

Literary Journalism as Counter-Narrative in Pesantren Reporting on Kediripedia.com

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Abstract

The growth of digital media has accelerated journalistic practices toward speed and sensationalism, particularly in coverage of pesantren (Indonesian Islamic boarding schools). Amid this trend, Kediripedia.com positions itself as an alternative local media outlet that reports on pesantren through literary journalism, drawing on lived experience rather than controversy. This study aims to analyze the implementation of literary journalism in Kediripedia.com's pesantren coverage and how it functions as a counter-narrative, using a qualitative approach based on Teun A. van Dijk's critical discourse analysis model. Data were collected through interviews with Kediripedia.com's Managing Editor and a journalist, and a documentary study of four pesantren-related news articles published between [bulan/tahun] and [bulan/tahun], selected through purposive sampling based on literary journalism characteristics. Analysis covered three dimensions: text structure (macro, superstructure, micro), social cognition, and social context. Findings show that Kediripedia.com applies literary journalism through metaphor, emotive vocabulary, third-person pronouns, and dramatic narrative flow, resulting in a dominantly narrative writing style. At the social cognition level, journalists draw on schemas of event, self, person, and role. At the social context level, Kediripedia.com's reporting reinforces pesantren's local identity amid negative mainstream coverage through narrative, emotional, and dramatic writing.

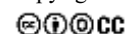
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INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of digital media is driving changes in journalistic practices, particularly in online media, which are expected to deliver information quickly, accurately, and efficiently. As a result, online media outlets are competing to present breaking, viral, or sensational news to attract clicks and readers and boost their traffic (Hakim, 2019). However, the demand for fast, up-to-date information has given rise to new problems, such as a lack of news verification, as verification processes are rushed or even overlooked, thereby compromising the accuracy of news reports (Sumberpost, 2017).

Other journalistic practices used to boost traffic or ratings for online media include the use of clickbait headlines and a tendency to prioritize controversial information (Setiawan, 2021). As a result, sensationalist news stories have come to dominate news that is relevant and substantive to the interests of marginalized communities, thereby fueling disparities among certain groups and the polarization of public opinion. Consequently, this has contributed to a decline in the quality of the news coverage received by the public (Hidayat, 2019).

One news story that sparked public debate over its perceived sensationalism was Expose Uncercored's report on *pesantren* culture. Members of the *pesantren* community argued that the coverage was unbalanced, emphasizing only negative aspects while omitting positive context. The report triggered protests in several regions and digital activism in the form of the #BoikotTrans7 campaign (Attar, 2025). This case illustrates a broader pattern in which dominant media discourse on *pesantren* has tended toward negative framing a pattern this study uses as the backdrop for examining Kediripedia.com's counter-narrative role.

In this context, online media outlets such as Kediripedia.com play an important role in producing and disseminating information to the public, including more balanced coverage on *pesantren*—educational and religious institutions that are vital to society. *Pesantren* are the oldest educational institutions in Indonesia. In fact, they existed before Indonesia gained independence and have remained in existence to this day. Historically, *pesantren* have not only served as places for teaching religious knowledge but have also functioned as centers for *da'wah* (Islamic preaching), social transformation, and the shaping of Muslim communal ethics in various regions, including Kediri (Hakim, 2025). Therefore, Kediripedia.com helps spread information about *pesantren* as an alternative source amid many media outlets that highlight the negative aspects of life in *pesantren* to attract more clicks.

In this study, literary journalism is operationally defined through six indicators: scene construction, characterization, dialogue, detailed description, metaphor, and emotional narration (Hikmat, 2018). These indicators serve as the analytical criteria applied throughout the results section. This phenomenon is particularly interesting because it highlights a shift in the way the media conveys reality. News serves not only to convey facts to the audience, but also as a medium for storytelling that evokes emotional experiences and fosters a sense of connection among readers (Hikmat, 2018). In reporting on *pesantren*, a more vivid atmosphere through the stories of key figures, details of students' daily lives, and the historical context is conveyed dramatically through literary journalism.

This is a crucial phenomenon to study because it demonstrates how language and media narratives shape readers' perceptions of reality. The technology used also enables creative innovations, such as immersive multimedia narratives, thereby expanding how stories are conveyed to audiences (Murphy, 2023). Furthermore, the paradigm shift from traditional objectivity to a narrative approach reflects an effort to engage readers more deeply, viewing them not as passive recipients but as active participants in constructing the meaning of the news. Thus, when *pesantren* are reported in a narrative form through literary elements, readers not only gain information but also undergo a profound process of interpreting the values, culture, and identity inherent in these institutions.



