

## MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF THE KPK IN NEWS COVERAGE: A FAIRCLOUGHIAN CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

*This research aims to analyze how the online media outlets Kompas and Tempo portray the image of the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi or KPK) during its working meetings held in Yogyakarta. Using a descriptive qualitative method and applying Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study investigates media representation across three analytical dimensions: text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. The findings reveal that in the textual dimension, Kompas constructs a positive image of the KPK by using supportive language and justifying the Commission's actions. At the same time, Tempo presents a negative portrayal, often highlighting ethical concerns and public criticism. At the level of discursive practice, Kompas maintains a balanced reporting style, occasionally aligning with government perspectives. In contrast, Tempo reinforces its reputation for investigative journalism by critically scrutinizing the KPK's decisions. On the sociocultural level, Kompas seeks to preserve the KPK's legitimacy following the controversial revision of its governing law in 2019, while Tempo critiques the Commission's choice to hold a high-profile meeting during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, framing it as insensitive to public health and economic challenges. This study demonstrates that media discourse plays a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of government institutions, particularly during times of crisis. The study highlights how ideological and linguistic strategies influence narratives, underscoring the importance of critical media literacy and the accountability role of journalism.*

**Keywords:** Kompas, Tempo, KPK, Critical Discourse Analysis

### INTRODUCTION

The Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi or KPK) has long been regarded as a key institution in Indonesia's fight against systemic corruption. Furthermore, its public image has become increasingly contested, particularly following the controversial revision of its governing law in 2019 and a series of internal leadership decisions that sparked public debate. Notably, this included the decision to hold a high-profile working meeting at a luxury hotel in Yogyakarta during the

height of the COVID-19 pandemic—a move widely criticized as insensitive and ethically questionable. This event emerged as a focal point in media discourse, with different news outlets offering starkly divergent portrayals of the KPK: some framing it as fulfilling its institutional mandate, others condemning it for fiscal irresponsibility and moral insensitivity.

Efforts to combat corruption remain suboptimal. This condition is attributable to multiple factors. One of them is the power to intervene against the anti-corruption agency, which aligns with Maruapey's (2020) statement that the prevention efforts carried

out by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) were not optimal due to power intervention. According to him, this power tends to undermine the duties and independence, as well as the independent functions and integrity of the Corruption Eradication Commission.

As an independent institution, KPK often strengthens the integrity of its officials. As officials of high integrity, KPK's officials must act consistently, competently, and professionally in accordance with the code of ethics, and be individuals who are careful, thorough, reliable, and trusted by their colleagues. This was emphasized by Ananda et al. (2019), who noted that the KPK's professionalism must be maintained in carrying out its noble duties of preventing and combating corruption. Naturally, this remains subject to the public's supervision and scrutiny by the anti-corruption agency. (Abbas, 2022)

Media representation is pivotal in shaping the public perception of state institutions, especially those operating under intense scrutiny, such as the KPK. The way an organization is portrayed, whether positively, negatively, or ambivalently, can influence public trust, political legitimacy, and institutional accountability. However, media narratives are not neutral reflections of reality; they are socially constructed through language, ideology, and institutional positioning. In this context, the portrayal of the KPK in mainstream online media such as Kompas.com and Tempo.co, reveals more than just journalistic reporting; it reflects deeper ideological stances, editorial policies, and power dynamics between the press, government institutions, and civil society (Arianto, 2021).

While both media outlets cover the same event, their representations of the KPK often differ significantly. Kompas, traditionally seen as a centrist and balanced outlet, tends to present the KPK within a framework of institutional legitimacy and policy justification. In contrast, Tempo, known for its investigative and critical tradition, frequently highlights ethical concerns and public skepticism. These contrasting narratives raise essential questions: How do these influential media shape the public image of the KPK? To what extent does journalistic ideology determine whether the KPK is framed as a defender of integrity or an agent of elite privilege?

Despite growing scholarly interest in media discourse on governance and anti-corruption efforts, a lack of focused critical analysis persists regarding how major Indonesian news platforms represent the KPK in moments of institutional controversy. Moreover, few studies examine the linguistic and discursive mechanisms through which positive or negative images are constructed across different media ecosystems (Maulidiah et al., 2023). This research addresses that gap by analyzing the media representation of the KPK in its 2021 Yogyakarta working meeting coverage, with a focus specifically on Kompas.com and Tempo.co. In addition, this research argues that media portrayals of the KPK are not merely descriptive but deeply ideological, shaped by the interplay of textual choices, journalistic practices, and broader sociopolitical

contexts. By applying Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a framework explored in detail in the methodology section, the study unpacks how language is used strategically to construct particular versions of reality about the KPK's integrity and legitimacy.

