



International Conference on Islam, Law, and Society (INCOILS)  
Conference Proceedings 2025  
Yogyakarta, November 21-23, 2025  
E-ISSN: 2985-7392  
Published by: FORDIPAS PTKIN

**DIALECTICS OF TEXTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL  
UNDERSTANDING IN MEDIA DISCOURSE  
A Critical Discourse Analysis of Lirboyo Islamic Boarding School  
Content in the Trans7 Program "Xpose Uncensored"**

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**ABSTRACT :**

The era of religious mediatization has transformed the way Islamic values are communicated to the public. This study analyzes the representation of Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo in the Trans7 television program "Xpose Uncensored," which generated public controversy and calls for a boycott. Using Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, strengthened by a dialectical perspective of textual and contextual understanding in Islamic studies, this research explores the orientation of meaning that shapes the construction of media discourse. Findings reveal that Trans7 predominantly employs a textual and literal approach in depicting pesantren life, which neglects the sociological and historical contextual dimensions of the institution. This lack of dialectical balance produces a biased representation, reduces meaning, and risks undermining religious symbols. The study highlights the importance of Islamic communication ethics in mass media broadcasting, especially when addressing sensitive religious content. The research offers a theoretical contribution by integrating Islamic hermeneutics with Van Dijk's model in the field of media and communication studies.

**Keywords:** *textual and contextual dialectics, Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis, religious mediatization, Pesantren Lirboyo, Islamic communication ethics.*

## INTRODUCTION

The era of religious mediatization is marked by a shift in the transmission of Islamic values from traditional spaces to digital and mass broadcasting spheres. Broadcasting institutions such as Trans7, through various programs, play a significant role in shaping public perceptions and discourse on Islam (Prasetya et al., 2025). However, this role is often accompanied by controversy when media content approaches sensitive religious issues. Recently, the Trans7 program "Xpose Uncensored" drew widespread public attention and triggered calls for a boycott due to its portrayal that was seen as reductive and disrespectful toward religious symbols and figures, particularly in its depiction of life at Pondok Pesantren Lirboyo Kediri, one of the oldest and most influential Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia.

The controversy surrounding Pesantren Lirboyo emerged when the program presented a narrative that appeared to reduce the pesantren's esteemed traditions, including ta'dhim (student reverence for the kyai) and the tradition of giving envelopes as a form of barakah, into merely material and sensational transactions. Strong criticism came from alumni, Islamic organizations,

and scholars who argued that the media failed to understand the sociocultural and historical context of the pesantren's traditional practices. This controversy demands a deeper examination of how media constructs religious reality. In Islamic studies, there are two major approaches to understanding sacred texts: Textual (interpreting the text literally) and Contextual (considering social, cultural, and historical backgrounds) (Kamal et al., 2025). It is suspected that the media framing in the Trans7 case leaned toward a highly textual or literal interpretation of cultural institutions such as Pesantren Lirboyo, resulting in an inability to grasp the depth of the institution's sociological, theological, and historical dimensions. This failure of dialectical balance ultimately produced a biased discourse that unsettled the Muslim public.

As one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, Pesantren Lirboyo possesses unique characteristics that cannot be understood at a superficial level (Abu Bakar and Mardiyah, 2023). Founded in 1910 by KH Abdul Karim, Lirboyo has developed into a major center of traditional Islamic scholarship, producing thousands of scholars and national figures. Its traditions, rituals, and value systems were shaped through a long historical process rooted in the sociocultural context of Indonesian Muslim society, particularly the NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) tradition, which emphasizes manners, reverence for teachers, and the concept of barakah in the transmission of knowledge.

As an agent of social reality construction, mass media carries an ethical responsibility to present fair and unbiased representations of religious institutions (McQuail, 2010). However, in practice, the pursuit of ratings and sensationalism often overshadows journalistic integrity and the principles of Islamic communication ethics.

