Research Article

The Representation of Religious Figures' Responses to The Al Zaytun Controversy: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal the representation of religious figures' attitudes toward the Al Zaytun controversy as reported by *Kompas.com*. Unlike previous studies that focused on government officials' responses, this research offers a new perspective by positioning religious figures as the main discourse actors. Using a critical qualitative descriptive approach, linguistic data were obtained from nine purposively selected news articles on *Kompas.com*. The analysis applied Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA). The findings show that *Kompas.com* portrays religious figures as proactive, firm, objective, and responsive toward the controversy, yet supportive of the institution's continuation on humanitarian grounds. Through its discursive practices, the media constructs a narrative that Al Zaytun should not be disbanded, emphasizing moderate approaches and compromise solutions aligned with central government narratives. At the sociocultural level, coverage is shaped by tensions between the controversy and the majority's religious practices, media economic interests, a tendency to follow government narratives, and religious leaders' firm responses based on religious commitment and efforts to gain public sympathy. Theoretically, this study extends the application of Fairclough's CDA in examining contemporary religious discourse in Indonesian media. Practically, it offers insights for media, scholars, and policymakers on how representations of religious figures influence public perception and social stability.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mass media plays a crucial role in shaping public perception of social reality. As an agent of discourse production, the media not only delivers information but also frames events through word choices, narrative structures, and the selection of sources presented (Hubner, 2021; Weng & Mansouri, 2021; Zabern & Tulloch, 2020). Thus, the media is not simply an instrument for conveying facts, but an ideological actor that can influence how society understands an issue.

In this context, it is essential for the public, especially academics and researchers, to develop critical thinking skills toward every message conveyed by the media. This is because mass media often carries certain interests, political, economic, or ideological hidden behind the seemingly objective presentation of information (AlAfnan, 2020; Nugraha *et al.*, 2024; Öztunç & Pierre, 2021). The representation of an issue by the media is often not value-free, but influenced by the ideological stance and interests of the media institution itself.

One case that illustrates how media constructs certain representations is the coverage of the controversy involving the Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School by *Kompas.com*. In the reports presented by *Kompas.com*, it can be observed that the media chose to highlight narratives from a number of figures as main sources, including Islamic religious figures. This choice is certainly not a neutral one; it carries particular interests that warrant critical examination (Priadi & Thariq, 2023; Sabrina *et al.*, 2021; Santuso *et al.*, 2023).

In this context, it is important to deconstruct how *Kompas.com* frames the attitudes of these religious figures in shaping public opinion regarding Al Zaytun. This is significant because *Kompas.com* is one of the largest and most influential mass media outlets in Indonesia. This is reinforced by a survey conducted by Ipang Wahid Stratejik (IPWS). The survey, conducted through online interview questionnaires from August 28th to September 4th, 2023, involved 1,400 respondents across 33 provinces in Indonesia. The results showed that *Kompas.com* ranked highest in media readability across eight categories, including being the most read media outlet by netizens on a daily basis (Mantalean & Meiliana, 2023).

To critically and thoroughly examine this matter, this article employs the critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach. CDA is an interdisciplinary approach that studies how texts or utterances reflect, maintain, or challenge power relations and ideology in society (Afzal *et al.*, 2021; Anwar *et al.*, 2024).

Using this approach, the study aims to uncover how *Kompas.com* frames the attitudes of religious figures through language choices, discursive practices, and the surrounding social context. This analysis not only seeks to identify the representations constructed by the media, but also to understand how mass media plays a role in producing and reproducing specific meanings related to sensitive issues such as the Al Zaytun controversy. Thus, this research contributes not only to the field of critical linguistic studies but also opens space to examine the dynamics of power relations, ideology, and religious authority in mainstream media discourse.

The problem formulation in this research consists of three things. First, this study examines the linguistic features employed by *Kompas.com* in representing the attitudes of religious figures regarding the Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School controversy. Second, it analyzes the discursive practices used by *Kompas.com* in constructing such representations. Third, it investigates the sociocultural practices embedded in *Kompas.com*'s portrayal of religious figures' attitudes toward the controversy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Unlike conventional discourse analysis, which focuses solely on the linguistic structure of texts or conversations, CDA situates language within a broader social context, encompassing historical, political, and sociocultural dimensions. The main strength of CDA lies in its ability to uncover hidden dimensions of discourse, such as ideological bias, linguistic manipulation, and mechanisms of domination that are not always explicitly visible in the text. In other words, CDA does not only examine "what is said," but also "why it is said that way" and "who benefits or is disadvantaged" by the discourse.

