

Narrative Policy Framework: Media's Role in 2024 Local Leaders Election Policy

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Abstract. *The research aims to analyze the strategic role of the media in shaping the narrative of the 2024 simultaneous regional head elections in Indonesia, focusing on how the media influences people's perceptions and political decisions. This research used a qualitative method, employing the Media Role Narrative approach by collecting and analyzing data from Kumparan, Detik, and Kompas media. NVivo 12 Plus was utilized to systematically manage and analyze qualitative data, allowing researchers to identify narrative patterns and themes from many news articles efficiently. Using the 'Crosstab Query' and 'Word Cloud' features of NVivo 12 Plus, the researchers could see that narratives related to specific candidates, such as corruption allegations against one of the regional head candidates, were often repeated in Kompas and Detik news articles. The results revealed that the media has a role in shaping election narratives, but previous literature demonstrates that its influence on election outcomes tends to be indirect and non-deterministic. This study provides new insights into the impact of media narratives in the context of local elections, revealing how narratives can be directed to strategically influence public opinion. It also offers a policy framework that can support the creation of fair and balanced narratives in the context of local democracy.*

Keywords: *narrative policy framework, media influence, local elections*

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INTRODUCTION

Simultaneous Regional Head Elections in 2024 will be important in Indonesian politics. In 2024, regional elections cover a large number of regions across provinces and regencies, creating a wave of change that not only affects local leadership but also carries significant consequences for national political dynamics (Nafiah & Hidayat, 2021). The simultaneous organization of elections is designed to improve the efficiency of election administration and reduce costs and has more profound implications (Rajagukguk et al., 2021).

These simultaneous elections are often seen as a barometer for future

political trends as well as an effective evaluation tool for the performance of political parties in the eyes of the public (Dinata & Akbar, 2022). The results of these simultaneous elections serve as a barometer of party-political strength at the regional level, allowing parties to adjust their political strategies before the national elections. This is important as it will enable political parties to understand and respond to voter preferences more effectively (Fionna & Hutchinson, 2019). As a result, these elections not only determine who will lead at the regional level but can also influence shifts in political power and policy priorities across the region (Misbahudholam et al.,

2023).

In the context of the relationship between local elections and national politics, the complexity and significance of these elections are increasing (Sulistiyanto, 2020). Regional heads have a crucial strategic role in implementing national policies at the local level. They are responsible for translating central policies into concrete actions that are relevant to local needs and contexts, which can affect how effectively the policies are implemented (Fionna & Hutchinson, 2019). In many cases, regional heads who are successful in this role can help advance the national agenda more effectively, while those who fail can hinder the achievement of national goals.

These elections are also an opportunity for the public to assess candidates' performance in addressing local issues and how well they align local policies with the aspirations and needs of the wider community. These judgments, in turn, will influence their success in maintaining or increasing political support in the future (Subekti et al., 2023). Local elections determine who will lead at the regional level and are an essential test of candidates' leadership and strategic capabilities in supporting or challenging national policies. This reflects the importance of local roles in the overall national political framework (Galuh Larasati et al., 2023).

In the context of regional head elections, the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) approach serves as a general framework for studying how policy actors use stories strategically to influence policy (Bertrand et al., 2024). Political narratives can be used to create, explain, and predict the role of narratives in politics and policy (Jones & McBeth, 2020). NPF enables in-depth analyses of how the media shapes public narratives about a policy (Syukri et al., 2023). Narratives can also provide critical

insights into how issues are framed in media and political campaigns (Mintrom & O'Connor, 2020).

The primary issue in this research is how the media influences regional head election policies through the built narratives. The media plays an essential role in influencing public opinion and the policy-making process through the narratives it constructs (Istiqoh et al., 2022; Plazova et al., 2024). While the media is often regarded as one of the key players in shaping public perceptions and influencing political decisions, there is a view that media influence is not always significant in determining political support (Smajlović & Čolakhodžić, 2023). Factors such as party loyalty, past performance, social networks, and direct interaction with candidates play a crucial role in voter decisions (Hughes, 2020). In addition, the increasing use of social media has limited the control of narratives by traditional media and enabled wider dissemination of information (Carr, 2020). It is access to multiple sources of information that allows voters to form more independent and critical opinions (Chaiyaphum et al., 2023).