Previous studies have generally focused on framing analysis of purely political or social issues in the media (Entman, 1993). Several works have examined the representation of Islam in mass media. Media has also been used as a channel for conveying moral messages to the public, as seen in the study by Desvira Jufanny and Lasmeri RM Girsang (Jufanny and Girsang, 2020). Television media, particularly Metro TV, has also been utilized to discuss political issues, such as in the program Mata Najwa hosted by Najwa Shihab (Payuyasa, 2017). This study, conducted by I Nyoman Payuyasa, employed Van Dijk's discourse analysis comprising three levels of analysis: macro structure, superstructure, and microstructure. A similar discourse analysis approach was applied to examine news coverage in the *Republika* newspaper regarding the theme "First-time Voters Considered Passive," which was analyzed in relation to the surrounding situation, institutions, and social structure that shaped the framing and emphasis placed on a particular political party, as seen in the study by Hera Wahdah Humaira (Humaira, 2022).

Although several studies have addressed the representation of Islam in mass media, few have integrated Islamic hermeneutics, particularly the dialectics of textual and contextual interpretation, as a critical analytical framework for broadcast media content using Van Dijk's model in a comprehensive manner (van Dijk, 1993). This research offers novelty by combining Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis in broadcast media with philosophical and hermeneutical approaches in Islamic studies, specifically the dialectics of textual and contextual understanding. The aim is not only to examine how Trans7 frames the issue of Pesantren Lirboyo but also to critique that framing from the epistemological perspective of Islamic scholarship in the context of broadcasting.

The intellectual tradition of Islamic studies and the interpretation of sacred texts has been a longstanding discourse from the classical to the contemporary era. Scholars have developed various interpretive approaches (tafsir) that can generally be divided into two major paradigms: textual (literal) and contextual (Adinugraha and Ulama'i, 2020). The textual approach emphasizes literal understanding of the text based on linguistic structure and explicit meaning. Textualist groups such as the Zahiri school, founded by Daud az Zahiri, argue that textual meaning should be understood according to its external wording without excessive allegorical interpretation (al Andalusi, 1980). This approach has the advantage of safeguarding the original meaning of the text and preventing excessive interpretative relativism.

In contrast, the contextual approach considers external factors such as *asbab al nuzul* (circumstances of revelation), sociohistorical context, the objectives of Islamic law (*maqasid al sharia*), and public interest (Nawawi and Juandi, 2020). Thinkers such as Imam al Shatibi, in his work *al Muwafaqat*, developed the theory of *maqasid*, emphasizing the importance of understanding the universal objectives of Sharia in the process of *ijtihad* and interpretation (Awang et al., n.d.). This approach allows Islamic values to be applied flexibly in changing temporal and social contexts.

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, a contemporary Egyptian thinker, further developed a hermeneutical theory of the Quran that emphasizes the historicity of the text (Bakr et al., 1993). According to him, the Quran is a cultural product that emerged within a specific historical context, and therefore its interpretation must take that context into account. Although Abu Zayd's views are controversial, they open an important discourse on the necessity of establishing a dialectical relationship between text and context.

Based on this background, the present study aims to analyze the discursive elements, both verbal and visual, used by Trans7 in its coverage of Pesantren Lirboyo in the program "Xpose Uncensored" through the three dimensions of Van Dijk's model (micro structure, macro structure,

and sociocognition). The study also identifies and critiques the underlying interpretive orientation, whether textual or contextual, that shapes the construction of the media discourse. Furthermore, it explains the implications of the failure of textual contextual dialectics in the broadcasting of religious issues for Islamic communication ethics and social harmony. The textual contextual dialectic in this study is not applied to sacred texts but to the way media interprets and represents religious realities such as pesantren. Media employing an overly textual approach tends to depict pesantren phenomena in a literal and surface level manner, neglecting the deeper meanings, educational purposes, and sociocultural contexts that shape them. In contrast, a balanced contextual understanding allows for a more comprehensive and fair representation.

## **Methods**

This study applies a descriptive qualitative approach using Critical Discourse Analysis, focusing on media texts, particularly the Trans7 program “Xpose Uncensored” (Saefullah, 2024). The primary data consist of video recordings and full transcripts of the episode featuring pesantren content that triggered public controversy. Secondary data include academic literature on Islamic hermeneutics, mass communication theory, pesantren studies, and supporting documents such as official statements from Trans7, responses from religious organizations, and public discussions on social media related to the controversy. The units of analysis in the program include verbal narration, visual elements, audio components, and narrative structure. Data were collected through documentation, transcription, visual description, and literature study. The analysis technique employs Teun A. van Dijk’s Critical Discourse Analysis framework, which includes three dimensions of analysis: semantics, syntax, stylistics, rhetoric, and macro structure. This is further strengthened by the textual contextual dialectic perspective as a critical analytical lens (van Dijk, 1993).