One of the most influential models in CDA was proposed by Norman Fairclough, who introduced the three-dimensional framework of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992, 1996, 2010). Fairclough offers three dimensions of analysis. First, the text dimension, which involves analyzing the structure of the text or the language used by the media. In this dimension, researchers highlight how linguistic elements are used to frame a certain reality or ideological position. In this study, textual analysis focuses on four aspects: vocabulary, modality, metaphor, and active-passive sentence construction. Second, the discursive practice dimension, which examines how texts are produced and consumed. This includes questions such as: who produces the text, in what context, and how it is interpreted by readers or listeners. Third, the social practice dimension, which explores the broader social and institutional context, including power relations, ideology, and social structures that influence and are influenced by discourse.

These three dimensions are interconnected and serve as the foundation for understanding how language operates within the framework of power. This approach helps to deconstruct the power relations and ideologies hidden behind the way the media produces news content (Billah & Sukmono, 2022; Denilza & Muzakir, 2025; Rosadha *et al.*, 2025). In this regard, the present study aims to uncover the discourse behind *Kompas.com*'s news production concerning religious figures' attitudes toward the Al Zaytun controversy.

2.2. Language and Power

Language is not merely a tool for communication, but also a primary means of shaping, maintaining, and challenging power (Fakhrurrozi *et al.*, 2025; Laksana *et al.*, 2025; Lasmidewi *et al.*, 2025). In critical studies, language is understood as a non-neutral medium, as choices in vocabulary, sentence structure, and rhetorical strategies can reflect particular ideologies and support the interests of dominant groups. Every use of language carries social and political dimensions that enable power relations to be formed between speakers and listeners, as well as between the media and the public.

The relationship between language and power is clearly evident in mass media practices. The media plays a crucial role in framing

social, political, and religious issues (Alfriandi & Zuhriah, 2024; Gufran *et al.*, 2021; Suharto *et al.*, 2023). Media framing is often inseparable from specific institutional or ideological interests (Muthaqin *et al.*, 2021), making the representations presented to the public potentially hegemonic. In this context, critical discourse analysis is employed as a tool to uncover how media texts construct reality, and how language is used to reinforce or challenge existing power structures.

By understanding the close relationship between language and power, the analysis of media texts becomes essential in revealing patterns of domination and resistance in the representation of certain issues. In the case of the Al Zaytun controversy, for example, it is important to examine how media outlets like *Kompas.com* frame the attitudes of religious figures and to what extent this framing reflects the power relations among religious authorities, the state, and the media. This approach enables readers not only to comprehend the content of the text but also to uncover the ideological processes behind the production of such media discourses.

2.3. Previous Relevant Studies
Previous studies related to this research have been conducted by several parties as follows. First, Santuso *et al.* (2024) examined how *Kompas.com* represented the attitudes of central government officials in responding to the controversy surrounding the Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School. The study found that *Kompas.com* portrayed central government officials as indecisive, uncertain, hesitant, and slow in responding to the Al Zaytun case, but firm in defending the institution's existence. In the discursive practice dimension, it was found that *Kompas. com* intended to shape public opinion that Al Zaytun should not be dissolved.

Second, Ervania *et al.* (2022) analyzed the representation of religious life in the short story Mbah Sidiq by A. Mustofa Bisri. The findings show that the story represents the author's critique of Javanese society's behavior in blending religious spiritual practices with ancestral traditions, which sometimes conflict with Islamic teachings.

Third, Hakiki *et al.* (2024) investigated the representation of power practices by Islamic boarding school figures in the film Qorin. The study revealed that the boarding school leader, Ustaz Jaelani, is portrayed as engaging in the abuse of religious-based authority, oppression and exploitation of women, distortion of education and morality, as well as mystical and manipulative practices.

Fourth, Hafidh (2023) examined the representation of millennial santri (Islamic boarding school students) in the discourse of digital literacy on the Instagram account @elmahrusy. The study found that millennial santri are represented as actively engaging in digital literacy on Instagram to shape their identity, counter negative perceptions, and promote Islamic values in a modern context.

Based on the review of previous studies above, it can be seen that these studies share a common focus on representation within religious contexts, analyzed using Norman Fairclough's model of CDA. However, the objects of these prior studies ranged from news articles, short stories, and films to social media content.

This current study shares similarities with Santuso *et al.* (2024), which also investigated news coverage surrounding the Al Zaytun controversy. However, this study specifically focuses on the representation of religious figures' attitudes, while the previous study focused on the attitudes of central government officials. Therefore, this research presents a novelty in terms of its object of study, religious figures as discourse actors, an aspect that has received limited attention in previous studies on Al Zaytun. Furthermore, this study offers a deeper analytical approach to the power relations and ideologies embedded in how the media constructs representations of religious figures, enriching the discourse within CDA.