From the perspective of Teun A. van Dijk's discourse analysis, the media not only represent reality but also construct reality through language choices, narrative structures, and the emphasis on specific meanings. Van Dijk's model was selected because it enables analysis not only at the textual level, but also of the journalists' social cognition and the broader social context three interrelated dimensions necessary to explain how *pesantren* coverage functions as a counter-narrative to negative mainstream discourse. Thus, the literary journalism of *Kediripedia.com* is understood as a discursive practice that not only emphasizes aesthetics but also helps shape social discourse on *pesantren*, serving as a counter-narrative to the negative coverage of it by other media. As a local media outlet, *Kediripedia.com* can help change public perception, particularly regarding negative stereotypes of *pesantren*, specifically through a more in-depth and contextual approach that reflects local realities and strengthens community identity (Fadilah et al., 2021a).

Putra (2010) revealed that the development of literary journalism in Indonesia was pioneered by national media outlets such as *Tempo*, which adopted narrative journalism. According to Latief & Sanusi (2020), student activists perceive *Tempo*'s literary journalism as emphasizing news credibility grounded in accuracy. The detailed, reconstructive presentation of events in narrative form is also seen as making it easier for readers to grasp the news message. Meanwhile, from the journalistic perspective, Suhaimi (2013) reveals that literary journalism has become a global trend, particularly in print media. This trend provides journalists with an opportunity to express themselves and gain the experience necessary to craft detailed, vivid, relevant, and contextual narratives.

A study by Fredericca & Ispandriarno (2014) explains that there are two dimensions in the production of literary journalism: the writing technique dimension, which consists of factual elements, emotions, third-person perspective, and descriptive details. In addition, the technical aspects of presentation include scene construction and dialogue. From the perspective of local media, they face challenges in improving content quality, particularly in meeting high journalistic standards to provide content that is relevant to local audiences (Fadilah et al., 2021b).

While these studies have made significant contributions to our understanding of literary journalism, there are still important research gaps that need to be addressed. Firstly, research on literary journalism in Indonesia has primarily centred on national media outlets such as *Tempo*, resulting in a lack of academic literature on the practice of literary journalism in local media. Secondly, no study has specifically examined how literary journalism is used to represent *pesantren* in local media. Thirdly, the discursive dimension of literary journalism practices, such as the narrative techniques that shape social discourse surrounding religious institutions, has not been explored in depth, particularly within the context of digital local media. Despite these contributions, three research gaps remain. First, studies on literary journalism in Indonesia have focused mainly on national media such as *Tempo*, leaving local digital media underexplored. Second, no study has specifically examined how literary journalism represents *pesantren*. Third, the discursive dimension of literary journalism particularly its narrative techniques as counter-narrative practice has not been examined in local digital media.

This study addresses these gaps by examining literary journalism in digital local media an area largely overlooked in scholarship centered on national and print media and by positioning *pesantren* coverage as its subject, offering a more comprehensive understanding of narrative techniques as both aesthetic and discursive practice. Accordingly, this study pursues three interconnected objectives: (1) to identify the literary journalistic techniques applied in *Kediripedia.com*'s *pesantren* coverage, (2) to analyze how these techniques construct meaning and representation of *pesantren*, and (3) to understand the social discourse formed through these practices as a counter-narrative to negative mainstream portrayals of *pesantren*.

Kediripedia.com was chosen for its distinctive use of narrative writing techniques to present factual accounts of events. It also highlights everyday life events as living data that serve as a source of information and are documented as a modern encyclopedia accessible via the internet (Hakim et al., 2023). Thus, it is not the controversial aspects of *pesantren* that are highlighted, but rather their unique qualities, aspects that will stand the test of time presented through a literary journalistic lens.



Furthermore, this local media outlet is managed by competent journalists, as evidenced by their Press Council certificates of competence and the awards they have received.

Thus, this study aims to identify and analyze the implementation of literary journalism in news coverage of *pesantren* on Kediriipedia.com, and to understand how these narrative techniques are used to construct meaning and representation. This study is expected to contribute to the development of communication studies, particularly by advancing understanding of the dynamics of journalistic forms and their innovations amid digital developments. More specifically, the theoretical contribution of this study is to expand the application of van Dijk's critical discourse analysis in literary journalism studies in local digital media. In practice, it provides a narrative-based alternative journalism model that can be adopted by other local media outlets to represent marginalised communities and institutions. In practice, this study can serve as a reference for media practitioners seeking to develop creative writing styles without compromising journalistic values.

METHODS

This study is a qualitative research employing Teun A. van Dijk's critical discourse analysis (CDA) model. This approach was chosen because it is relevant to the research objective, namely to uncover the meaning, linguistic structure, and discursive practices embedded in news texts — particularly the implementation of literary journalism in *pesantren* coverage on Kediriipedia.com. This research is useful for providing in-depth understanding of how a local digital media outlet constructs counter-narrative discourse through narrative writing practices.