## **Result**

### **1. Sensationalist Discourse Construction of Pesantren Lirboyo in Trans7’s “Xpose Uncensored”**

Analysis of the “Xpose Uncensored” program reveals several problematic patterns of discourse construction in its representation of Pesantren Lirboyo. As a program categorized as investigative and expositional, it presents Pesantren Lirboyo through a sensationalist approach that reduces the complexity of one of Kediri’s oldest Islamic educational institutions into a form of entertaining spectacle. At the macro structural level of Van Dijk’s model, the program constructs a dominant theme of “uncovering hidden facts” behind what is framed as the closed and secretive life of the pesantren (Humaira, 2018). The pesantren is depicted as a mysterious space whose

secrets must be revealed, rather than as a historical educational institution with a significant contribution to Islamic learning in Indonesia. This theme is reflected in the segment titles, opening narration, and narrative structure that builds suspense as though a scandal or shocking revelation is about to be exposed.

At the micro level of verbal narration, the selection of diction and semantic framing emphasizes the unusual or surprising aspects of life at Pesantren Lirboyo. Phrases such as “uncovering hidden facts,” “life behind the pesantren walls,” and “the rarely seen other side” create the impression that the pesantren is a mysterious space awaiting revelation. This narrative adopts the logic of criminal or tabloid investigative journalism rather than an approach that respects Pesantren Lirboyo as a sacred educational institution with a long historical legacy since 1910 (Tahitu et al., 2021).

More specific findings show that the program focuses on visually dramatic or controversial aspects such as strict disciplinary practices, certain rituals that may appear unfamiliar to general viewers, or the issue of giving envelopes to the kyai. Meanwhile, the educational, spiritual, and social dimensions of Pesantren Lirboyo, including its role in sending thousands of kyai across the archipelago, preserving the scholarly tradition of Islam salaf, and the achievements of its students, receive minimal attention or are entirely excluded. This imbalance reflects a media bias that prioritizes entertainment value at the expense of educational depth and fairness of representation (Bayat, 2011).

## **2. Tendency Toward Textual Literal Interpretation in the Representation of Lirboyo**

A deeper analysis of the three dimensions in Van Dijk’s model shows that Trans7, in this program, tends to adopt a textual literal understanding of practices and daily life at Pesantren Lirboyo. The textual approach here refers to how the media understands and presents pesantren realities only at the surface level, without exploring the meanings, intentions, and contexts behind them.

### **2.1 Case Example 1: Representation of Discipline and Regulations at Pesantren Lirboyo**

One of the most controversial segments is the portrayal of strict rules and discipline at Pesantren Lirboyo. The program presents various regulations that students must follow, such as very early wake up schedules, restrictions on gadget use, limited communication with the outside world, and sanctions for students who violate the rules.

#### **1) Micro Structural Analysis**

- a) Semantics: The media presents only the “what” (the literal facts about the rules) without explaining the “why” (the educational philosophy behind the rules).
- b) Stylistics: The presentation uses dramatic and sensational diction such as “super strict rules,” “absolute prohibitions,” or “heavy punishments.”

- c) Rhetoric: The use of tense background music and dramatic narration creates the impression that Pesantren Lirboyo is an authoritarian institution suppressing individual freedom.

## 2) Sociocognitive Structural Analysis (Dialectical Critique)

From the perspective of textual contextual dialectics, Trans7 adopts a clearly textual literal approach (Prasetya et al., 2025). The media fails to recognize that within the context of Pesantren Lirboyo, strict discipline and certain restrictions are not merely repressive actions but part of a character building process (*tarbiyah*) aimed at shaping patience (*shabr*), perseverance (*istiqamah*), and mental resilience in students. A balanced contextual interpretation would explain that these rules are pedagogical methods passed down since the era of Lirboyo's founder, KH Abdul Karim, and have proven effective in forming strong and principled scholars.