The contribution of this study to the development of CDA lies in expanding the application of Fairclough's model to examine contemporary religious discourse in mass media, particularly within Indonesia's complex socio-political context. This research also contributes conceptually by highlighting how religious figures are represented in public discourse, and how their position and authority are negotiated through media language. As such, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a valuable reference for future research exploring the intersection of media, religion, and power.

3. METHODOLOGY
3.1. Research design and context
This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The model used is the three-dimensional framework developed by Fairclough (1992, 1996, 2010), which includes text analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. The research aims to uncover how the attitudes of religious figures toward the controversy surrounding the Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School are represented in online news reporting, particularly on *Kompas.com*. The study was conducted within the context of growing public debate over the existence and teachings of Al Zaytun, which has drawn attention from religious leaders, government authorities, and the wider society.

3.2 Participants
The object of this study consists of online news texts that present the responses of religious figures to the Al Zaytun controversy. These texts were sourced from *Kompas.com*, one of Indonesia's major mainstream media outlets, selected for its wide influence and credibility in shaping public opinion. The selection process employed purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) articles published between June 15th and August 31st, 2023, when the controversy was at its peak in public discourse; (2) containing direct quotations or explicit references to responses from Islamic religious figures; (3) providing sufficient contextual information to understand the stance of the religious figures; and (4) covering a range of perspectives to ensure variation in the reported responses. Nine news articles meeting these criteria were chosen as they represent the diversity of religious figures' positions while maintaining thematic coherence with the research focus.

While the sample is not intended to be statistically representative of all Indonesian media coverage, it captures the dominant narratives presented by a leading mainstream outlet during a

critical period of the controversy. A possible limitation is that the reliance on a single media source may reflect *Kompas.com*'s editorial stance, potentially narrowing the scope of perspectives compared to multi-platform coverage.

3.3. Data collection

The data in this study are linguistic data that reflect the attitudes of religious figures toward the Al Zaytun controversy. The data were collected by copying news texts from *Kompas.com* that met specific criteria, namely, those containing direct quotations or explicit references to responses from Islamic religious figures. Once collected, relevant segments of the texts were marked and organized using a coding system: the letter "N" refers to the news article and "P" to the paragraph, for example, N1P1 refers to the first paragraph of the first news article. This process was conducted to facilitate data analysis and tracking.

3.4. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis. First, in the textual dimension, the researcher examined linguistic features such as vocabulary, metaphor, sentence structure, and modality to uncover implicit ideological positions. Second, the discursive practice dimension focused on how the texts were produced and consumed, including the role of the media in shaping representations of religious figures. Third, the sociocultural practice dimension examined the situational, institutional, and social contexts that influence *Kompas.com*'s discursive practices.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Results

This study aims to describe and reveal how *Kompas.com* represents the attitudes of religious figures regarding the controversy surrounding Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School. The analysis is carried out through the three dimensions of Fairclough's CDA model: text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice.

Out of 240 *Kompas.com* news articles, nine news texts were selected that contain representations of religious figures' attitudes toward the Al Zaytun controversy. These attitudes are represented through the use of vocabulary, modality, metaphor, and sentence structures. The following section presents data that illustrate the attitudes of these religious figures.

Table 1. Data related to Representation of Religious Figures' Attitudes

Data Sequence Number	News Text Quotes	Code
1	*"Tidak terbantahkan, artinya penelitian MUI tahun 2002 itu sangat valid, dia (Al Zaytun) adalah penyimpangan dalam paham keagamaan," tutur dia.* ("Undeniably, it means the MUI's 2002 research is highly valid; it (Al Zaytun) constitutes a deviation in religious understanding," he said.)	N4P3
2	*Ketua Umum Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah Haedar Nashir meminta pemerintah menertibkan Pondok Pesantren (Ponpes) Al Zaytun yang dianggap menyimpang dari ajaran agama Islam.* (The General Chairman of Muhammadiyah Central Executive, Haedar Nashir, urged the government to take action against Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School (Ponpes), which is considered to deviate from Islamic teachings.)	N6P1
3	*Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) mendesak agar aparat penegak hukum bisa memproses dugaan tindak pidana yang dilakukan oleh pimpinan Al-Zaytun, Panji Gumilang.* (The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) urged law enforcement to process the alleged criminal acts committed by Al-Zaytun leader, Panji Gumilang.)	N3P1
4	*Haedar mempercayakan Menko Polhukam Mahfud MD bisa menyelesaikan masalah yang ditimbulkan Al Zaytun.* (Haedar entrusted Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs Mahfud MD to resolve the issues caused by Al Zaytun.)	N6P2
5	*Di sisi lain, ia meyakini pemerintah juga telah menyiapkan langkah-langkah antisipasi jika polemik harus diselesaikan.* (On the other hand, he believes the government has also prepared anticipatory steps should the controversy need to be resolved.)	N9P2
6	*Ketua Umum Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU) Yahya Cholil Staquf mengaku siap jika diminta menampung siswa atau para santri pondok pesantren Al Zaytun.* (Chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board (PBNU), Yahya Cholil Staquf, stated his readiness to accommodate students or santri from Al Zaytun Islamic boarding school if requested.)	N9P1