The independence of local media plays a crucial role in holding local governments accountable and ensuring a healthy democratic process. A high dependency on the local government budget (APBD) can reduce the media's ability to perform its oversight function effectively, as media dependent on such funding sources are more likely to publish narratives that favor the government and highlight critical issues relevant to the community (Rianto et al., 2023). This, in the context of the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), exhibits how media funding structures can influence framing and narratives, which in turn shape public perceptions and political decisions. In this context, social media and official government websites are

also the main sources for citizens to obtain government-related information, potentially strengthening or weakening the narratives that local media have shaped.

The importance of utilizing communication channels through social media is also a factor that cannot be ignored in this context (Slamet & Yadi, 2023). Social media provides a platform for candidates to interact directly with voters, extend the reach of their campaign messages, and directly influence public perception (Liçenji, 2023). In addition, social media allows for faster and broader dissemination of narratives, allowing for multiple interpretations of the campaign messages delivered. In this context, social media not only influences public perception but also strengthens or weakens the narratives constructed by the national press.

To deeply understand the influence of media narratives on political perceptions and decisions during regional head elections, this study will answer several key questions using the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) theory. First, how do the media frame and construct narratives about critical issues and the character of regional head candidates in the context of elections? In this case, the research will explore how the media use specific narratives – such as story patterns, metaphors, and framing – to shape public perceptions of candidates and campaign issues. Secondly, to what extent do the narratives constructed by the media influence public perceptions of existing policies and policies proposed by candidates? By answering these questions, this research aims to uncover the complexity of the interaction between media narratives and political decisions, as well as evaluate in depth the extent of media influence in the context of the 2024 simultaneous regional head elections, focusing on the dynamics and impact of

narratives offered by the media.

The Policy Narrative Framework (NPF) is an approach used to analyze the role of narrative in the public policy process. One recent study by Jones and McBeth (2020) applied NPF to the policy context of President Donald Trump, known for using narratives to obscure the truth. Their research shows that NPF can be used to understand Trump's narrative tactics and how they can threaten democratic and scientific institutions (Jones & McBeth, 2020). Another study by Neto and Barcelos (2020) utilized NPF to explore the role of narrative in the affirmative policy process at the Federal University of Pelotas. Their findings demonstrated that policy narratives influence institutional regulatory outputs, indicating the importance of narratives in setting the policy agenda (Neto & Barcelos, 2020).

Further research by Kuhlmann and Blum (2021) examined policy narratives in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic. They found that policy narratives involving characters such as “heroes” and “villains” were used to communicate various regulative, distributive, and redistributive policies (Kuhlmann & Blum, 2021). Wolton et al. (2021) used automated text analysis to study policy narratives related to fracking in the United States. The results revealed that the use of characters and solutions in narratives varies depending on the framework used, demonstrating how narrative elements play a role in influencing public views on policy (L. P. Wolton et al., 2021).

A study by Williams and Kuzma (2022) examined how policy narratives were used in the GMO salmon debate in Canada. They found that groups with particular cultural views were likelier to use narratives that broadened or narrowed the issue according to their policy objectives. The study suggests that

narratives more aligned with hierarchical views are more likely to be adopted in the final policy document (Williams & Kuzma, 2022). Research by Aryal and Bharti (2022) shows how NPF can be used to analyze the changing media landscape in India under the Modi government, focusing on how narratives are used to change public perceptions (Aryal & Bharti, 2022).

In implementing simultaneous Regional Head Elections (Pilkada) in 2024 in Indonesia, the Policy Narrative Framework (NPF) can be used to analyze the narrative dynamics that emerge in political campaigns and discourses. Research by Istiqoh et al. (2022) on the Presidential Threshold shows how the media forms a public narrative that influences the perceptions of voters and policy actors regarding the implementation of the presidential threshold in general elections (Istiqoh et al., 2022). Similarly, the application of NPF in the 2024 elections can help reveal how political narratives constructed by various political actors, be it candidates, political parties, or the media, can influence election outcomes and public participation. This aligns with Wolton and Crow's (2022) research, which explains that the Policy Narrative Framework (NPF) can be applied to electoral politics (L. Wolton & Crow, 2022) In the 2024 elections, narratives centered on crucial issues such as transparency, candidate integrity, and responses to local issues will play an important role in shaping public opinion and voter decisions. Analyzing these narratives using NPF can provide deeper insights into effective political communication strategies and their impact on the democratic process in Indonesia.