Type of Research

The type of research employed is a qualitative study with a critical discourse analysis approach. This approach is appropriate for the research topic because it allows the researcher to examine not only the textual structure of news articles, but also the social cognition of the journalists who produced them and the broader social context in which the coverage operates. The analysis is conducted on three interrelated dimensions: text structure (macro, superstructure, and micro), social cognition, and social context.

Research Focus

To narrow the scope of analysis and avoid data unrelated to the research problem, this study focuses on the implementation of literary journalism in Kediriipedia.com's coverage of *pesantren*. The literary journalism indicators used as the analytical focus include scene construction, characterization, dialogue, detailed description, metaphor, and emotional narration (Hikmat, 2018). These indicators are then examined in relation to the three CDA dimensions of van Dijk: text structure, social cognition, and social context, to understand how Kediriipedia.com's reporting functions as a counter-narrative to negative mainstream coverage of *pesantren*.

Data Sources

The data sources for this study are divided into two categories, namely primary and secondary data.

Primary Data

Primary data in this study consists of interview responses obtained directly from the Managing Editor and a journalist of Kediriipedia.com. These interviews focused on the editorial team's understanding of *pesantren*, narrative journalism practices, and their approach to counter-narrative reporting.

Secondary Data



Secondary data consists of four news articles published by Kediripedia.com on the theme of pesantren, selected through purposive sampling (see Table 1). This data is supported by relevant literature, including previous studies, books, and scientific articles on literary journalism and critical discourse analysis, which serve to strengthen the theoretical framework of this study.

Data Collection Techniques

Interview

Interviews were conducted directly with the Managing Editor and a journalist of Kediripedia.com to obtain information relevant to the implementation of literary journalism and counter-narrative reporting practices.

Observation

Observation in this study was conducted by directly examining the news content published on Kediripedia.com, including the writing style, narrative structure, word choice, and accompanying visuals of the four selected articles. This non-participatory observation allowed the researcher to identify literary journalism features within the text prior to and alongside the interview process, while maintaining an objective stance free from external influence beyond the research focus and methodology.

Documentation

Documentation involved collecting and archiving the four selected news articles directly from the Kediripedia.com website, including their accompanying images, to serve as the primary textual data for the discourse analysis.

Informant Selection Techniques

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, whereby informants were chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2017). Individuals selected as informants are those considered by the researcher to possess and be able to provide information relevant to the research needs. The specific criteria for informant selection in this study are as follows:

- a. The key informant is the Managing Editor of Kediripedia.com, Kholisul Fatikhin.
- b. The supporting informant is a journalist of Kediripedia.com, Dimas Eka Wijaya.

Validity of Findings

The validity of the data in this qualitative research was tested through several approaches, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Sugiyono, 2017). Credibility was strengthened through triangulation, comparing interview data from the Managing Editor and the journalist with the textual evidence found in the four analyzed articles. Transferability was achieved by presenting a detailed, systematic, and clear description of the research process and findings, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the results to similar contexts in other local digital media. Dependability was maintained through a consistent and documented analytical process, reviewed by the research supervisor. Confirmability was ensured by grounding all interpretations directly in interview transcripts and textual data, minimizing researcher bias.

Data analysis

Data analysis was carried out using van Dijk's critical discourse analysis framework, applied in three stages. First, the macrostructure (overall theme), superstructure (narrative flow), and microstructure (word choice, sentence structure, and stylistic features) of each article were coded. Second, the findings were interpreted in relation to the journalists' social cognition, drawing on interview data with the Managing Editor and journalist. Third, the findings were interpreted in relation to the social context, connecting the textual and cognitive findings to broader media discourse on *pesantren* in Indonesia. This three-stage process follows the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification ensuring that the research findings are presented in a structured and verifiable manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the four articles reveals that Kediripedia.com consistently applies literary journalism techniques across the three dimensions of text structure, social cognition, and social context, as detailed below.

A. Text Structure

1. Macro

This element refers to the overall structure of a text, which is determined by the theme or topic that serves as the text's central focus. The main themes observed in literary journalism covering *pesantren* are analyzed in terms of their thematic elements. The macro structure, in the form of a theme, represents the journalist's perspective on an event, operationalized through propositions, sentences, and relationships among clauses, thereby forming a cohesive text. Thematic structure can also be understood as a textual arrangement that enables readers to focus on the most important parts of a text. The topic elements within this theme constitute the most crucial information within a discourse (Ratnaningsih, 2019).