Data Sequence Number	News Text Quotes	Code
7	*Tim bentukan Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) Pusat mengaku telah mengirimkan surat kepada pimpinan Pondok Pesantren (Ponpes) Al Zaytun sejak bulan lalu.* (The team formed by the Central Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) claimed to have sent a letter to the leadership of Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School since last month.)	N1P1
8	*Sekretaris MUI Jabar, Rafani Achyar mengatakan, tim yang terdiri dari MUI Provinsi Jabar dan Kabupaten Indramayu itu juga telah mengumpulkan data mengenai Ponpes Al Zaytun.* (The Secretary of West Java MUI, Rafani Achyar, said the team, consisting of MUI members from West Java Province and Indramayu Regency, had also gathered data regarding Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School.)	N1P2
9	*Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII) sudah menyampaikan tentang sepak terjang NII yang meresahkan umat Islam kepada pemerintah sekitar 12 tahun silam.* (The Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Council (DDII) had informed the government about the activities of NII that have troubled muslims approximately 12 years ago.)	N7P3
10	*"Hasil penelitian MUI sudah jelas bahwa itu (Al Zaytun) terindikasi atau terafiliasi dengan gerakan NII. Sudah sangat jelas,"* ("The results of the MUI study clearly show that it (Al Zaytun) is indicated or affiliated with the NII movement. It's very clear,")	N4P3
11	*Ketua Tim Peneliti Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) Pusat Firdaus Syam mengatakan, penanganan konflik terkait pondok pesantren (Ponpes) Al Zaytun harus memperhatikan hak belajar para santri. Penyelamatan Al Zaytun dinilai perlu karena di tempat tersebut banyak orang yang menggantungkan mata pencaharian.* (Head of the Research Team at the Central Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Firdaus Syam, said that handling the conflict regarding Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School must consider the students' right to education. Saving Al Zaytun is deemed necessary because many people rely on it for their livelihood.)	N5P1
12	*"Maka pemerintah dan MUI sangat ideal dalam rangka membenahi kembali Al Zaytun agar tidak lagi terpapar sebagai bibit radikal yang menjadi bom waktu bagi negara nanti," ujar Ichsan.* ("Therefore, the government and MUI are very well-positioned to restructure Al Zaytun so that it is no longer exposed as a seed of radicalism that could become a ticking time bomb for the country in the future," said Ichsan.)	N4P3
13	*Ikshan mengatakan, Ponpes Al Zaytun juga perlu dilakukan reorientasi komitmen kebangsaan agar paparan nilai kebangsaan dari Negara Islam Indonesia atau paham yang salah bisa dibersihkan.* (Ikhsan stated that Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School also needs a reorientation of national commitment so that exposure to values from the Islamic State of Indonesia or other misguided ideologies can be cleansed.)	N8P2
14	*"Ada yang terkait dengan penyimpangan, ada yang terkait dengan persoalan akhlak, ada yang terkait dengan arogansi (juga) kriminal," ujar Utang saat dihubungi melalui telepon, Rabu (21/6/2023).* ("There are issues related to deviation, some related to morality, some to arrogance, and also to criminal acts," said Utang when contacted by phone on Wednesday (June 21st, 2023).)	N2P1
15	*Ikhsan juga menyebut MUI akan memberikan masukan terkait kurikulum yang dinilai memiliki permasalahan di Al Zaytun.* (Ikhsan also mentioned that MUI will provide input regarding the curriculum, which is considered to have issues at Al Zaytun.)	N8P2
16	*"Ya jangan dibubarkan, diganti pengurusnya, yayasannya dibekukan, diganti pengurus baru dan pola pembinaan dikembalikan," kata Ikhsan saat ditemui di Kantor MUI Pusat, Jalan Proklamasi Nomor 51, Jakarta Pusat.* ("No, it shouldn't be dissolved. The management should be replaced, the foundation frozen, new management appointed, and the mentoring system restored," said Ikhsan when met at the MUI Central Office, Jalan Proklamasi No. 51, Central Jakarta.)	N8P1

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. Textual Analysis

The first dimension is textual analysis. Textual analysis includes linguistic aspects, intertextuality, and assumptions. The texts analyzed cover the use of vocabulary, modality, metaphor, and sentence structures. The following is a detailed explanation.

The first form of representation of religious figures' attitudes appears through the use of vocabulary. Vocabulary is a collection of words used in a language to convey messages or ideas (Zheng, 2024). The vocabulary used by *Kompas.com* to portray the attitudes of religious figures is reflected in the following data.

