom can shape news production.

Finally, at the ideological level, both media outlets functioned as agents of hegemonic discourse by maintaining ideological boundaries within public debate. Through selective coverage of legitimate controversies, reinforcement of consensus narratives, and marginalization of deviant positions, the media contributed to the construction of cohesive societal meanings. In doing so, they did not merely report political events but actively participated in the reproduction of dominant ideological frameworks surrounding religion and electoral politics in Indonesia.

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