Table 2. Macro Themes Across Articles

Article	Macro Theme	Contribution to Pesantren Identity
Diponegoro's Son	Historical heroism & legitimacy	Links pesantren to national struggle narrative
Nationalism at Pesantren Kapu	Religious-nationalist harmony	Frames pesantren as nationalism incubator
Kiai Ngliman	Anti-colonial resistance	Positions pesantren within national history
Santri's Death	Human-centered tragedy	Counters bullying controversy with empathy

This theme indicating that *pesantren* function not only as religious institutions but also as important components of national history and character education. These findings support Hikmat (2018) argument that literary journalism can highlight historical and cultural aspects that are frequently overlooked in traditional reporting. It can also strengthen the identity of the communities it represents. Furthermore, according to Musa et al. (2025), *pesantren* play an important role in fostering nationalism in Indonesia.

On the other hand, the news article titled "*Santri Pendiam itu Tak Lagi Antre Sarapan, Kematiananya Diratapi Warga*" ("The Quiet Santri No Longer Queues for Breakfast; His Death Is Mourned by Residents") highlights the tragic death of a *santri* and the emotional impact it had on the surrounding community. The article presents a factual report on the death of a *santri* resulting from bullying. However, Kediripedia.com approaches the event from a perspective rarely explored by mainstream media, emphasizing the humanistic dimension of the incident, thereby making the narrative more vivid and emotionally engaging for readers. This approach

aligns with Frederica's findings that the emotional dimension is a key element in the production of effective literary journalism, where facts are presented not merely as data, but as human experiences that readers can relate to.

2. Superstructure

This part explains the structure and elements of discourse in a text, particularly those that create narrative flow and explain the sequence of events or occurrences reported in the news. In literary journalism, narrative flow plays a crucial role in guiding readers through the sequence of events. It also helps journalists avoid word repetition that would detract from the text's aesthetic appeal. This is important so that the writing does not merely convey facts, but also conveys a sense of feeling and emotion (Suhaimi, 2013).

In the news story about the hiding of Prince Diponegoro's son, the text is organized chronologically, with a narrative structure resembling a historical account, starting from the escape and hiding to the eventual establishment of a *pesantren*. In the report on nationalism at the *pesantren*, the Kediripedia.com journalist uses an explanatory structure, describing the topic at hand, the values reflected, and providing examples. Another news piece presents a figure's biography in a narrative structure, beginning with the event's background and the conflict, and culminating in acts of resistance. All of these news articles employ a narrative structure, consistent with the distinctive style of Kediripedia.com, including a report on the death of a student that begins with an introduction, details the incident, and concludes with the community's reaction. The patterns crafted by Kediripedia.com journalists resemble the narrative structure found in literary works, allowing readers to emotionally follow the characters' journeys, which is a hallmark of literary journalism.

This finding confirms the argument of Latief & Sanusi (2020) that reconstructive narrative structures not only improve readability but also strengthen the credibility of journalistic messages in readers' eyes. Furthermore, the variety of chronological, explanatory, and biographical narrative patterns found in Kediripedia.com coverage demonstrates the flexibility of literary journalism practices within the context of digital local media. This finding expands previous understandings of literary journalism studies, which have predominantly focused on national and print media (Suhaimi, 2013).

3. Micro

This is the smallest observable aspect of a text, consisting of vocabulary, sentences, and writing style. This aspect also constitutes a part of discourse meaning that can be directly observed based on vocabulary, sentences, or clauses; Van Dijk categorizes it as something concrete (Ratnaningsih, 2019). The elements analyzed in this aspect are semantics, syntax, stylistics, and rhetoric. To delve deeper into the events, the semantic element includes background, details, and presuppositions. Details are a hallmark of literary journalism, serving to establish atmosphere and narrative structure.

Meanwhile, the relationships between the elements that construct a sentence are discussed in the syntactic aspect. Therefore, this aspect examines the arrangement of words, phrases, and clauses that form a sentence. The third element in the micro aspect is stylistics, which refers to language style or the way a writer conveys their meaning through language. The final element in van Dijk's micro aspect of critical discourse analysis is rhetoric, which involves the use of emphasis in a discourse. This element consists of figures of speech and metaphors (Ratnaningsih, 2019).

In this regard, the characteristics of literary journalism can be observed directly, particularly in the choice of style and metaphors. Literary journalism emphasizes metaphors as a literary device in shaping narrative, so metaphors play a significant role. As part of the style analyzed within rhetorical elements, the use of metaphors allows journalists to report the news as if writing a story with the aesthetic values of literature (Suharti & Sutikno, 2020).



a. News on the hiding of Prince Diponegoro's son

Semantic elements are conveyed through the setting, which refers to the historical context following the Java War that forced the descendants of Diponegoro to flee to Kediri and establish a *pesantren*. This setting is presented in detail through the inclusion of specific years and the background of the central figure, as illustrated in the excerpt:

“Dia adalah putra Diponegoro dari istri selir. Usai pecah Perang Jawa pada 1825-1830, tokoh bernama asli Raden Wiryokusumo itu melarikan diri ke Kediri.”