A media report's portrayal is shaped not only by the individuals involved in its creation but also by the underlying ideologies of the media and journalists, as well as the broader social, political, and economic interests connected to the event (Erdayani et al., 2023; Hilmiyatun et al., 2022). Furthermore, according to Fairclough (2001), mass media are 'not a free and neutral channel,' as news production is often driven by institutional ideologies and business interests that shape what issues receive attention and how they are framed. In the case of the KPK, media discourse becomes a battleground where competing narratives about integrity, accountability, and national priorities are negotiated and debated.

Indeed, prior research indicates that media outlets such as Kompas.com and Detik.com play a significant role in constructing public perceptions of the KPK, especially regarding allegations of ethical violations and demands for oversight (Arianto, 2021). Similarly, disinformation circulating on social media has been shown to influence public understanding of KPK-related events, including the dismissal of 57 KPK employees, thereby affecting institutional credibility (Firdaus, 2023; Larasati, 2022; Mujianto et al., 2023). These findings underscore the need for critical analysis of how dominant online media frames sensitive institutional actions, especially during crises.

Recent developments in the application of critical discourse analysis (CDA) theory to various scientific fields have occurred (Syahlendra & Ashaf, 2021; Cahyaningsih & Pranoto, 2021; Erdayani et al., 2023). Several research results provide valuable insight for readers, although there are still research results that do not apply the basic principles of a critical approach. The results of this study aim to demonstrate that the systematic application of several theories, such as Systemic Functional Linguistics to text or discourse (as often recommended by CDA supporters), is not enough to claim a critical attitude from the study of text or discourse. According to Fairclough (2001), the analysis of online texts as social practices that attend to power and ideology is rooted in the CDA tradition.

Research on digital media discourse and its social impact is not universal but tends to be more context-specific. However, an increasing number of studies highlight online discourse as a form of political resistance in authoritarian countries (H.Y. Salama, 2022; Guo, 2019). Likewise, there is little research, in this case, to address online discourse related to contentious politics in the Asian context, primarily through a CDA approach.

In summary, this paper aims to answer the following question: How do Kompas and Tempo portray the image of the KPK in their online coverage of the 2021 Yogyakarta working meeting, and what

do these representations reveal about the role of media in shaping institutional legitimacy during times of crisis? Understanding this dynamic is vital not only for assessing media accountability but also for strengthening democratic oversight in Indonesia's ongoing struggle against corruption.

## METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach informed by Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how the online media platforms Kompas.com and Tempo.co represent the image of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in their coverage of the controversial working meeting held at the Sheraton Mustika Hotel in Yogyakarta from October 27 to 29, 2021. According to Fairclough (2001), a three-dimensional framework—text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice—was operationalized as an analytical tool to uncover how language, ideology, and power relations shape media narratives about the KPK. A purposive sampling method was used to select news articles published on October 28, 2021, the day immediately following the public revelation of the KPK meeting. This date was strategically chosen because it marked the peak of media attention and public debate surrounding the event. The search terms used included: '*KPK rapat di Yogyakarta*', '*KPK rapat hotel mewah*', '*Firli Bahuri rapat*', and '*KPK boros anggaran*.'

From this process, a total of four articles were selected for analysis: two from Kompas.com (one main report and one follow-up commentary) and two from Tempo.co (one investigative-style article and one opinion piece). The inclusion criteria were: (a) articles directly reporting on or analyzing the Yogyakarta working meeting, (b) published within 48 hours of the event (October 27–29, 2021), (c) containing substantial textual content suitable for linguistic and discursive analysis, and (d) representing different journalistic genres (e.g., straight news, editorial, quote-driven reportage). All selected texts were downloaded and saved in plain text format for systematic coding.

To ensure analytical rigor and replicability, each dimension of Fairclough's model was operationalized with specific procedures and coding categories. Each article was manually annotated using these categories. For instance, all instances of evaluative adjectives and passive/active voice constructions were highlighted and classified to reveal patterns of legitimization or delegitimization. At the text level, the analysis focused on linguistic features that construct meaning and ideological positioning (Talib & Fitzgerald, 2016; Eghlidi, 2016). Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the following elements were coded as outlined in Table 1.

At the discursive practice level, the focus shifted to how texts are produced and consumed (Nurhayati & Sukarno, 2022). The focus involved: (a) Producer analysis: Investigating editorial stances of Kompas and Tempo, based on documented institutional ideologies (e.g., Kompas' historical alignment with centrist-conservative values; Tempo's legacy of investigative journalism), (b) Text production context: Reviewing authorship, publication timing, headline construction, and sourcing strategies, and (c) Interpretive inference: Assessing how readers might interpret the framing, considering dominant socio-political narratives at the time. For example, Tempo's use of Novel Baswedan, a widely respected former KPK investigator, in the headline ("Is it ethical or not?") signals a deliberate appeal to moral authority, reinforcing its critical stance. In contrast, Kompas cited internal KPK statements emphasizing legal compliance, reflecting a more institutional alignment.

