



## Representation of Military Barack Policy for Problem-Ful Students in Online Media Reporting

Finessa Salsabila<sup>1</sup>, Untung Yuwono<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Universitas Indonesia

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#### Corresponding Author:

Finessa Salsabila  
[finessasalsabila@gmail.com](mailto:finessasalsabila@gmail.com)  
Universitas Indonesia

### Abstract

*This study aims to examine how Indonesian online media represent the military camp policy for problematic students initiated by Dedi Mulyadi. The research employs a qualitative approach using Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis model combined with intratextuality and appraisal theory. The data consist of five online news articles published by Metrotvnews, Okezone, Tempo, Tribunnews, and Viva.co.id between May 8-9, 2025. The analysis covers three levels of discourse structure: macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure. The findings reveal that four of the five media outlets frame the military camp policy positively by emphasizing character building, legality, and human resource development, while Tribunnews presents a more critical stance by highlighting possible human rights issues and the decline of democratic values. The analysis also shows that media attitudes are represented through cohesive text structures and evaluative language that reinforce either support or opposition to the policy. These findings indicate that the media actively shape public perspectives on educational policy through strategies of representation, attitude, and framing in their news discourse.*

## **1. Introduction**

Educational issues in Indonesia have once again come under public scrutiny following the emergence of a military barracks policy proposed by Dedi Mulyadi as a solution to discipline problematic students in West Java. The policy quickly gained widespread attention and sparked public controversy. On the one hand, some parties argue that a military-style approach can instill discipline and foster a sense of nationalism (Tempo, May 20, 2025). On the other hand, critics contend that the policy is excessive, as it risks normalizing violence in education and neglecting children's rights (Kompas, April 30, 2025). Furthermore, the policy may lead to psychological trauma among participating students (FIA UI, May 17, 2025).

This debate becomes more significant within Indonesia's broader socio-political context, where militaristic discourse has increasingly permeated civilian life, raising concerns about the blurring boundaries between military and civilian domains. In this context, the policy reflects a tension between disciplinary approaches and the principles of humane, child-centered education.

Mass media play a central role as a primary channel for information dissemination and public opinion formation (Rahmalia & Hamdani, 2025; Zainuddin et al., 2021). Rather than merely reporting events, media actively construct social representations that shape how reality is interpreted. Through the selection of perspectives, narrative structures, and lexical choices, militaristic education policies can be framed as a solution, a threat, or even a paradox. Such framing is inherently ideological, as linguistic constructions reflect interests and positions (Khasanah & Faris, 2018).

Consequently, media function as an arena of discursive contestation, a role that becomes even more significant in the digital era where online platforms increasingly shape public perception. According to the Digital News Report 2025 by the Reuters Institute, digital platforms and online news portals have become the primary sources of information for Indonesian society (Reuters Institute, 2025). Therefore, examining how media discourse represents the military barracks policy is essential for understanding how public opinion is shaped.

To analyze how such representations are constructed, this study draws on discourse as a semiotic practice through which social reality is produced and negotiated (Surya R et al., 2023). Language functions as both a communicative tool and a mechanism through which power relations and ideological positions are expressed (Melinda et al., 2021; van Dijk, 2015). In media contexts, discourse shapes public perception by embedding particular values and interpretations within texts (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Fairclough, 1995).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly van Dijk's model, provides a framework for examining how such meanings are constructed through discourse structures. This model distinguishes three levels of analysis, namely macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure, which enable the identification of thematic emphasis, textual organization, and lexical choices in

media texts (van Dijk, 1980, as cited in Renkema & Schubert, 2018). Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach in revealing ideological positioning across various contexts, including representations of mental health, political debates, and gender discourse (Agustiyani & Kuntoro, 2024; Prihartono & Suharyo, 2022; Debora, 2023). However, these studies largely rely on CDA as a single analytical framework, limiting their ability to capture evaluative meaning and internal textual relations.

To address this limitation, appraisal theory is incorporated to examine how evaluative language constructs media stance, particularly through the attitude subsystem consisting of affect, judgement, and appreciation (Martin & White, 2005). In addition, intratextuality is employed to analyze how different elements within a text interact to produce coherent meanings (Raj, 2015; Fairclough, 1995). Despite their relevance, the integration of CDA with appraisal and intratextuality remains limited in studies of media representation.