(“He was Diponegoro’s son from a concubine. After the outbreak of the Java War in 1825–1830, the figure, whose real name was Raden Wiryokusumo, fled to Kediri.”)

Additional details are conveyed through descriptions of rainy weather, Qur’anic learning activities, family genealogy, and the gradual process of establishing the *pesantren*. The semantic dimension of the news article also reveals the journalist’s presupposition, associating the *pesantren* with a continuation of struggle, a shifting from physical resistance to a struggle pursued through education.

Based on their syntactic structure, these declarative sentences are predominantly narrative-descriptive, such as descriptions of the setting and the characters’ journeys. This sentence structure makes it easier for readers to understand the message (Latief & Sanusi, 2020). In terms of coherence, the news text is structured chronologically, beginning with the war, followed by flight, settlement, and the establishment of a *pesantren*. In addition, the journalist employs third-person pronouns, a characteristic feature of literary journalism writing techniques (Suharti & Sutikno, 2020), such as *dia* (“he/she”), *beliau* (“he/she,” honorific form), as well as references to figures including Kiai Mahfud, Hasan Alwi, and Nyai Rohmah. Furthermore, the heroic and reflective tone of the language, which emphasizes struggle, along with lexical choices such as *pelarian* (“flight”), *mendirikan* (“establish”), *perlawanan* (“resistance”), and *sembunyi* (“hiding”), reinforces the historical and dramatic atmosphere, thereby strengthening the stylistic elements of the news narrative. On the other hand, rhetorical elements are conveyed through visual graphics that legitimize the historical narrative by displaying photographs of the *pesantren* signboard, as well as through the metaphorical shift from “*perjuangan dari perang ke pendidikan*” (“struggle through war to struggle through education”), which symbolizes the transformation of resistance. Using this transformation metaphor is consistent with Murphy (2023) view that narrative innovation in digital journalism can convey stories to audiences in new ways, while also reinforcing the relevance of historical events in the present day.

Figure 1. Graphic of the News about the Hiding of Prince Diponegoro’s Son Who Established a *Pesantren* in Kediri



Source: Kediripedia.com (Wijaya, 2025)

b. News on the nationalism in *pesantren*

Education within the *pesantren* environment, as connected to the history of national struggle, forms the semantic background of the news discourse. Nationalism and religion are portrayed as harmonious, reflecting the journalist's presupposition that can be inferred from the text. Furthermore, detailed meanings are conveyed through concrete practices such as *kasidah*, drum band performances, and symbols of *santri* nationalism, particularly as illustrated in the following excerpt:

“Menurutnya, drumband adalah bentuk sikap bela negara, sedangkan mars atau kasidah merupakan pondasi membentuk karakter santri. Lagu ini wajib dikaji secara mendalam oleh santri yang hendak lulus.”

(“According to him, the drum band represents an expression of patriotism, while marches or *kasidah* serve as a foundation for shaping the character of *santri*. These songs must be studied thoroughly by *santri* prior to graduation.”)

The sentence structure tends to be explanatory–narrative, presenting concepts through concrete examples, thereby creating coherence through a narrative flow that moves from historical background to practice and ultimately to the meaning of nationalism. In addition, the journalist constructs authority through pronouns such as *santri* and *mereka* (“they”) and references to figures including Gus Bik and Kiai Shodiq, which contribute to the syntactic dimension of the news discourse. Meanwhile, stylistic elements are evident in lexical choices such as *nasionalisme* (“nationalism”), *perjuangan* (“struggle”), *membakar semangat* (“igniting enthusiasm”), and *bela negara* (“defending the nation”) alongside an inspirational and persuasive tone that emphasizes national values and strengthens the narrative's overall atmosphere. This aspect becomes crucial in literary journalism writing, as the technique prioritizes vivid and emotionally engaging storytelling (Hikmat, 2018). On the other hand, visual representation is conveyed through photographs depicting *santri* activities and *pesantren* figures, while the metaphorical use of the word *menguar* (“emanating” or “spreading naturally”) portrays nationalism as something that diffuses organically.

These findings support the argument of Fadilah et al. (2021a) that local media can reflect local realities and strengthen community identity. In this context, this role is demonstrated by the association of nationalist values with everyday activities in *pesantren*, which serves as a counter-narrative to negative stereotypes.