This research provides significant benefits, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research contributes to developing the Narrative Policy

Framework (NPF) by applying it to the Indonesian political context, particularly in regional head elections. Practically relevant terms in this research include the use of media narratives, policy framing, and the involvement of political actors in shaping public opinion. From a practical perspective, this research offers valuable insights into how the media is used in political campaigns, which policymakers can directly utilize to formulate more effective communication strategies. This research is also helpful for media practitioners in designing narratives that suit local political dynamics. With a deeper understanding of the effects of media narratives, campaign practitioners and policymakers can create more responsive communication strategies and utilize the media to influence public opinion in a more precise and measurable way.

METHOD

This research used the qualitative research method to describe findings through online media. The method in this research was intended to describe the data obtained systematically, factually, and accurately about the facts in a news text by the media. Online media and previous research on the implementation of simultaneous regional head elections in 2024 were used as data sources in this research. The sample inclusion criteria included media that ranked highly in the Similarweb.com survey and actively covered issues related to the 2024 elections from 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024. The Ncapture feature on NVivo 12 plus, a web browser extension designed to capture web content in the form of website content, social media content, scientific content, and articles, was used to collect data. The sample exclusion criteria were media that did not consistently report local political news or did not have representative coverage

TABLE 1. Media Online

No.	Online Media Name	Website
1	Kumparan	https://www.kumparan.com/
2	Detik	https://www.detik.com/
3	Kompas	https://www.kompas.com/

within the specified period.

The NVivo 12 Plus analysis used the crosstab query analysis feature, allowing the researchers to see how much data was manually coded using NVivo 12 Plus. Furthermore, to see and collect data that often appears, the researchers used word cloud analysis to see words or concepts usually present in the research file. Here, the internet sources used to collect data can be seen.

In Table 1, the researchers analyzed three online media. The reason for choosing this online media as research reference material is because these three online media are included in Indonesia's top seven best online media based on a survey (Similarweb.com). Similarweb.com provides traffic information, metrics, and analysis that collects traffic data from direct sources. Web rankings are monitored for three months; rankings are calculated using a proprietary methodology that estimates the site's average daily unique visitors. Of the seven best online media, three discussed the implementation of the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Head Elections the most (1 January 2024 - 30 June 2024). The data analysis process began with data capture using the Capture feature found in NVivo 12 Plus. Furthermore, the researchers imported the data collected into NVivo 12 Plus and then coded the data. After the data were coded, they were displayed and analyzed in the form of Crosstab Query, Word Cloud, and other data the author could display in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Issue of Simultaneous Regional

Head Elections in 2024

In the policy analysis of the 2024 simultaneous regional elections, the theory of Public Policy Narratives (NPF) provides a valuable framework for understanding how narratives constructed by the media can influence public views (McBeth & Pearsall, 2021). Using NPF, it can be assessed that the narratives produced by various media do not merely report events but also play a crucial role in shaping perceptions, identifying problems, and proposing solutions (Witting & Dudley, 2019). Narratives may include topics such as candidate integrity, the effectiveness of local governance, and responsiveness to community needs in the context of local elections. These narratives, often reinforced by framing strategies, become crucial in influencing voter preferences and local political dynamics, ultimately shaping the outcome of the electoral process.

Furthermore, issues in the media related to the 2024 simultaneous regional head elections often highlight conflicts and polarisation arising from competing political interests. The press tends to emphasize controversial or sensational stories to attract public attention (Witting & Dudley, 2019). For example, corruption, nepotism, and populism often become the dominant narrative material. The media is not just a passive observer but a key player in shaping the policy narrative (Browning & Sweetser, 2020). This role demands ethical and professional responsibility in reporting accurate facts and analyses. By understanding the power of this narrative, electoral stakeholders can better understand how political opinions and decisions are shaped and