Several previous studies have examined the military barracks policy from different perspectives. Parhi (2025) and Fajariya et al. (2025) focus on educational policy and governance, while Maryam DM (2025) discusses its juridical implications. Although these studies provide important insights, they pay limited attention to how the policy is constructed in media discourse. A more closely related study by Sobarudin and Hamdani (2025) applies CDA to examine media representations by comparing CNN Indonesia and Kompas, showing contrasting ideological positions. However, the study is limited to two media sources and a single analytical framework, restricting its ability to capture the complexity of evaluative stance and textual relations across media.

To address this gap, the present study integrates van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis with intratextuality and appraisal theory to examine how discourse structures, evaluative language, and textual relations interact in shaping media representations of the military barracks policy across five Indonesian online news portals. This study aims to reveal how ideological positioning is constructed through the interplay between macrostructural themes, textual organization, and evaluative language, thereby offering a more fine-grained analysis of media discourse beyond single-framework CDA approaches.

## **2. Method**

### *Research Design*

This study employs a qualitative approach using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The analysis integrates van Dijk's model with intratextuality and appraisal theory to examine how media discourse constructs representations and ideological positioning in reporting the military barracks policy for problematic students.

### *Data Source*

The data consist of five online news articles published by *Tribunews*, *Okezone*, *Tempo*, *Metrotvnews*, and *Viva.co.id* on May 8–9, 2025. These media outlets were selected based on the Reuters Digital News Report 2025, which ranks news platforms according to their reach and public trust in Indonesia.

Initially, the top ten most accessed and trusted online news portals were identified based on this report. From these portals, articles related to the military barracks policy were collected. However, only five media outlets were found to report the same news event, namely the meeting between Dedi Mulyadi and the Minister of Human Rights, within the same timeframe. Therefore, the final dataset consists of five articles, each representing one media outlet.

The selection of articles was based on the criterion that all reports cover the same event within the same publication period. This approach enables a comparative analysis of how different media construct and frame the same issue. The timeframe of May 8–9, 2025 was chosen because the event was simultaneously reported across these media during this period, whereas coverage outside this timeframe was limited and inconsistent.

### *Data Collection*

The data were collected through online searches by directly accessing each media portal. Articles were selected based on topical relevance, publication date, and consistency of the reported event to ensure comparability across media sources.

### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis was conducted through several systematic stages. First, macrostructure analysis was performed by identifying the main themes of each news article using van Dijk's macro rules, namely deletion, generalization, and construction. These procedures were used to determine how each media outlet summarizes and emphasizes particular aspects of the event.

Second, superstructure analysis was conducted by examining the organization of the news texts, including headlines, leads, and body structure. This analysis was further integrated with intratextuality to identify how different parts of the text are interconnected in constructing a coherent narrative and framing the issue.

Third, microstructure analysis focused on lexical choices, particularly words and expressions related to the topic that indicate evaluative or ideological positioning. All relevant lexical items associated with the issue were identified and

analyzed.

To capture evaluative stance, appraisal theory was applied by categorizing linguistic elements into effect, judgement, and appreciation. The analysis was conducted through a coding process using analytical tables to systematically label and interpret evaluative expressions in each article.

In addition, intratextuality was used to examine the relationships between paragraphs within each news text to identify how meanings are constructed and reinforced throughout the discourse. The analysis was conducted both individually for each article and comparatively across media to reveal differences in framing and representation.

To ensure the rigor of the analysis, the study applies several validation strategies. Credibility is established through repeated reading and careful examination of the data, as well as the use of multiple media sources for comparison. Dependability is maintained by applying consistent analytical procedures across all data using the same framework. Confirmability is ensured through systematic coding and interpretation based on textual evidence, with additional review conducted by the co-author to minimize subjective bias.