Historically, Pesantren Lirboyo developed within a traditional Javanese agrarian culture that upholds values of simplicity (*tawadhu'*) and self control (*mujahadah*), which differ from modern values that emphasize individualism and unrestricted freedom. The media's failure to understand this socio cultural context produces a biased and unfair representation of Lirboyo's century old tradition.

### 2.2 Case Example 2: Religious Rituals and Practices at Lirboyo

Another segment that drew criticism was the depiction of certain religious rituals or practices at Pesantren Lirboyo. Several rituals that may appear unique or unfamiliar to general audiences were presented in a way that seemed to exploit their exotic elements without providing sufficient explanation of their spiritual meaning or educational purpose.

#### 1) Micro Structural Analysis

Spiritual practices (*riyadhah*) such as voluntary fasting, night prayers (*qiyamul lail*), or collective *dhikr* were displayed mainly for their visual uniqueness, with emphasis on duration or intensity that may appear "extreme" by modern standards. The accompanying narration often created distance between viewers and the practices, presenting them as foreign, unusual, or even excessive. Camera angles shot from afar and editing techniques that sped up or slowed down the movements of the rituals contributed to an effect of alienation.

#### 2) Sociocognitive Structural Analysis (Dialectical Critique)

This textual literal approach fails to capture the essential contextual dimensions. In the tradition of *tasawuf* and Islamic education at Lirboyo, which follows the *Syafi'i* and *Ash'ari* schools, *riyadhah* is a method of spiritual training (*tazkiyatun nafs*) aimed at drawing closer to God. These practices have strong theological foundations in the Quran and Hadith and have been carried out by scholars and *Sufi* masters for centuries. Historical context shows that *riyadhah* is not a mechanical ritual but a spiritual process

requiring guidance from a teacher (kyai or mursyid) and deep understanding of its goals (maqasid).

Media with contextual understanding would present riyadhah as an integral part of Lirboyo's spiritual education, a practice with high educational value that has shaped the character of thousands of scholars graduating from Lirboyo, rather than as an "oddity" exposed for sensational appeal. This failure of contextual comprehension not only leads to misconceptions among audiences but also risks demeaning sacred values upheld by the pesantren community.

### **2.3 Case Example 3: Santri–Kiai Relations and the Envelope Tradition at Lirboyo**

One of the most controversial elements and the center of public criticism was the representation of the relationship between students (santri) and their kiai, as well as the tradition of giving envelopes at Pesantren Lirboyo. The program portrayed students' respect and deference toward the kiai, alongside the practice of envelope giving, in a way that appeared excessive, materialistic, or suggestive of a narrative of wealthy kiai viewed through a modern individualistic perspective.

#### **1) Micro Structural Analysis**

- a) Semantics: The narration tended to question or criticize this relational pattern using the standards of democratic and egalitarian relations typical of modern educational institutions. Phrases such as "santri must give envelopes," "kiai receive many envelopes," or "a tradition that benefits the kiai" were used without adequate contextual framing.
- b) Stylistics: The use of the word "envelope" itself carries a transactional and materialistic connotation, unlike alternative terms that would be more appropriate, such as "gift," "alms," or "token of respect."
- c) Rhetoric: Visuals showing students presenting envelopes with zoom-in shots and repeated focus, combined with a suspicious narrative tone, created the impression that the practice was a commercial transaction of knowledge or even a form of student exploitation.

#### **2) Macro Structural Analysis**

The theme constructed was that of "materialization of religious boarding schools" or "commercialization of Islamic knowledge," completely neglecting the spiritual dimension and the tradition of ta'dhim which forms the core of the practice.

##### **a) Sociocognitive Structural Analysis (Dialectical Critique)**

From a textual–contextual dialectical perspective, the media adopted a purely surface-level reading, focusing only on “what is visible” (the envelope as a material object) while ignoring “why it exists” (the philosophical basis of ta’dhim and barakah). In the cultural and religious tradition of Pesantren Lirboyo, which is deeply influenced by NU values, the relationship between santri and kiai is grounded in concepts of barakah (divine blessing through knowledge) and tawadhu (humility), which are fundamental principles in the Islamic transmission of knowledge. Respect toward teachers is not merely a social formality; it is an ethical discipline believed to influence the benefit and spiritual effectiveness of the knowledge gained.