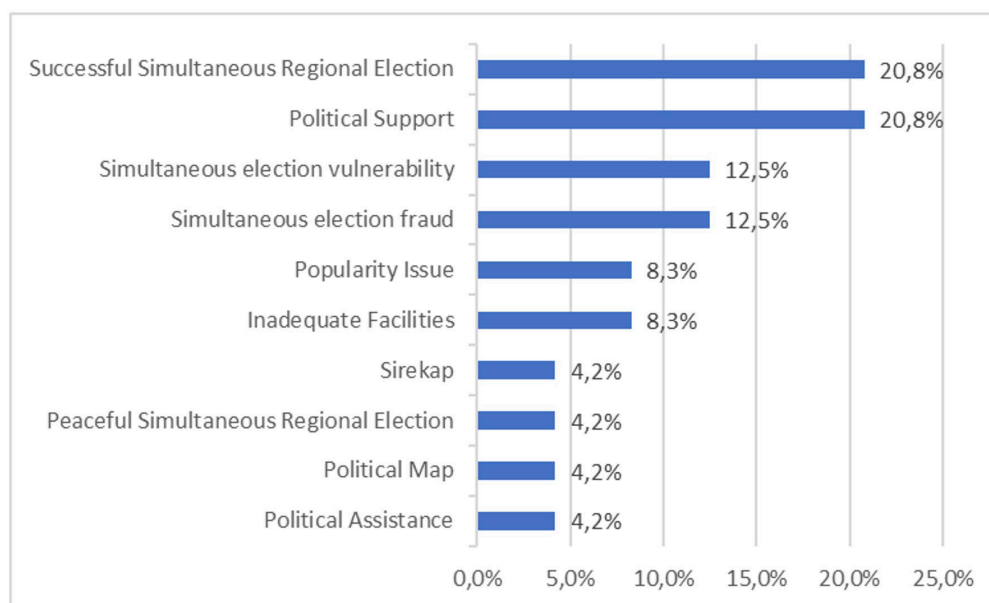


FIGURE 1. Issues in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections

seek strategies to overcome possible biases and manipulation of information.

Figure 1 illustrates the various issues related to the 2024 simultaneous regional elections, with “Successful Simultaneous Regional Elections,” “Political Support,” and “Simultaneous Regional Election Insecurity” dominating as the main issues, at 20.8% each. Other problems, such as “Simultaneous Pilkada Vulnerability” and “Simultaneous Pilkada Fraud,” are also prominent, at 12.5% each. In the context of Public Policy Narrative theory (NPF), narratives formed by the media can be prioritized based on strategic interests and responses to public concerns (Lysyckina, 2019). In this way, the media can identify the topics that are most relevant and important to their audience and frame the narrative to reflect those priorities (Snytko, 2020).

Analyzing the issue of Successful Pilkada 2024 using the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) highlights the importance of narrative in shaping public perception and participation in elections. In this context, the General Election Commission (KPU) plays a vital role as the ‘narrator’ who organizes the election stages, emphasizes the importance of inter-agency coordination, and ensures

the integrity of the election process. Using a narrative of cooperation between local government and legal authorities, NGOs, and civil society reflects a strategy to increase the legitimacy and transparency of elections. It also aims to reduce tensions and potential conflict, particularly in vulnerable areas such as Papua, by reinforcing messages about security and close supervision during elections.

In addition, the narrative of the importance of professionalism and political education promoted by the KPU and Bawaslu aims to influence public opinion and improve the quality of voter participation. Through the emphasis on voter education and transparency of the process, stakeholders sought to shape a narrative that emphasized the elections as an effective and fair democratic tool. This creates a ‘setting’ where voters are expected to feel more responsible and informed, reducing the potential for chaos and increasing trust in the electoral system. This approach illustrates how the narrative sought to inform, motivate, and inspire broader and more meaningful participation in Indonesia’s democratic context.