### 3. Result

#### *Global Themes and Policy Representation in Macrostructural Analysis*

The first stage of analysis focuses on the macrostructural level to identify the principal themes articulated in media coverage concerning the military barracks policy for problematic students. This analysis aims to examine how media outlets select and foreground particular issues, thereby constructing specific representations of the policy. The findings regarding the global themes of each news text are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Results of Macrostructural Analysis of News Coverage Across Five Media Outlets

No.	Media Outlet	News Title	Central Theme (Macrostructure)	Representation Direction
1	<i>Metrotvnews</i>	<i>Menteri Pigai Pastikan Kebijakan Kirim Siswa ke Barak Militer Tak Langgar HAM</i>  (Minister Pigai Confirms Policy of Sending Students	Legitimization and justification of the military barracks policy as a character education program that does not violate human rights and is oriented toward human resource	Positive (Pro-legitimization)

		to Military Barracks Does Not Violate Human Rights)	development	
2	Okezone	Menteri HAM Tunggu Kesuksesan Siswa Nakal Dibina di Barak TNI untuk Dijadikan Program Nasional  (Minister of Human Rights Awaits Success of Problematic Students Trained in TNI Barracks to Be Adopted as a National Program)	Support and expectation that the military barracks program will succeed and be adopted as a national education model; emphasizing alignment with human rights principles.	Positive (Pro-legitimization)
3	Tribunnews	Gubernur Jawa Dedi Mulyadi Temui Menteri HAM, Bahas Kebijakan Kirim Siswa Nakal ke Barak Militer  (West Java Governor Dedi Mulyadi Meets Minister of Human Rights to Discuss Policy of Sending Problematic Students to Military Barracks)	Presentation of an official meeting and debate between regional government support and criticism from human rights institutions; human rights and democracy issues contrasted with disciplinary arguments	Neutral-Critical
4	Tempo	Menteri HAM Bilang Program Dedi Mulyadi Kirim Anak ke Barak Militer Visioner  (Minister of Human Rights States Dedi	Construction of the military barracks policy as a visionary, legally valid, and strategic initiative for educational development and	Positive (Visionary)

		Mulyadi's Program of Sending Children to Military Barracks Is Visionary)	human resource improvement	
5	Viva.co.id	Menteri HAM Bakal Dorong Program Kirim Siswa Nakal ke Barak Militer Secara Nasional jika Jabar Sukses (Minister of Human Rights to Promote National Implementation of Military Barracks Program for Problematic Students if Successful in West Java)	Legitimization of the military barracks policy as a valid and constructive strategy; emphasizing legality, official support, and potential for national expansion.	Positive (Pro-legitimization)

The macrostructural analysis reveals a clear pattern in how the five online media outlets represent the military barracks policy. As presented in Table 1, four media, namely *Metrotvnews*, *Okezone*, *Tempo*, and *Viva.co.id*, construct the policy through themes of legality, character development, and human resource improvement. This framing positions the policy as a constructive educational intervention and reduces emphasis on its potentially coercive or militaristic aspects. In this way, the policy is discursively situated within the domain of education rather than control, allowing it to be interpreted as a socially beneficial initiative.

From the perspective of van Dijk's critical discourse analysis, this thematic selection functions as a mechanism for shaping public understanding. Global themes at the macrostructural level play a role in organizing how information is interpreted by readers. By emphasizing developmental and legal aspects, the media foreground certain meanings while limiting the visibility of more controversial dimensions. This indicates a tendency to align the policy with institutional legitimacy and to construct it as acceptable within the broader social context.

In contrast, *Tribunnews* adopts a different macrostructural orientation by incorporating both governmental and critical perspectives, particularly those related to human rights and democratic values. The inclusion of these perspectives introduces a more complex representation, as the policy is not only presented as a

solution but also as a subject of concern. However, this critical framing appears in a more limited proportion, which suggests that alternative viewpoints are present but not equally emphasized.

Overall, the findings indicate that media discourse tends to reinforce the legitimacy of the policy through the dominance of supportive themes, while critical perspectives receive less attention. This pattern reflects an imbalance in the representation of viewpoints, where the discourse is more oriented toward policy justification than critical evaluation.