Figure 2. Graphic of the News about Nationalism in *Pesantren*



Source: Kediripedia.com (Fathikin & Hadi, 2023)

c. News on a Qur'anic teacher's rebelling against the forced cultivation system

The semantic element is reflected through the setting, which depicts social conflict during the colonial period, particularly the implementation of the forced cultivation system (*cultuurstelsel*) in Nganjuk, known as the “Geger Bhumi Anjuk Ladang.” The news report

is written with detailed descriptions focusing on the role of a *kiai* in resisting Dutch colonial rule, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

“Akar perjuangan Kiai Ngliman masih bertaut dengan situasi pasca-Perang Jawa (1825–1830). Pertempuran Belanda melawan Pangeran Diponegoro itu menguras kas kolonial.”

(“The roots of Kiai Ngliman’s struggle are still tied to the situation following the Java War (1825–1830). The Dutch campaign against Prince Diponegoro had drained the colonial treasury.”)

In the news report, the literary journalism techniques employed are reflected in the syntactic elements, particularly in narrative sentence structures that emphasize dramatic elements, as well as in a coherent writing structure that progresses systematically from character background, through conflict, to acts of resistance. In addition, the use of personal pronouns such as *ia* (“he”) serves to personalize the character. Meanwhile, the dramatic atmosphere is constructed through stylistic elements, especially lexical choices such as *pemberontak* (“rebel”) and “forced cultivation,” which convey a heroic tone.

The visual elements in this article function rhetorically within van Dijk’s microstructure by reinforcing the historical legitimacy claim made in the text: photographs of [lokasi/figur] visually anchor the abstract narrative of resistance turned education, making the counter-narrative claim — that pesantren are sites of ongoing national struggle, not merely religious institutions — more persuasive to readers (Romadhoni, 2023). Thus, the news report highlights forced cultivation activities during the Dutch colonial period. The term *pemberontak* is employed metaphorically to signify courage in opposing injustice and oppression. The visual material accompanying this article appears to draw on archival-style photographs; however, the specific archival collection or document reference could not be verified from the article itself. If sourced directly from Kediripedia.com’s own photography rather than a national archive, this should be stated explicitly to avoid overstating archival accuracy.

Figure 3. Graphic of the News on a Qur’anic Teacher Rebelling Against Forced Cultivation System



Source: Kediripedia.com (Fathikin, 2026)

d. News on the death of a *santri*

The tragic event that led to the death of a *santri* functions as the semantic background of the news report. Grounded in the presupposition that everyday routines can convey loss more deeply, the event is narrated through detailed descriptions that foster emotional proximity, particularly through the phrase *antre sarapan* (“queuing for breakfast”). The journalist develops the atmosphere through detailed depictions of daily situations, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

“Jalan di depan pondok juga sepi. Hanya terlihat dua pria bersarung yang berbelanja di toko kelontong. Padahal, saat jam istirahat siang para santri kerap

menyerbu warung-warung makan di Dusun Kemayan, Desa Kranding, Kecamatan Mojo, Kabupaten Kediri.”

“The street in front of the boarding school was also deserted. Only two men in sarongs could be seen shopping at the grocery store. However, during their lunch break, the students often flock to the food stalls in Kemayan Hamlet, Kranding Village, Mojo Subdistrict, Kediri Regency.”

The journalist also demonstrates syntactic elements through descriptive-emotional sentence structures, employing simple yet meaningful expressions. The paragraphs in the news report are arranged coherently, flowing from depictions of everyday life to the moment of death and subsequently to the community’s response. Emotional closeness is further established through the use of the pronoun *ia* (“he”). Stylistic elements are constructed through lexical choices such as *pendiam* (“quiet”), *tak lagi* (“no longer”), and *diratapi* (“mourned”), which help create an evocative, empathetic, and melancholic tone throughout the report. Meanwhile, rhetorical elements appear in the graphic presentation, which tends to emphasize visuals of a quiet *pesantren* atmosphere accompanied by text symbolizing profound loss. This is illustrated by a simple sentence such as “*tak lagi antre sarapan*” (“no longer queuing for breakfast”), which also serves as the news headline. The metaphor employed is a defining characteristic of literary journalism, as it enables expressive narration (Meyridah, 2017).

From a practical standpoint, this reporting pattern shows that literary journalism is not just an aesthetic choice, but also an ethical approach to covering sensitive issues. Rather than sensationalising, Kediripedia.com adopts a human-centred approach that could foster public empathy and reduce the stigmatisation of *pesantren* institutions.

Figure 4. Graphic on the News of a *Santri*’s Death



Source: Kediripedia.com (Wijaya & Fathikin, 2024)

B. Social Cognition

This section examines how the text author’s (journalist’s) cognition influences their understanding of the topic being written about. In critical discourse analysis, social cognition relates to the mental processes that constitute the ability to produce discourse. Social cognition, as viewed by van Dijk, is crucial in the formation of discourse, as the discourse that emerges in a text possesses specific characteristics influenced by the mental awareness or cognition of its author (Ratnaningsih, 2019).