Using the Narrative Policy

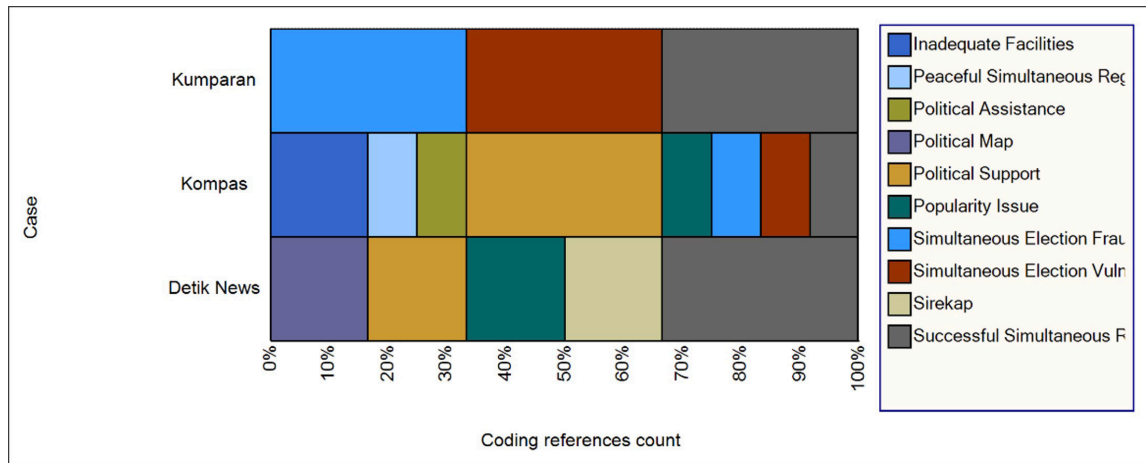


FIGURE 2. Issues in the 2024 simultaneous regional elections in various media

Framework (NPF) approach, analysis of the Simultaneous Regional Election Fraud issue reveals several negative narratives that reflect severe challenges in implementing regional elections. The narrative of the reduction in the term of office of regional heads due to the regulation of Law No. 10/2016 caused dissatisfaction in many regions, which felt disadvantaged by this decision. This created a negative perception of the central government and the KPU, which were perceived as unfair and not paying enough attention to local aspirations. Allegations of fraud in the last 2024 presidential election revealed by Tempo, including money politics and intimidation of academics, further deteriorated the image of the integrity of the electoral process, creating a narrative of public distrust of electoral justice.

Additionally, narratives about the technical problems and workload of the KPU and the incompatibility of voter data between national and regional elections illustrate structural and operational weaknesses that could hinder the smooth running of the 2024 simultaneous elections. The Election Vulnerability Index (IKP) released by Bawaslu exhibits a high potential for conflict in several provinces, adding to public concerns about the security and neutrality of election organizers. Bawaslu's call for

stakeholders to reduce fraud reflects a deep concern over money politics and hate speech that could undermine the democratic process. The narrative creates a picture of an election prone to fraud, manipulation, and injustice, fuelling distrust and potential conflict among the public.

In the context of the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), news about the 2024 regional head elections (Pilkada) and the potential vulnerabilities expressed by Bawaslu and the National Police Chief show a narrative that describes instability in the local democratic process. Rahmat Bagja from Bawaslu described the high potential for conflict and insecurity, reflecting a pessimistic narrative regarding the integrity of elections at the regional level. This uncertainty was compounded by reports of less-than-ideal monitoring and preparedness, as expressed by Lolly Suhenty, who highlighted shortcomings in voter list updating procedures. This narrative paints a bleak picture of a democratic process prone to abuse and negligence, giving room for skepticism about the effectiveness of electoral oversight and fairness.

Another narrative is that the security operation announced by the National Police Chief, General Listyo Sigit Prabowo, while aimed at maintaining stability, can be seen as

an indication that security forces must be deployed massively to preserve the integrity of the election. This indicates that the existing conditions are far from ideal, where elections that should embody the democratic expression of citizens instead become a potential arena for conflict and unrest. The emphasis on the “Cooling System” and the role of the police in maintaining stability during the 2024 elections reflects a narrative that highlights the vulnerability of local democracy to disruption and instability while underlining doubts about the ability of electoral institutions to perform their duties without extensive intervention from the security forces.

Figure 2 depicts the distribution of news focus related to the 2024 simultaneous regional elections issues from three significant media in Indonesia: Detik News, Kompas, and Kumparan. From the graph, it can be seen that Detik News tends to give more attention to the issues of “Political Support” and “Simultaneous Election Fraud.” At the same time, Kompas emphasizes “Popularity Issues” and “Simultaneous Election Vulnerability.” On the other hand, Kumparan seems to focus more on “Successful Simultaneous Regional Election” and “Inadequate Facilities.” This illustrates how each media has a different narrative and news emphasis, which can affect how the public receives and understands issues related to the elections.

Using the theoretical framework of Public Policy Narratives (NPF), this analysis shows that the media not only acts as a conveyor of information but also as a narrative shaper that actively influences public policy perceptions. The different narratives between Detik News, Kompas, and Kumparan display a diversification of approaches to communicating and framing political issues, which can shape voters’ base and orientation. For example,

Detik News’ highlighting of the problem of “Simultaneous Pilkada Rigging” may reflect and reinforce concerns about the integrity of the election. In contrast, Kumparan’s focus on “Sukseskan Pilkada Serentak” may try to create a narrative of optimism and active participation from the community. These narratives can potentially influence policy and political decisions taken by stakeholders, including voters, candidates, and regulators.

The media not only conveys information but also shapes and manipulates narratives that influence public focus and support specific policies, as seen in the issues of fraud, political support, and electoral success in the 2024 simultaneous regional elections. Analyses using Public Policy Narratives (NPF) theory demonstrate how political realities are constructed to fulfill specific agendas by various media outlets, emphasizing the importance of a critical attitude towards news sources. An in-depth understanding of the influence of media narratives is crucial to anticipate and effectively manage policy impacts.