#### Representation of Media Stance in News Discourse Structure

Following the identification of global themes, the analysis proceeds to the superstructural level, focusing on the organization of news discourse and the coherence between textual elements that reflect the media’s position and stance toward the military barracks policy. The analysis examines the relationships among the headline, lead, and body of the text, as well as the evaluative expressions manifested in language use. The findings regarding patterns of structural coherence and tendencies in media stance are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Summary of Media Stance Representation in Discourse Structure

No.	Media Outlet	Discourse Structure (Superstructure)	Intratextuality	Evaluative Stance (Appraisal)
1	<i>Metrotvnews</i>	Headline–lead–body structure focuses on legitimation; the narrative is linearly organized and emphasizes the outcome of the meeting between Pigai and Dedi, asserting that the policy does not violate human rights.	Consistent across sections; no oppositional elements; the text is cohesive in reinforcing policy legitimation.	<b>Judgement:</b> Pigai states that the program “does not violate human rights because it fosters development rather than punishment”. The phrase “ <i>tidak melanggar</i> (does not violate)” indicates a positive moral evaluation of legality, while “ <i>membina</i> (fosters development)” reflects moral approval of the program’s purpose.

2	<i>Okezone</i>	The news structure forms a pattern of conditional support; the lead highlights the program's potential as a national model.	Cohesive; all sections support the theme "keberhasilan program = nasionalisasi (program success = national adoption)".	<p><b>Appreciation:</b> The policy is framed as "<i>pembinaan karakter</i> (character development)"; indicating a positive and constructive social valuation.</p>
				<p><b>Judgement:</b> Pigai states that "<i>jika berhasil, program ini bisa dijadikan model nasional</i> (if successful, the program can serve as a national model)". The phrase "<i>jika berhasil</i> (if successful)" signals contingent judgement, indicating a positive evaluation conditional upon effectiveness.</p>
				<p><b>Appreciation:</b> The policy is considered capable of "<i>dapat meningkatkan kualitas SDM</i> (improving the quality of human resources)", reflecting a positive valuation of its utility.</p>

3	<i>Tempo</i>	The headline explicitly contains a positive evaluation “ <i>visioner</i> (visionary)”; the structure progresses from legal legitimation to assessments of benefits and potential national implementation.	High cohesion, forming a sequence from legal aspects, then expanding to benefits, and finally reaching national prospects.	<p><b>Judgement:</b> Pigai describes Dedi Mulyadi’s policy as “<i>visioner</i> (visionary)”, indicating a positive evaluation of leadership capacity and long-term orientation.</p> <p><b>Appreciation:</b> The policy is framed as an “<i>inovasi pendidikan</i> (educational innovation)”, reflecting a constructive evaluation of its aesthetic and social value.</p>
4	<i>Tribunnews</i>	The structure begins with a factual report of the meeting and shifts to criticism from YLBHI; the body is dominated by oppositional quotations	Cohesive in presenting contrast: initial official discussion followed by criticism and emphasis on negative implications.	<p><b>Judgement:</b> YLBHI states that the program “<i>merusak sistem demokrasi</i> (undermines the democratic system)”, indicating a negative moral evaluation of its impact.</p> <p><b>Appreciation:</b> The policy is considered to “<i>berpotensi melanggar HAM</i> (potentially violate human rights)”,</p>

suggesting a destructive value and a threat to humanitarian norms.

5	<i>Viva.co.id</i>	The structure emphasizes conditional support from Pigai and Dedi; the narrative is linear and contains no oppositional elements.	Cohesive; consistency across headline, lead, and body in supporting the policy.	<p><b>Judgement:</b> Pigai states, “<i>Jika berhasil di Jabar, kami akan dorong secara nasional</i> (If successful in West Java, we will promote it nationally)”. The phrase “<i>akan dorong secara nasional</i> (will push for it nationally)” indicates support and a positive assessment of the policy's viability.</p> <p><b>Appreciation:</b> Pigai stated, “<i>Kalau variabel-variabel ini seirama, senasib, sejiwa dengan hak asasi manusia, berarti gak ada dong tidak masuk ke wilayah-wilayah yang bertentangan dengan hak asasi manusia</i> (If these variables are in harmony, share the same fate, share the same spirit</p>
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with human rights, then there is no way they fall into areas that contradict human rights)". The use of phrase "*tidak bertentangan* (do not contradict)" contains positive appreciation, assessing the policy as legitimate, legal, and in accordance with humanitarian norms.

The analysis of superstructure and intratextuality reveals two distinct patterns in how media stance is constructed. As summarized in Table 2, four media outlets, namely *Metrotvnews*, *Okezone*, *Tempo*, and *Viva.co.id*, organize their news texts in a linear and cohesive manner. The alignment between the headline, lead, and body creates a consistent flow of information that supports a single perspective and guides readers toward a particular interpretation of the policy. In terms of intratextuality, information introduced in the opening sections is reiterated and reinforced throughout the text, which strengthens the intended message and reduces space for alternative readings.