The schema is divided into four categories: self-schema, which illustrates how individuals perceive, understand, and describe themselves; role schema, which reflects how individuals perceive a person’s role or social position; person schema, which explains how individuals perceive and characterize others; and event schema, which demonstrates how

individuals interpret and assign meaning to events based on their knowledge or prior experiences (Gunawan & Kurnia, 2023).

In the news report about the hiding of Prince Diponegoro's son, the journalist employs a narrative framework whose primary focus is on interpreting the escape as a form of the struggle's transformation. The journalist reconstructs the escape from the war as a strategy that ultimately led to the establishment of a *pesantren*. It is evident that journalists do not merely report events but also produce meaning. Thus, how journalists understand events significantly determines the direction of the narrative they construct (Nossek & Berkowitz, 2006). This is consistent with van Dijk's view that the social cognition of journalists is never neutral, but is always influenced by their mental models and social representations of the subjects they cover (Eriyanto, 2006).

The framing of *santri* as agents of nationalism in the other news report indicates that journalists employ a role schema, portraying *pesantren* institutions as spaces for the formation of national values. The way journalists position *santri* is also evident in the following news excerpt: "*Santri di pesantren ini tidak hanya belajar agama, tetapi juga ditanamkan nilai-nilai nasionalisme.*" ("*Santri in this pesantren not only study religion but are also instilled with values of nationalism,*" author's translation). On the other hand, the person schema is reflected in news coverage that portrays Kiai Ngliman as a heroic figure, a symbol of courage in resisting injustice. As argued by Jubba et al. (2021), such representations of religious figures play an important role in reinforcing the legitimacy of *pesantren* within the public sphere, particularly amid narratives that focus solely on the problematic aspects of *pesantren*.

Meanwhile, in constructing news discourse surrounding the death of a *santri*, the journalist employs a self-schema, positioning themselves as an empathetic narrator, as reflected in the news excerpt: "*Santri pendiam itu tak lagi antre sarapan seperti biasanya.*" ("*The quiet santri no longer queued for breakfast as usual,*" author's translation). This perspective is constructed through an emotional narrative closely connected to everyday life, intended to foster a sense of proximity between the story and its readers. Through this human-interest approach, the journalist presents news that is not only informative but also emotionally engaging. In this context, the journalist of *Kediripedia.com* transforms raw facts into a profound and meaningful narrative through emotional elements. In literary journalism, such an approach helps build a connection with readers while demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of events in news reporting (Qorib et al., 2024; Suharti & Sutikno, 2020).

These schemas are also reflected in the editorial principles that guide *Kediripedia.com*'s newsroom. As stated by the Managing Editor, "Terkait menghindari kekerasan atau ujaran kebencian, itu terus kami kuatkan dalam rapat redaksi. Termasuk penguatan peran media sebagai clearing house, yaitu menyajikan berita sesuai fakta, berimbang, dan tidak menyulut pertikaian horizontal di masyarakat" (Interview, 2025). This statement illustrates a self-schema in which the editorial team positions itself not merely as a news disseminator, but as a "clearing house" responsible for factual balance and social stability a position that directly informs how *pesantren*-related events are framed. The Managing Editor further explained the writing practice applied to marginalized groups: "Sedangkan proses penulisan berita, terutama untuk kaum marjinal, tulisan sebisa mungkin menghindari kata sifat. Upaya ini dibuat agar tidak menebalkan stigma" (Interview, 2025). This editorial policy of avoiding adjectives when reporting on marginalized communities including *pesantren* demonstrates a deliberate cognitive strategy to

prevent the reinforcement of negative stereotypes through word choice, directly shaping the stylistic restraint observed at the micro-textual level.

At the level of individual news production, the journalist's event schema is shaped by a similar awareness. As the journalist explained, "Tidak menyudutkan, memaparkan solusi yang disampaikan narasumber, menghindari narasi yang memicu kerusuhan" (Interview, 2025). This statement shows that the journalist interprets events not simply as raw occurrences to be reported, but as material to be framed in a way that avoids cornering any party, foregrounds the solutions offered by sources, and steers clear of narratives that could provoke unrest. This event schema is consistent with van Dijk's view that journalists' mental models of an event directly shape the resulting discourse (Eriyanto, 2006), and it explains the consistently empathetic, non-confrontational framing observed across all four analyzed articles.