From the analysis of various issues in the 2024 simultaneous regional elections using the theory of Public Policy Narratives (NPF), it can be understood that the media functions not only as a means of delivering information but also as an opinion shaper that has a significant influence on the political decision-making process. Various studies have shown that media bias in news coverage can effectively shape public political opinion and influence election outcomes through the selective presentation of information (Ullah et al., 2020). In addition, social media such as Facebook and YouTube have been shown to have a major impact on individual political decisions, especially among young voters, by being the main source of political information (Mariano et al., 2021). The attention given by the media to certain issues can trigger political

decision-making processes that result in changes in public policy, especially when the issue has become the focus of politicians' attention. On the other hand, media pressure has also been uncovered to influence resource allocation and decisions within public bureaucracies, with political action often triggered by a combination of media pressure and broad public support (Figenschou et al., 2019). The media, thus, plays a crucial role in shaping people's political knowledge and directing the political decision-making process (Mathews & Orlinski, 2022).

Research by Marbun and Girsang (2019), Noor, Hairunnisa, and Ghufroon (2019), and Febriani (2020) adds essential insights into the impact of media narratives. While social media activities are intense in building images and influencing public opinion, the studies show that their influence on election outcomes tends to be indirect and non-deterministic (Febriani, 2020; Marbun & Girsang, 2019; Noor et al., 2019). Media, especially in the context of voter education and political participation, can raise political awareness that affects the long-term quality of democracy. Wenas

and Stefany (2023) also found a positive correlation between the use of hashtag features on social media and changes in voter behaviour (Wenas & Stefany, 2023). While the influence is not always direct, the use of hashtags can significantly steer political perceptions and decisions. Therefore, a deep understanding of how voters process information and the factors that influence their decisions, such as beliefs and values, is crucial in crafting effective political communication strategies.

Frequency Analysis of Candidate References in the Media

In understanding the dynamics of public policy and its influence on public perceptions, examining how various regions and candidates for public office are discussed in the media is essential. The Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) approach allows this research to explore the evolving narratives and their distribution across different media platforms (Khotami et al., 2023). This analysis aims to identify the regions and political figures that dominate public discussions, uncovering the factors that