Zamakhsyari Dhofier notes that the santri–kiai relationship in pesantren is a unique patron–client model, in which the kiai is not only a teacher but also a spiritual figure, adviser, and even a parental figure for students (Dhofier, 2011). The envelope tradition at Lirboyo must be understood within this framework, not as a commercial exchange but as:

1. Symbolic expression of deep respect (ta’dhim) for the teacher
2. A spiritual bond (rabithah) believed to reinforce the transmission of barakah
3. A form of almsgiving with religious value, hoped to bring blessing to knowledge
4. A cultural tradition rooted within the Lirboyo community for more than a century

This context differs greatly from the teacher–student relationship in formal schooling, which is more professional and transactional. Failure to understand this socio-cultural and theological context results in a mediated representation that reduces the complexity of this relationship into something “strange,” “unhealthy,” or even “exploitative.”

The sociocognitive analysis suggests that the Trans7 producers likely approached pesantren through a secular modernity frame, in which all practices are evaluated using standards of material rationality and modern efficiency. This frame is incapable of accommodating the spiritual logic and religious tradition that form the foundation of education at Pesantren Lirboyo.

### **3 Implications of Dialectical Failure: Representational Bias and Ethical Violations**

The tendency toward a textual and literal understanding adopted by Trans7 in portraying Pesantren Lirboyo produced several serious negative implications from both the perspective of Islamic epistemology and mass communication ethics.

### a) **Reduction of Meaning and Distortion of Lirboyo's Reality**

The first implication is a sharp reduction of meaning. Pesantren Lirboyo, as a holistic educational institution encompassing intellectual development (classical Islamic scholarship), spiritual formation (riyadhah and tazkiyatun nafs), moral development (the shaping of noble character), and social contribution (community service), was reduced to a sensational visual spectacle. The complexity of values, traditions, and educational systems that have developed for more than 110 years since 1910 was simplified into a few visually appealing or controversial fragments (MEGA, 2024).

Distortion occurred when the media presented only a very small portion of pesantren life, selected based on entertainment value rather than representativeness or educational relevance. Viewers without sufficient knowledge of Lirboyo, or pesantren in general, would form biased and inaccurate perceptions based on this mediated portrayal. They could perceive Lirboyo as authoritarian, materialistic, or even exploitative, while the actual reality is far more complex and largely positive.

### b) **Violations of Islamic Communication Ethics**

From the viewpoint of Islamic communication ethics, Trans7's representation violated several fundamental principles:

1. Qaulan Sadida (speech that is just and truthful) was compromised because the media did not present a complete and balanced truth. Only sensational elements were highlighted, while fair contextual explanations were omitted.
2. Qaulan Ma'rufa (speech that is respectful and appropriate) was violated because the representation diminished and failed to respect the values upheld by the Lirboyo community. The use of suspicious framing and negatively charged lexical choices showed a lack of empathy and respect.
3. Qaulan Karima (speech that is honorable) was violated because sensitive religious traditions were exploited for commercial gain. Sacred concepts such as ta'dhim and barakah were turned into sensational commodities for ratings, without regard for the dignity of the institution and its leaders.
4. Qaulan Baligha (speech that accurately reaches its intended purpose) was violated because the messages conveyed fostered misunderstanding rather than accurate comprehension of Pesantren Lirboyo.

Hamid Mowlana emphasizes that communication within the Islamic paradigm must be based on moral responsibility and sensitivity to the social impact of one's message (Mowlana,

1996). Trans7, in this case, failed to meet this moral responsibility by prioritizing ratings and sensationalism over representational fairness and social harmony.

**c) Potential for Conflict and Social Disharmony**

Biased and unfair representations of religious institutions carry the potential to trigger conflict and social disharmony. In the Indonesian context, where religious issues are highly sensitive and society is pluralistic, the media bears a distinct responsibility to present religious content with balance and caution.

The controversy generated by the program “Xpose Uncensored” and subsequent boycott calls from various Islamic organizations, including Lirboyo alumni, PBNU, and other Muslim groups, demonstrates that insensitive representations can provoke public anger and tension. The emergence of trending social media discussions under hashtags such as #BoikotTrans7 and strong public statements from religious leaders reflect the serious impact of misleading media portrayals.