In data (1), the Deputy Secretary-General for Law and Human Rights of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Ichsan Abdullah, stated that the results of the MUI's 2002 study are considered highly valid. He firmly believed that the findings from that year support the conclusion that Al Zaytun deviates from Islamic teachings. Furthermore, in data (2), the General Chairman of the Central Board of Muhammadiyah, Haedar Nashir, also considered Al Zaytun to deviate from Islamic teachings. Therefore, he urged the government to take action to regulate the boarding school so that its teachings would no longer deviate from Islam. Through these two data points, *Kompas.com* represents religious figures with a firm and clear stance, explicitly stating that the teachings at Al Zaytun deviate from Islamic doctrine.

In data (3), *Kompas.com* uses the word mendesak (urged), which means "to compel immediate action, fulfillment, or resolution due to an emergency, urgency, etc." This word illustrates a firm command from MUI to law enforcement, namely the police, to seriously address the criminal acts committed by Panji Gumilang. Through the use of this word, *Kompas.com* represents religious figures with a firm attitude by demanding that law enforcement immediately resolve the criminal case involving Panji Gumilang.

In addition to firmness, *Kompas.com* also represents religious figures as having trust and respect for the government's decisions. This can be seen in data (4—5), where Muhammadiyah figure Haedar Nashir and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) leader Yahya Cholil Staquf state that they believe the government is capable of resolving the issues at Al Zaytun. Moreover, *Kompas.com* also represents religious figures, particularly from NU, as open and tolerant toward Al Zaytun students, as shown in data (6). Despite the problems facing Al Zaytun, NU is willing to accommodate its students by placing them in Islamic boarding schools managed by the organization.

The second form is shown through modality. Modality reflects the speaker's attitude toward the degree of certainty or truth of a piece of information (Киливник & Гикава, 2024). Its functions include expressing expectations, requests, possibilities, obligations, and evaluations of actions or events. Therefore, modality plays a crucial role in conveying subjective attitudes in language. In Indonesian, modality is divided into four types: intentional, epistemic, deontic, and dynamic (Chaer, 2014).

Kompas.com employs two types of modality: epistemic and deontic. Epistemic modality relates to levels of certainty or possibility, while deontic modality involves commands, prohibitions, or permissions. Examples can be seen in the following data.

Epistemic modality is found in data (7—10), using the words telah and sudah (both meaning "have/had" or "already"). These synonymous words are used to indicate that an action has been completed. In data (7), the Central Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) formed a team that to have sent a letter to the figureship of Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School the previous month. The letter was sent even before the Al Zaytun controversy went viral on social media. Then, in data (8), the Secretary of West Java MUI, Rafani Achyar, stated that his team had gathered data regarding Al Zaytun. This shows that MUI had taken steps to collect as much information as possible about Al Zaytun before taking further action regarding allegations of heretical teachings. In data (9), the activities of the Indonesian Islamic State (NII) at Al Zaytun, which had caused public unrest, had been reported to the government by the DDII twelve years ago. Based on the use of epistemic modality, it can be seen that *Kompas.com* represents religious figures as responsive and quick to act in addressing the Al Zaytun controversy.

Furthermore, in data (10), it is mentioned that research findings indicating that Al Zaytun was affiliated with the Indonesian Islamic State (NII) had been conveyed by the MUI in 2002. These findings are described as being very clear or indisputable. Thus, through this modality, *Kompas.com* represents religious figures as confident and unwavering in their belief that Al Zaytun's teachings deviate from Islamic principles.

Next, data (11) contains deontic modality, showing a sense of obligation marked by the use of the words harus (must) and perlu (necessary). In this data, it is reported that resolving the issues surrounding Al Zaytun must take into account the students' right to education. This indicates that even though Al Zaytun is under police investigation, students' rights to continue their education there must be protected. Similarly, the news states that Al Zaytun must be saved. The urgency to save Al Zaytun, according to the MUI, is to ensure that people who work there can continue to earn a living. Therefore, *Kompas.com* represents the MUI as taking a firm stance on the issues at Al Zaytun while also showing concern for the students' rights and the livelihood of those working at the institution.

The third form is evident through the use of metaphors. A metaphor is a direct comparison between two different things or a substitution of meaning using symbols that share similarities (Hia, 2023). In *Kompas.com* texts, metaphors are used to represent the attitudes of religious figures and can be seen in the following data.

In data (12), the phrases bibit radikal (seed of radicalism) and bom waktu (time bomb) are used. Literally, the phrase bibit radikal means "a seed or initial plant that possesses radical traits or characteristics". Metaphorically, this phrase refers to something that serves as the early element in the growth of an ideology, belief, or behavior considered radicalism or threatening. Through this metaphor, the teachings of Al Zaytun are depicted as seeds that may grow into a large tree, potentially becoming dangerous if not properly managed or addressed.