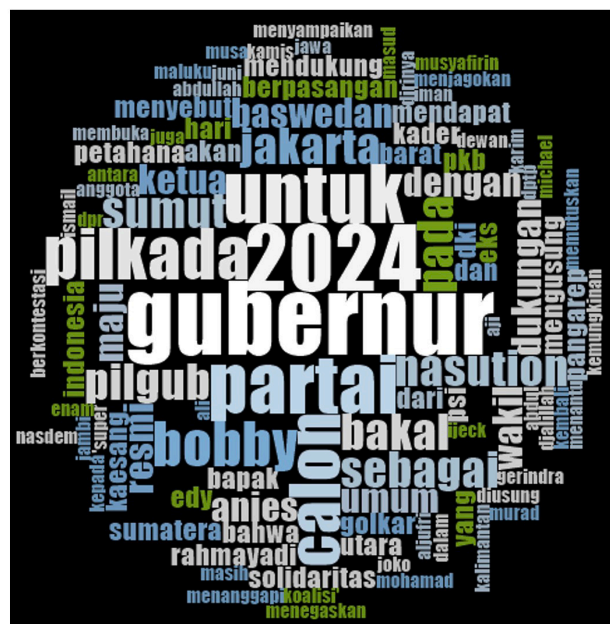


FIGURE 3. World Cloud references candidates in the media

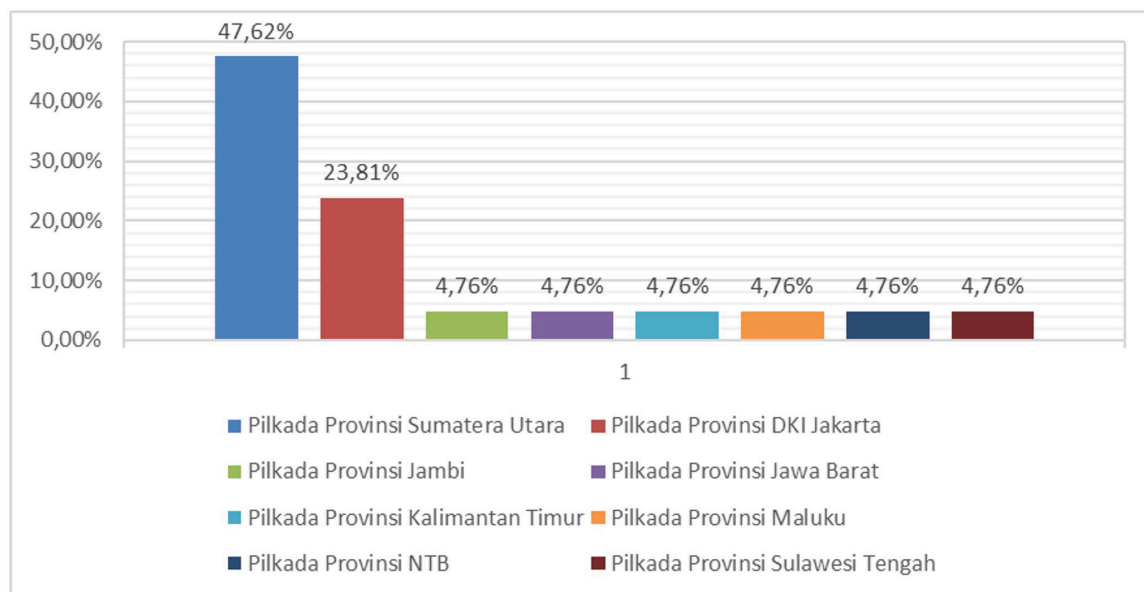


FIGURE 4. Election Location References in the Media

contribute to their visibility. The research shows that media narratives often frame political figures as heroes, villains, or victims, which affects public perception and their visibility (Istiqoh et al., 2022).

The use of textual analysis in public policy research can often provide rich insights into the most resonant issues in society. The use of NVivo to create word clouds has proven effective in analyzing extensive text data and helping to identify key themes in media narratives (Subekti, 2022). This technique facilitates the rapid and intuitive identification of key themes emerging from large text data, allowing researchers to assess the focus and intensity of public attention to various policy issues. This word cloud analysis will support a broader understanding of the content and structure of narratives in the policy-making process.

The word cloud shown (Figure 3) depicts the words that appear most frequently in the context of discussions about gubernatorial and regional head elections in Indonesia for 2024. Words such as “governor,” “Jakarta,” “2024,” and the names of potential gubernatorial candidates, such as “Anies,” “Bobby,” and “Ridwan Kamil,” stand out, suggesting

that they are central figures in public and media discussions related to the upcoming elections. These visualisations reveal the public and media focus on specific figures and locations, providing insights into intense political competition and early speculation about candidates and their strategies. The word cloud is effective in illustrating how often a topic or name is talked about, indicating the importance of the issue or individual in the emerging election narrative.

Following that, Figure 4 illustrates the percentage of news frequency related to regional elections in various provinces in Indonesia, highlighting North Sumatra and DKI Jakarta as the main focus of media coverage. North Sumatra dominates with a percentage of 47.62%, while DKI Jakarta follows with 23.81%. Other provinces, such as Jambi, West Java, East Kalimantan, Maluku, NTB, and Central Sulawesi, have a share of around 4.76% each, showing significantly lower coverage than the top two provinces.

In the context of the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), this data can be analyzed to understand how narratives circulating in the media can influence public perceptions and policy dynamics