Negative depictions of Pesantren Lirboyo can reinforce existing stereotypes and elements of Islamophobia in some sectors of society. Lirboyo, which is in reality a major center of moderate Islamic education, has produced thousands of clerics and scholars who contribute significantly to the nation-building process and uphold the traditions of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah. Yet it may be perceived as an institution that is closed, feudal, materialistic, or irrelevant to modernity. Such stereotypes are highly damaging, as they can erode the public image of pesantren more broadly and weaken their essential social role.

**d) Neglecting the Educational Function of Media**

Besides informing and entertaining, mass media also carries an educational function. In the context of broadcasting religious content, this function is crucial for fostering public understanding of Islam and its institutions. However, the sensationalistic and textual-literal approach used by Trans7 overlooks this responsibility and instead produces harmful misconceptions.

Ideally, the media could serve as a bridge connecting Pesantren Lirboyo with the wider public, helping audiences understand its positive values, highlighting its contributions to national education (such as the number of alumni who have become kiai, NU leaders, or community figures), appreciating its role in preserving the scholarly tradition of Islam Nusantara, and demonstrating how pesantren adapt to modernity without losing their identity. Instead, the program creates distance, reinforces stereotypes, and diminishes the dignity of an institution that deserves respect.

To address these problems, several alternative analytical approaches can be applied to assess the representation of Lirboyo in Trans7:

### **1. Contextual-Maqashidi Approach in Media Journalism**

A shift in journalistic paradigm is needed when covering religious issues, especially those involving pesantren. This study proposes a contextual-maqashidi approach as a more ethical and balanced alternative.

#### **a) Principle of Contextual Understanding**

The media should seek to understand the historical, sociological, and theological contexts of the institutions or religious practices being reported. This requires thorough research, consultation with experts, and openness to learning before producing content. In the case of Pesantren Lirboyo, journalists should:

1. Recognize Lirboyo's long history since 1910 and the role of its founder KH Abdul Karim
2. Understand the salafi pesantren philosophy emphasizing ta'dhim and barakah
3. Appreciate the socio-cultural tradition of the santri community and NU heritage
4. Acknowledge Lirboyo's contribution to Islamic education and the development of ulama in Indonesia
5. Consult kiai, alumni, and scholars who deeply understand Lirboyo

#### **b) Principle of Maqashidi Analysis**

A maqashidi approach requires journalists to explore the objectives and purposes behind religious rules or practices. Reporting should not stop at the literal level but must dig deeper into the reasons and intentions behind them. In the context of Pesantren Lirboyo, this means:

1. Explaining that strict rules aim to build character, resilience, and discipline
2. Clarifying that riyadhah serves spiritual refinement and closeness to God
3. Showing that the tradition of giving envelopes symbolizes ta'dhim and spiritual bonding, not material transaction
4. Describing that the hierarchical kiai-santri relationship supports the transmission of barakah in Islamic scholarly tradition

#### **c) Balanced Representation**

The media must provide a balanced portrayal by presenting multiple dimensions of the institution or community being covered. If certain aspects

appear negative or unusual, they should be accompanied by contextual explanations and positive elements that help audiences understand the issue holistically.

In the case of Pesantren Lirboyo, the media should highlight:

1. Academic achievements of students and alumni in various fields
2. Social contributions of Lirboyo to the wider community, including community outreach and alumni service
3. The quality of its kitab kuning education system
4. Lirboyo's role in upholding the moderate Islamic tradition of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah
5. Testimonies from alumni who have succeeded and benefited from the pesantren system
6. The institution's ability to adapt to modernity without losing its traditional salaf identity

#### **d) Respectful Framing Principle**

Media should employ language and framing that respect the subjects being covered, especially when dealing with sacred or sensitive values.

Practices to avoid:

1. Sensational or derogatory wording
2. Background music that creates suspicion or a negative atmosphere
3. Exploitative or voyeuristic camera angles
4. Editing that dramatizes scenes or distorts context

Practices to adopt:

5. Framing that is empathetic and respectful of diverse ways of life
6. Neutral or positive language
7. Providing space for knowledgeable stakeholders to explain the context
8. Visual storytelling that respects privacy and the sanctity of religious spaces

#### **e) Ethical Consideration**

Every editorial decision should account for ethical and social consequences. The media needs to reflect on questions such as:

1. Will this content enhance understanding or reinforce stereotypes?
2. Will it promote social harmony or trigger conflict?