In contrast, *Tribunnews* presents a different structural pattern by incorporating multiple sources with differing perspectives, including critical voices that raise concerns about human rights and democratic values. The inclusion of these perspectives disrupts the linear structure found in other media and produces a more complex narrative. In this case, the policy is constructed not as a unified solution, but as an issue open to debate and contestation.

Differences in evaluative stance further reinforce these structural distinctions. The four media tend to employ positive evaluations that align the policy with desirable social outcomes, while *Tribunnews* introduces more critical evaluations that highlight potential risks. Overall, a linear and cohesive structure tends to sustain a dominant perspective, whereas a more contrastive structure allows competing viewpoints to emerge.

*Lexical Analysis of Media Framing Strategies*

The final stage of analysis focuses on the microstructural level, specifically lexical aspects, to reveal the framing strategies employed by media in constructing the military barracks policy. The examination centers on diction choices, negation forms, and evaluative terms that create either positive or negative representations of the policy. The findings of the lexical analysis are presented in the following table.

Table 3. Lexical Analysis of Media Framing Strategies

No.	Media Outlet	Evaluative Words/Phrases (Lexical)	Meaning and Framing Function	Type of Evaluation (Appraisal)	Framing
1	<i>Metrotvnews</i>	<i>“membina (fostering)”, “menanamkan kedisiplinan (instilling discipline)”, “pembentukan karakter (character formation)”, “tidak melakukan hukuman fisik (not imposing physical punishment)”</i>	Emphasizes moral and educational aspects; frames the policy as a developmental mechanism rather than a repressive measure	<i>Judgement positive, Appreciation positive.</i>	Positive constructive (pro-development framing)
2	<i>Okezone</i>	<i>“mendorong (encouraging)”, “melatih (training)”, “siswa nakal dibina (problematic students are guided)”, “jika berhasil bisa menjadi contoh nasional (if successful, it can serve as a</i>	Frames the policy as a form of social reform with positive potential; reflects optimism accompanied by caution	<i>Judgement conditional, Appreciation positive.</i>	Positive-conditional (cautionary framing)

		national model”			
3	<i>Tempo</i>	“visioner (visionary); “inovatif (innovative); “program unggulan (flagship program); “menumbuhkan ketahanan mental (fostering mental resilience)”	Highlights the policy as forward-looking and long-term oriented; frames the government as an agent of positive transformation	<i>Appreciation positive, Judgement positive.</i>	Positive-progressive (national character development framing)
4	<i>Tribunnews</i>	“khawatir (concern); “merusak sistem demokrasi (undermining the democratic system); “otoriterisme (authoritarianism); “pelanggaran HAM (human rights violations)”	Directs attention to the negative implications of the policy; frames it as a threat to humanitarian and democratic values.	<i>Judgement negative, Appreciation negative.</i>	Negative-critical (resistance to policy framing)
5	<i>Viva.co.id</i>	“seirama, senasib, sejiwa dengan hak asasi manusia (aligned, harmonious, and in unity with human rights); “tidak bertentangan (not contradictory);	Frames the policy as legitimate and compatible with human rights principles; emphasizes alignment with humanitarian norms.	<i>Judgement positive, Appreciation positive.</i>	Positive-legalistic (harmonization with human rights framing)

*“selaras dengan  
nilai  
kemanusiaan  
(consistent with  
humanitarian  
values)”*

The lexical analysis reveals a systematic pattern in how evaluative language is used to construct the framing of the military barracks policy. As presented in Table 3, four media outlets, namely *Metrotvnews*, *Okezone*, *Tempo*, and *Viva.co.id*, consistently employ lexical choices that convey positive judgement and appreciation. Expressions such as *“membina (fostering)”*, *“menanamkan kedisiplinan (instilling discipline)”*, *“mendorong (encouraging)”*, *“melatih (training)”*, *“visioner (visionary)”*, and *“inovatif (innovative)”*, as well as phrases such as *“tidak melakukan hukuman fisik (not imposing physical punishment)”* and *“tidak bertentangan (does not contradict)”*, collectively frame the policy as constructive, progressive, and aligned with human rights values.