Next, the phrase bom waktu literally refers to "an object that can explode and cause damage or danger at a certain time".

Metaphorically, the phrase in this text portrays Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School as an entity that may not currently pose an immediate threat or danger, but has the potential to become a serious problem in the future if not addressed seriously. In this case, the "time bomb" metaphor creates an analogy of a hidden or not yet fully revealed danger. If not handled carefully, this potential may develop into a significant threat.

In data (13), the word dibersihkan (cleaned) is used. Literally, it means "an effort done through washing, sweeping, scrubbing, etc., to remove dirt". Metaphorically, the word refers to "an effort to remove the influence of values deemed controversial or incompatible with national commitment". In this context, cleaned reflects an attempt to restore Al Zaytun to a path aligned with national values and to prevent the influence of deviant ideologies. This may include changes in curriculum, religious leader guidance, and a reorientation of national commitment within the institution.

Based on the above data, it can be understood that *Kompas.com* represents religious figures as candid, firm, and courageous by portraying Al Zaytun as an institution that poses a danger if not immediately addressed and as one that has been contaminated with negative teachings, therefore requiring urgent intervention.

The fourth form is evident in sentence construction. A sentence is a linguistic unit that has a subject and a predicate structure and functions to convey an idea or message (Hidayah *et al.*, 2024). In written form, a sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with punctuation. In its reporting, *Kompas.com* tends to use active sentences to display the attitudes of religious figures; only one data point was found to use a passive sentence, as shown in the following examples.

In data (14), the Head of the Research, Study, and Development Division of MUI, Utang Ranuwijaya, provided information regarding MUI's initial findings related to Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School. Utang stated that these findings involved several aspects, namely deviation, moral issues, arrogance, and even criminality within the school. Through this sentence, religious figures are represented as objective and serious in addressing the Al Zaytun issue.

In data (15), MUI formed a religious guidance team in response to the Al Zaytun controversy. This step shows that MUI not only focused on legal aspects but also sought to provide a religious recovery and mentoring approach. The establishment of this guidance team reflects MUI's intention to preserve the integrity and quality of religious education at Al Zaytun. Thus, MUI's attitude in this context is proactive and seeks a holistic solution that involves both legal and religious aspects in responding to the controversy surrounding the school.

Data (16) represents the use of a passive sentence. In this case, MUI conveyed its views and recommendations to the government regarding the handling of Al Zaytun. MUI stated that Al Zaytun should not be dissolved, but rather only required changes in its figureship and the management of its foundation. These recommendations aim to ensure that Al Zaytun does not deviate from Islamic teachings and does not remain a source of controversy. Moreover, MUI also suggested that the pattern of school mentoring should return to being overseen by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and MUI. This indicates MUI's

solution-oriented stance in addressing the Al Zaytun issue.

Based on the textual analysis compared with the study by Santuso *et al.* (2024), it is evident that *Kompas.com* represents the attitudes of central government officials and religious figures differently in responding to the Al Zaytun case. Central government officials are portrayed as cautious, slow, indecisive, and tending to be subjective, yet firm in protecting Al Zaytun's existence due to their assessment that the school plays a positive role in producing quality students. Meanwhile, religious figures are represented as more proactive, firm, objective, and responsive, and they support the continuity of Al Zaytun for humanitarian reasons, namely to ensure that the school's workers do not lose their livelihoods.

However, these findings should be interpreted with caution. As the data are drawn exclusively from *Kompas.com*, the representations identified may reflect the outlet's editorial stance, which is known for its moderate tone and tendency to align with central government narratives. This could influence how religious figures' statements are selected, framed, and emphasized. Alternative interpretations are possible if coverage from other media with different ideological orientations, such as religious-based or more oppositional outlets, were included. Such sources might portray religious figures in ways that highlight conflict, opposition, or stronger calls for closure, which are less visible in *Kompas.com*'s reporting. Acknowledging this limitation is important, as it underscores that the current representation is not a definitive portrayal of all religious leaders' attitudes, but rather one mediated through the lens of a single, influential media organization.

4.2.2. Discourse Practice

The discourse practice dimension in Fairclough's CDA model refers to the interpretative stage, focusing on the production and consumption processes of texts within a broader social and institutional context. This analysis is crucial for understanding how discourse is formed and received by the public. In the context of this study, the analysis of discourse practice is used to examine how the media, in this case *Kompas.com*, frames its reporting on the attitudes of religious figures toward the controversy surrounding Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School.