3. Does the content meet the standards of journalistic ethics and Islamic communication ethics?
4. Have the represented parties been given fair access to respond?
5. Is the overall approach balanced and fair?

## **5. Theoretical Reflection: Integrating Islamic Hermeneutics and Van Dijk's Model in Media Studies**

This study makes a theoretical contribution by bringing together Islamic hermeneutical perspectives, particularly the dialectic between textual and contextual interpretation, with Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework in media and communication studies (Van Dijk, 2015). Research on media in Indonesia has generally relied on Western theories such as framing, agenda setting, or CDA, without incorporating epistemological approaches rooted in Islamic scholarship.

### **a) Theoretical Integration**

1. Van Dijk's Micro Structure and Textual Understanding ↔ Micro-level analysis in Van Dijk's model, which examines semantics, syntax, and stylistic choices, can be aligned with textual interpretation in Islamic hermeneutics. When media limit their analysis to the literal dimension of language, neglecting deeper layers of meaning, this mirrors literalist approaches to tafsir that have been critiqued by contextualist scholars.
2. Van Dijk's Sociocognitive Dimension and Maqashid-based Interpretation ↔ Van Dijk's sociocognitive component, which analyzes social context, ideology, and the cognition of media producers, can be enriched with the Islamic concepts of maqashid asy-syariah and contextual reasoning. This integration allows analysis not only of ideological content but also of whether media narratives understand the objectives and underlying purposes of the religious practices they portray.
3. Epistemological Critique ↔ The textual-contextual dialectic found in Islamic interpretive traditions is highly relevant for examining how media understand and represent religious realities. This approach offers a sharper epistemological critique compared to conventional analyses that focus solely on framing techniques or ideological bias.

Integrating maqashid asy-syariah into media analysis creates space for developing journalistic ethics grounded in Islamic values. While Western media ethics often rest on principles such as freedom of speech and the public's right to know, an Islamic perspective emphasizes truth (haq), justice ('adl), public benefit (mashlahah), and moral responsibility (mas'uliyah) (Mawara, 2025).

This study also shows that the mediatisation of religion in Indonesia requires stronger critical attention. The media landscape should not operate solely under commercial logic without ethical oversight. Regulatory frameworks, industry self-regulation, and sustained public critique are necessary to ensure that the representation of religion, especially influential institutions like Pesantren Lirboyo, remains fair, ethical, and conducive to social harmony.

## **Conclusion**

This study reveals that the program Xpose Uncensored on Trans7 represents Pesantren Lirboyo through a textual and literal approach that fails to capture its sociological, historical, and theological contexts. Using Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis supported by a textual-contextual hermeneutic framework, the findings show that the absence of dialectical balance results in skewed representations, reducing the meaning of traditions such as ta'dhim and barakah and risking the desacralization of values deeply upheld within the pesantren community.

Analysis across Van Dijk's dimensions shows the following:

1. Micro Structure: Word choice, semantics, and visual rhetoric tend to be sensational and carry negative connotations.
2. Macro Structure: The dominant theme of revealing hidden realities creates a suspicious and disrespectful frame.
3. Sociocognitive Structure: The media fail to understand the socio-cultural background, the tradition of ta'dhim, and the concept of barakah that inform Lirboyo's educational practice.

Media priorities lean toward entertainment and sensational appeal rather than balanced representation and public education. Highlighting aspects perceived as unique or controversial, such as giving envelopes to respected scholars, without adequate contextualization of the tradition behind it, introduces distortion and reinforces negative stereotypes of Pesantren Lirboyo.

Theoretically, this research contributes by integrating Islamic hermeneutic perspectives, especially textual-contextual dialectics, with Van Dijk's CDA framework. This integration offers a pathway for developing analytical models and journalistic ethics grounded in Islamic epistemology and values. Future research may expand the scope by examining other media formats to gain a broader understanding of Islamic representation in Indonesian media and by conducting audience reception studies to explore how different viewer groups interpret religious content presented through mass media.

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