The inclusion of conditional expressions such as *“jika berhasil bisa menjadi contoh nasional (if successful, it could become a national example)”* further reinforces the perception of the policy as a promising initiative with broader social relevance. Across these media, the recurring use of positively evaluative expressions creates a coherent lexical pattern that supports a favourable representation of the policy.

In contrast, *Tribunnews* employs a different lexical strategy by incorporating expressions such as *“khawatir (concerned)”*, *“merusak sistem demokrasi (damages the democratic system)”*, *“otoriterisme (authoritarianism)”*, and *“pelanggaran HAM (human rights violations)”*. These lexical choices introduce a more critical tone and frame the policy as potentially problematic rather than purely beneficial.

Overall, the findings indicate that lexical variation across media reflects systematic differences in evaluative stance. While most media rely on development oriented and legitimacy based expressions to support the policy, *Tribunnews* employs more critical vocabulary that challenges the dominant framing, resulting in a contrast between supportive and critical representations at the level of word choice.

#### **4. Discussion**

##### *Media Framing of the Military Barracks Policy: Legitimation and Discursive Variation*

The macrostructural findings indicate that the representation of the military barracks policy in Indonesian online media is largely shaped by a dominant pattern of legitimation rather than reflecting a fully neutral or balanced portrayal. Four of the five media outlets consistently foreground themes of legality, character development, and human resource improvement, thereby positioning the policy within the domains of education and social development. As noted by Sobarudin and Hamdani (2025), such thematic orientation enables the policy to be interpreted not as a militaristic intervention, but as a constructive response to student behavior.

However, this framing can be understood as ideological, as it foregrounds socially acceptable aspects while simultaneously backgrounding the policy's coercive and disciplinary dimensions. In line with van Dijk's perspective, macrostructures shape social reality by determining which meanings become salient to audiences (Sobarudin & Hamdani, 2025). Through this process, the policy tends to be normalized and depoliticized, as its association with military discipline is reframed within a discourse of education and character formation.

This pattern of legitimation does not emerge solely from individual editorial decisions, but can be understood within broader structural conditions and ideological tendencies in Indonesian online media production. From a structural perspective, media outlets operate under constraints related to speed, access, and news value, which tend to privilege official sources such as Governor Dedi Mulyadi and Minister Natalius Pigai. These actors provide readily available statements, press releases, and authoritative narratives that can be efficiently incorporated into news reporting.

In contrast, critical voices, including those from the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation, often require additional verification and may involve institutional sensitivities.

As a result, routine journalistic practices may inadvertently prioritize perspectives aligned with state authority. From an ideological perspective, this pattern can be interpreted as part of a broader tendency in which military-based approaches are increasingly framed as acceptable responses to civilian issues, including in the field of education. The recurring use of expressions such as fostering discipline, mental resilience, and character formation reflects this tendency, as such language contributes to normalizing the presence of military logic within educational discourse. In this sense, the dominance of legitimizing themes appears to be shaped by both structural conditions and underlying ideological orientations.

The macrostructural framing is further reinforced at the level of superstructure through the organization of news discourse. The predominance of linear and cohesive structures, characterized by the alignment between headline, lead, and body, ensures that supportive perspectives are consistently introduced, elaborated, and reaffirmed throughout the text. As indicated by Ronda et al. (2024), the reliance on relatively uniform sources within such structures contributes to a more homogeneous representation of the policy. This structural consistency not only enhances readability but also stabilizes particular interpretations and guides readers toward a preferred understanding of the issue.

In line with van Dijk's concept of discourse control, the organization of textual elements directs readers' attention and tends to reduce the prominence of alternative viewpoints (Rimang et al., 2026). Although contrastive structures that incorporate competing perspectives are present in certain media, their limited occurrence suggests that superstructure may function as a mechanism that regulates the distribution of viewpoints within the discourse.

At the level of microstructure, lexical choices further consolidate this pattern of legitimation by embedding evaluative meanings within the text. The consistent use of positively connoted expressions associated with development, discipline, legality, and alignment with human rights contributes to constructing the policy as rational, beneficial, and ethically acceptable. For instance, expressions such as *tidak melakukan hukuman fisik* emphasize the absence of coercion, while phrases such as *seirama, senasib, sejiwa dengan hak asasi manusia* position the policy within a humanitarian framework.