To understand how the texts are created and presented, it is important to trace the background and editorial governance of *Kompas.com*. This media outlet is part of KG Media, a subsidiary of Kompas Gramedia, which has long been a prominent player in Indonesia's media industry. Kompas Gramedia was initially founded in 1963 with the publication of Intisari magazine by P.K. Ojong and Jakob Oetama. The Kompas daily newspaper later became one of the most influential national newspapers. With the advancement of information technology and the distribution challenges of print media, Kompas established Kompas Online in 1995, which later became known as *Kompas. com*, as a form of adaptation to the increasingly digital information consumption patterns of the public.

As an online media outlet, *Kompas.com* is known for prioritizing speed in news delivery, real-time information updates, and ease of access through various platforms. The site relies on advertising revenue and no longer has a print version. Based on a 2024 survey conducted by Ipang Wahid Stratejik

(IPWS), *Kompas.com* ranked highest in readability in 8 out of 11 categories, including being the most-read media outlet by internet audiences daily. This shows that the outlet holds an important position in shaping public opinion and influencing public perspectives on social and political issues, including in the case of Al Zaytun.

In the case of the Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School controversy, *Kompas.com* demonstrated a high intensity of coverage. During the period from June 15th to August 31st, 2023, the outlet produced more than 240 news articles related to the case. The majority of religious figures selected as sources came from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), including Anwar Abbas, Utang Ranuwijaya, Ichsan Abdullah, Firdaus Syam, Arif Fahrudin, and Rafani Achyar. In addition, *Kompas.com* also featured religious figures from outside MUI as sources, such as Yahya Cholil Staquf (Chairman of the Executive Board of Nahdlatul Ulama), Haedar Nashir (Chairman of Muhammadiyah Central Board), Syuhada Bahri (Chairman of the Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Council), and Ali Munhanif (Director of the Center for Islamic and Society Studies at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University).

Although these figures come from different institutions, the selection of sources was based on a shared discourse, namely a mutual rejection of the idea of dissolving Al Zaytun. The discourse promoted by *Kompas.com* through these sources leaned more toward advocating internal reform and figureship changes within Al Zaytun as the main solution. In contrast, other organizations called on the government to dissolve or shut down the boarding school, such as the Front Persaudaraan Islam (FPI) (Mohay, 2023). However, such organizations were not covered by mainstream media, including *Kompas.com.*

Based on the intensity of reporting, source selection and the direction of conveyed opinions, it can be interpreted that through its discourse practice, *Kompas.com* constructed a representation suggesting that Al Zaytun does not need to be disbanded. The outlet highlighted a moderate and compromise-driven approach, endorsed not only by central government officials but also by religious figures. Therefore, it can be concluded that *Kompas.com* played an active role in framing a narrative that emphasized institutional reform at Al Zaytun rather than its dissolution. Even though, in reality, numerous violations had been committed, both by the institution's figureship and the school itself (Santuso *et al.*, 2024).

4.2.3. Sociocultural Practice

The third dimension in Fairclough's CDA model is the analysis of sociocultural practice. This dimension constitutes the explanation stage. Sociocultural practice may not directly relate to text production but influences how texts are produced and understood. Analysis at this level is based on contexts external to the media but which influence the discourse that appears within the media. These contexts are divided into three types: situational, institutional, and social contexts.

Situational context relates to the particular conditions or events that form the background for a text's production. Texts appearing in the media are typically closely tied to current situations occurring in society. In this case, *Kompas.com*'s coverage of the Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School was influenced by a viral controversy that attracted widespread public attention, particularly because it involved religious practices that differed from the Shafi'i school of thought, which is followed by the majority of Indonesian muslims.

One major controversy was the performance of the Eid al-Fitr 1444 H prayer, which was documented by Al Zaytun and showed prayer rows that were spaced out and mixed between male and female congregants. This practice was viewed as inconsistent with the congregational prayer guidelines of the Shafi'i school. Additionally, a series of statements and actions by Panji Gumilang and the Al Zaytun figureship further fueled the polemic, such as their expressed desire to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, the use of Jewish greetings, controversial statements about the Qur'an, and plans to establish a church within the school grounds. Therefore, media coverage of Al Zaytun was strongly influenced by the dominant religious norms in Indonesian society.

The institutional context relates to the influence of institutions in discourse production practices, both from within the media and from external forces that affect news content. The most dominant internal media institutional factor is the economic aspect, such as dependence on advertising, target readership, competition among media outlets, and media ownership (Eriyanto, 2006). In this regard, mass media often construct news based on such institutional considerations in order to remain financially viable and competitive.