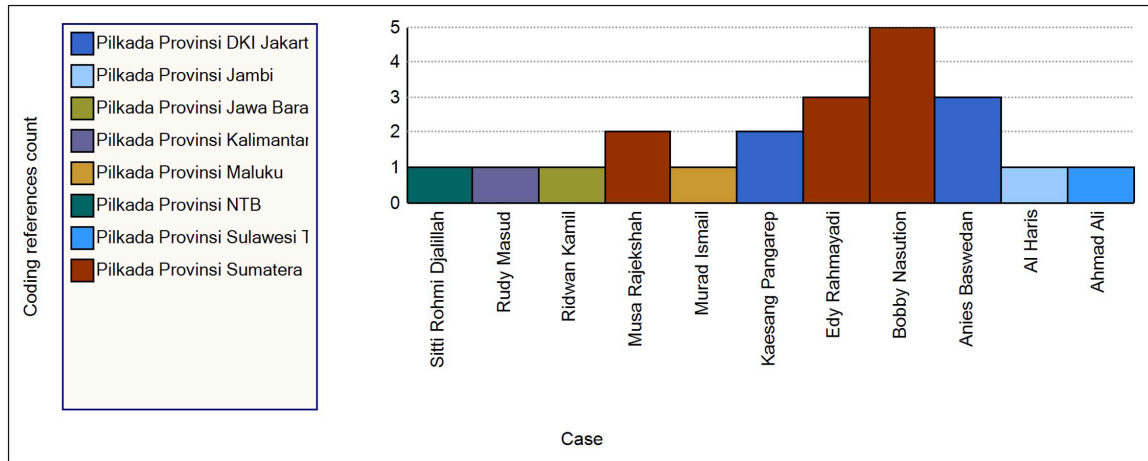


FIGURE 5. Gubernatorial Candidates in the Media and Candidacy Locations

in various regions. NPF recognizes that narratives in public policy play an important role in shaping public understanding of political and policy issues (Khotami et al., 2023) and in mobilizing support or opposition to specific policies (Istiqoh et al., 2022). The intense focus on North Sumatra and DKI Jakarta may reflect crucial ongoing strategic issues or ongoing policy conflicts, influencing the level of public engagement and policy response. Conversely, lower coverage in other provinces could indicate a lack of controversy or significant policy initiatives in the eyes of the public and media. This demonstrates the importance of narrative analysis in determining how the public and policymakers prioritize and respond to policy issues.

Figure 5 illustrates the frequency of references to various gubernatorial candidates in the media for several provinces in Indonesia, using the coding method in NVivo. This diagram shows that some names, such as “Bobby Nasution,” “Anies Baswedan,” and “Ahmad Ali,” receive significant media attention, especially in the provinces of DKI Jakarta, Sumatra, and Central Sulawesi, as seen from the high number of references. Meanwhile, “Siti Rohmi Djalilah” and “Ridwan Kamil” receive more moderate attention.

In the context of the Narrative

Policy Framework (NPF), this diagram offers valuable insight into how narratives relating to these political figures are realized and disseminated through the media. The NPF assumes that the media plays a crucial role in shaping the prevailing narrative in society by focusing attention on some figures and ignoring others, which can influence public opinion and election outcomes. The high frequency of references to specific candidates, such as Bobby Nasution and Anies Baswedan, may reflect a narrative strategy constructed by certain interest groups to promote their agenda or build the candidate’s image. This observation indicates the importance of further analyzing the narrative content associated with each candidate to understand the strategy and its impact on policy and electoral dynamics in Indonesia.

This analysis reveals the critical role of the media in shaping public narratives around gubernatorial elections in various provinces in Indonesia, which has been illustrated through two bar charts depicting the frequency of news coverage and references to gubernatorial candidates. From the analysis using the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) approach, how the media serves not only as a channel of information but also as an arena of narrative struggle that influences public perception and potential election

outcomes can be seen.

The high frequency of references to specific figures in the media reflects a narrative strategy that may be influenced by specific political or economic interests, aiming to promote or hinder the political visibility of these individuals. This suggests that molded narratives significantly shape political agendas and voter decisions. Therefore, stakeholders and policymakers need to understand and, if necessary, intervene in these narratives to ensure fair and transparent representation in the democratic process.

In the future, further studies could be conducted to analyse the long-term impact of these narratives on public policy and electoral participation. This would also allow for a deeper exploration of how interest groups use the media to influence public opinion, providing deeper insights into the power dynamics in local and national politics in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study uses the Narrative Policy Framework to explore the critical role of news channels in shaping narratives and public perceptions towards the 2024 simultaneous regional head elections in Indonesia. The results uncovered that through diverse narratives, news channels play an active role in influencing people's political opinions and decisions. However, previous literature has shown that their influence on election outcomes tends to be indirect and non-deterministic. However, news channels in the context of voter education and political participation raise political awareness that affects the quality of democracy in the long term. This confirms that the unique role of news channels is not simply that of information conveyors but as opinion formers that substantially impact the political decision-making process.

While media influence may not always directly affect election outcomes,

the ability of news channels to shape political narratives can steer public discussion and influence perceptions of candidates and key issues. This suggests that news channels significantly influence the political agenda and affect power dynamics in society, often in complex and multidimensional ways. From an applicative standpoint, these findings provide important insights for policymakers and media practitioners to design more ethical and effective communication strategies in a dynamic political context. Given the power of news channels in shaping public opinion, there is an urgent need for a more critical and transparent approach to reporting political issues. This study also urges further research to evaluate the long-term impact of media narratives on public policy and electoral participation to strengthen the role of news channels in strengthening democracy and enhancing electoral integrity in Indonesia.

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