In line with van Dijk's perspective, such lexicalization reflects underlying ideological orientations, as word choice subtly directs interpretation without requiring explicit argumentation (Sobarudin & Hamdani, 2025). Conversely, negatively evaluative expressions such as *merusak sistem demokrasi* and *pelanggaran HAM* introduce a counter-discourse that highlights potential risks and concerns. However, the relatively limited presence of such critical lexical items across the media suggests that this counter-discourse does not achieve an equivalent level of prominence.

When considered together, macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure interact to produce a coordinated pattern of legitimation. The macrostructure establishes the policy within a developmental and legal framework, the superstructure organizes information in a manner that sustains a consistent perspective, and the microstructure reinforces this perspective through evaluative language. These elements operate in an interconnected manner, where each level supports and strengthens the others in shaping how the policy is interpreted. As a result, dominant interpretations are maintained, while alternative perspectives remain less visible within the overall discourse.

At the same time, the findings indicate the presence of discursive variation. The inclusion of themes and expressions related to human rights and democratic concerns, as identified by Azzahra and Riza (2025), demonstrates that alternative perspectives continue to emerge within media discourse. However, these perspectives are not equally amplified. The asymmetrical distribution of viewpoints suggests that while media discourse provides space for differing interpretations, such space is structured in a way that privileges certain meanings while marginalizing others. Consequently, the appearance of balance in media coverage may coexist with an underlying dominance of policy legitimation.

The implications of these findings are significant for media literacy, policy communication, and democratic discourse. In terms of media literacy, the study highlights the importance of understanding how meaning is constructed through the interaction of thematic emphasis, discourse organization, and lexical choice. Readers are encouraged to critically examine whose voices are most frequently represented, which themes are repeatedly emphasized, and how evaluative language shapes the interpretation of the policy.

For policy communication, the findings indicate that framing strategies that emphasize development, legality, and alignment with human rights may contribute to greater public acceptance, particularly when potentially controversial aspects are less prominently presented. From the perspective of democratic discourse, the unequal distribution of perspectives across media platforms raises concerns regarding the balance of information available to the public. When critical viewpoints are less visible or less sustained, the capacity for informed and balanced public deliberation may be constrained.

In conclusion, the macrostructural analysis suggests that the representation of the military barracks policy in Indonesian online media is characterized by a dominant logic of legitimation supported by the alignment of macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure. This pattern appears to be shaped by structural conditions of news production as well as broader ideological tendencies that normalize particular approaches to social issues. Although alternative perspectives are present, they do not occupy an equivalent position within the discourse, indicating that media play an active role in organizing public understanding by privileging certain interpretations while limiting others.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that mass media constructs the issue of military barracks education for delinquent students by the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) through three mutually reinforcing layers of discursive representation. At the macrostructural level, most media outlets including *Metrotvnews*, *Okezone*, *Tempo*, and *Viva.co.id*, foreground the overarching theme of policy legitimacy as a form of character building and moral education, while *Tribunnews* stands as the sole outlet to emphasize a critical dimension by highlighting the potential for

human rights violations.

At the superstructural level, patterns of textual organization reveal that pro-policy media arrange news content in a linear and cohesive manner to construct a positive image of the policy, whereas *Tribunnews* employs a contrastive structure by presenting oppositional perspectives. At the microstructural level, framing strategies are realized through evaluative lexical choices: policy-supportive media employ positive diction such as "*membina* (fostering)", "*menanam kedisiplinan* (instilling discipline)" and "*visioner* (visionary)", while critical media deploy expressions such as "*merusak sistem demokrasi* (undermining the democratic system)" and "*pelanggaran HAM* (human rights violations)".

Overall, the findings reveal that mass media does not merely convey information but actively shapes discourse concerning the relationship among discipline, power, and education. Through their selection of themes, textual structures, and lexical choices, media outlets represent the military barracks policy with divergent ideological orientations. In doing so, the media frames this issue as an arena of contestation between discourses of social order and humanism, reflecting the differing ways in which Indonesian media constructs the relationship between education and power.

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