Kompas.com, as an online media outlet, relies heavily on advertising revenue. In fact, according to Heru & Asep, as much as 82% of *Kompas.com*'s income comes from advertising (Maulana & Prasetijowati, 2022). For this reason, *Kompas.com* massively reported on the controversy surrounding Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School. In the 2.5 month period from June 15th to August 31st, 2023, the outlet published more than 240 news articles containing the keyword "Polemik Ponpes Al Zaytun." The high volume of coverage indicates that the Al Zaytun issue was utilized as a clickbait strategy to attract readers and increase website traffic.

In its reporting, *Kompas.com* appeared to select sources from among religious figures who criticized the religious practices at Al Zaytun. The choice of these sources is significant, as it can influence the way the public interprets the controversy. Institutionally, *Kompas.com* does not explicitly affiliate itself with any political party or specific religion, but in certain cases, the media has shown a tendency to support government narratives (Santuso *et al.*, 2024). In the context of Al Zaytun coverage, *Kompas.com* quoted statements from religious figures who expressed disagreement with the allegedly deviant practices, but did not advocate for the radical step of dissolving Al Zaytun. It seems that *Kompas.com* took a cautious stance and tended to follow the dominant current, including by avoiding narratives that could potentially conflict with the interests of the regime.

News content is strongly influenced by the surrounding social context, including the political, economic, and cultural systems of society. In the case of the Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School, the assertive stance taken by religious figures in response to the controversy must be viewed through the lens of history and the individual behind the establishment of the school.

Historically, Al Zaytun was established under the Yayasan Pesantren Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Boarding School Foundation) and founded by Panji Gumilang. The school was once considered the largest in Southeast Asia. However, since the early 2000s, suspicions have arisen that the school deviated from Islamic teachings and was affiliated with the Indonesian Islamic State (NII) movement. Allegations of religious deviation by Al Zaytun were actually raised by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) based on its research conducted in 2002. Statements from Mustofa Nahrawardaya and former National Police Chief, Da'i Bachtiar also reinforced these allegations.

The assertiveness of religious figures toward Al Zaytun is based on two main reasons. First, their loyalty to Islamic teachings and their responsibility to the muslim community compelled them to take a firm stance. Their goal is to protect the community from the potential misguidance taught by Al Zaytun. Taking decisive action against the Al Zaytun controversy is a critical step in maintaining the integrity of Islamic belief and trust within the muslim community. This stance is further supported by fatwas issued by religious figures prohibiting certain activities in Islam, aimed at preventing muslims from committing sin and immoral acts. For example, MUI in Fatwa No. 3 of 2017 and Muhammadiyah in Suara Muhammadiyah magazine No. 23 of 2003 declared the celebration of Valentine's Day to be haram. This is because, in practice, the celebration is widely associated with relationships outside of marriage, thereby becoming a moment of sinful and immoral behavior. In addition, MUI has issued deviance fatwas against several groups considered to have deviated from Islamic teachings, such as Islam Jama'ah, Ahmadiyah, Lia Aminuddin (Lia Eden), and the Gerakan Fajar Nusantara (Purwaramdhona, 2023). These efforts also aim to protect muslims from deviant or heretical teachings.

Second, some of these religious figures also have the motivation to win the sympathy of the parents of Al Zaytun students. This is evident in Data (6) mentioned earlier, in which the Chairman of PBNU, Yahya Cholil Staquf, stated his readiness to accommodate Al Zaytun students. By taking a firm stance on the controversy, they hope to gain the trust of students' parents and encourage them to enroll their children in school managed by those religious figures.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the text analysis conducted, this study reveals that *Kompas.com* represents the attitudes of religious figures in responding to the Al Zaytun Islamic Boarding School controversy as proactive, firm, objective, and responsive. It also supports the continued operation of Al Zaytun for humanitarian reasons, namely to prevent employees at the school from losing their livelihoods. This is notably different from the findings of previous research, where the attitudes of central government officials were represented by *Kompas.com* as slow, lenient, and subjective, and their support for Al Zaytun was justified by the school's perceived positive role in producing quality students. It is also evident that through its discursive practices, *Kompas.com* constructs a representation that Al Zaytun does not need to be disbanded. The media appears to emphasize a moderate and compromise-based approach, which aligns with the discourse put forth by central government officials. As for the

dimension of sociocultural practice analysis, there are three main findings: (a) in the situational context, coverage of Al Zaytun was triggered by controversial statements and events from the institution that contradicted the religious practices of the majority of Indonesian society; (b) *Kompas.com* produced a high volume of news about the Al Zaytun controversy to generate advertising revenue and to create discourse aligned with government narratives in order to maintain a safe position; and (c) the firm response of religious figures in addressing the Al Zaytun case was driven by their loyalty to Islamic teachings and their responsibility to protect the muslim community from potential misguidance taught by Al Zaytun, as well as the motivation of some religious figures to gain sympathy from the parents of Al Zaytun students.

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