These schemas are among the distinguishing features of news writing on Kediripedia.com. As stated in an interview, "'Interesting' can be understood as easily comprehensible to the public. One method is to present writing narratively, as if telling a story," (Interview, 2025). Literary writers commonly employ such narrative techniques, which were later adopted in journalistic practices. A narrative approach enables facts to become more vivid, fosters reader engagement, and provides emotional as well as aesthetic power in news storytelling (Hikmat, 2018). From an implicative perspective, the findings within the social cognition dimension suggest that the competence with which journalists manage cognitive schemas is a determining factor in the quality of literary journalism. This highlights the importance of not only strengthening local journalists' technical writing skills, but also developing their critical awareness of the positions and perspectives they bring to the news production process.

C. Social Context

In recent years, issues related to *pesantren* have frequently become subjects of discussion in Indonesia's mainstream media. Mainstream coverage of *pesantren* in Indonesia has frequently centered on cases of abuse and institutional failure — including reports of sexual violence in Sragen, Jombang, and Sumenep, controversy surrounding Al-Zaytun Pesantren, and the building collapse at Al-Khoziny Pesantren (Ayomi Amindoni, 2023; BBC News, 2022, 2023, 2025; Defri Werdiono, 2024).

In addition, cultural critiques of *pesantren* have also become subjects of coverage in both mainstream media and social media, particularly concerning the tradition of *santri* showing respect toward *kiai* or religious teachers, which is often perceived as a form of feudalism and the cultivation of personality cults around certain figures (Siswanto & Yulita, 2019). Rather than reproducing these narratives, this section examines how such coverage has shaped public discourse on *pesantren* and how Kediripedia.com's local positioning allows it to offer a counterweight. This pattern reflects what Hidayat (2019) identifies as a broader crisis in reporting quality driven by sensationalism, underscoring the importance of locally grounded alternative media such as Kediripedia.com

Kediripedia.com counters the narrative by reporting on a religious identity that aligns with the national identity. Local media play a role in highlighting local values and *pesantren* traditions, which are also an integral part of the community's identity (Halim, 2018). Kediripedia.com further reinforces this local identity through coverage of local history, stories that have often been sidelined in the national narrative. The site highlights local histories rooted in Islam and resistance to colonialism, demonstrating that *pesantren*, as Islamic institutions, align with national values and remain relevant to this day. This finding reinforces the argument of Fadilah et al. (2021a) regarding the challenges faced by local media in meeting high journalistic standards: Kediripedia.com proves that local media can overcome these challenges

by developing a narrative approach that meets the accuracy and relevance standards for its local audience.

Kediripedia.com not only produces news about local history but also responds to events in the community. The coverage of a student who died due to bullying was presented with an emotional, human-centered perspective, rather than focusing on the controversy and sensationalism surrounding bullying in Islamic educational institutions. This demonstrates that the media plays a role in fostering social empathy within the community. In line with Indonesia's social and cultural context, which still highly values the spirit of togetherness, the emotional narratives constructed can strengthen social bonds and a sense of humanity.

CONCLUSION

The coverage of pesantren on Kediripedia.com demonstrates a strong application of literary journalism in the production of texts. This is evident in the narrative style of news writing, the choice of emotional vocabulary, and the use of metaphors, which not only make the news informative and factual but also aesthetically interpretive. In terms of text structure, the selection of news topics about pesantren is not based solely on virality but on themes that closely represent local identity, tied to Islam and nationalism. The news patterns follow a narrative storyline, whether through biographical, explanatory, or descriptive approaches. Kediripedia.com presents news in great detail, particularly in its depiction of atmosphere, its use of third-person pronouns, and its direct naming of figures, all of which indicate that it employs literary journalism techniques.

This study set out to examine how literary journalism is implemented in Kediripedia.com's pesantren coverage and how it functions as a counter-narrative. The findings confirm that Kediripedia.com applies literary journalism techniques narrative style, emotional vocabulary, and metaphor across all three dimensions of van Dijk's model. Theoretically, this study extends the application of critical discourse analysis to literary journalism in local digital media, demonstrating its relevance beyond the textual level to social cognition and social context. Practically, it offers a narrative-based alternative journalism model that other local media outlets may adopt to represent marginalized communities and institutions.

Overall, the findings of this study have several important implications. Theoretically, the study shows that van Dijk's critical discourse analysis framework can be applied productively to analyse literary journalism, not only at the textual level, but also at the cognitive and social context levels. In practice, the Kediripedia.com news model can serve as a reference for other local media outlets that wish to develop an alternative journalistic approach rooted in local richness without compromising journalistic values. However, this study has some limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the corpus analyzed in this study was limited to four news articles, so the generalization of findings must be made with caution. Second, the analysis did not include the perspectives of readers or audiences, so the actual effects of narrative reporting on public perception of pesantren could not be confirmed empirically. Third, the study focused on a single local media outlet, Kediripedia.com, preventing cross-media comparison. Future research is recommended to expand the corpus, integrate audience reception analysis, and compare literary journalism practices across various digital local media outlets in Indonesia.

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