At the sociocultural practice level, the analysis situated the texts within broader social, political, and economic contexts (Hajrah et al., 2024; Gitonga, 2019): (a) Situational context: The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, widespread public hardship, and national discourse on fiscal responsibility, (b) Institutional context: The aftermath of the 2019 revision of the KPK Law, which weakened the institution's independence and triggered public skepticism, and (c) Ideological context: Media ownership, journalist subjectivity, and competing narratives about state accountability versus bureaucratic autonomy. This dimension allowed for

Table 1 Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics

<b>Lexical Choice</b>	Use of evaluative words (positive/negative connotations)	Kompas: 'penggunaan APBN', 'pemulihan ekonomi nasional' Tempo: 'etis atau tidak', 'boros anggaran'
<b>Modality</b>	Presence of modal verbs indicating certainty, obligation, or doubt	Kompas: 'harus dilaksanakan' Tempo: 'apakah pantas?'
<b>Transitivity</b>	Types of processes (material, mental, relational) and agency attribution	Who is acting? Who is being acted upon?
<b>Pronoun Use</b>	Inclusion/exclusion strategies (we, they, kita, mereka)	Kompas: 'pimpinan KPK' (neutral) Tempo: 'Firli Bahuri cs' (pejorative implication)
<b>Intertextuality</b>	Quoting source, referencing laws, citing critics	Kompas quotes KPK officials justifying budget use Tempo cites Novel Baswedan questioning ethics

interpretation of why specific frames (e.g., ‘economic recovery’ vs. ‘ethical failure’) resonated differently across outlets. It also helped explain how Kompas may have aimed to stabilize trust in state institutions, while Tempo amplified public dissent as part of its role as a watchdog.

To enhance credibility, triangulation was applied through: (a) Cross-comparison of findings across the two media outlets, (b) Peer debriefing with fellow researchers familiar with CDA, and (c) Maintaining a reflexive journal to track researcher bias, especially regarding pre-existing perceptions of the KPK. Furthermore, the coding scheme was pilot-tested on one additional article from each outlet before final application. The pilot testing was intended to ensure consistency in thematic identification.

While the focused sample enables in-depth textual analysis, its limitation lies in its narrow scope, with only four articles from two elite media platforms. Therefore, the findings reflect dominant elite discourse rather than grassroots or social media narratives. Furthermore, given the influence of Kompas and Tempo in shaping national conversation, this focus remains analytically significant (Durmaz & Yogun, 2022; Ali & Khan, 2022).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

According to Fairclough (2001), discourse analysis can be applied in textual dimensions, discourse practices, and sociocultural dimensions. In the initial stage of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, the textual dimension focuses on the representation of clause selection, clause combinations, and inter-sentence sequences (Sobari et al., 2025; Fan et al., 2023; Abdul et al., 2020; Erdayani et al., 2023). This analysis helps reveal how media outlets construct the image of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), especially about its use of funds, through the opinions expressed in their reporting. The textual dimension provides insights into how media framing influences the public's perception of the KPK's actions and decisions. The following analysis examines how Kompas and Tempo, two prominent media outlets, portray the KPK's use of funds during a work meeting held in Yogyakarta, shedding light on the contrasting images of the anti-corruption agency presented by each. By examining the clauses used and their relationships with each other, it becomes clear how both media outlets influence the public's understanding of the KPK's financial management, with Kompas focusing on a more favorable narrative and Tempo emphasizing criticism. This textual analysis provides a foundation for understanding how media reporting, through its choices in language and structure, plays a pivotal role in shaping the public image of the KPK.

This section presents the findings of a critical discourse analysis of two news articles: one from Kompas.com and the other from Tempo.co, both of which report on the KPK's working meeting held in

Yogyakarta during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis is structured according to Fairclough's three-dimensional framework: textual analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. Each dimension is supported with specific Indonesian excerpts from the texts, their English translations, and an explanation of how these features contribute to meaning construction and ideological positioning. The linguistic analysis reveals apparent differences in diction, pronoun use, and sentence construction between the two media (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2020).

Kompas.com headline reads: ‘Pimpinan KPK Gelar Rapat Kerja di Hotel Mewah, ICW Singgung Soal Pemborosan Anggaran’ (KPK Leadership Holds Work Meeting at Luxury Hotel, ICW Mentions Budget Waste). The phrase ‘pimpinan KPK’ (KPK leadership) is a neutral, institutional term that distances the report from individual accountability. In contrast, Tempo.co uses a more personalized and critical form: ‘Firli Bahuri Cs Rapat di Hotel Mewah di Yogya, Novel Baswedan: Etis atau Tidak?’ (Firli Bahuri and Co. Hold Meeting at Luxury Hotel in Yogya, Novel Baswedan: Is It Ethical or Not?). The use of ‘Cs’ (cum suis) creates an informal and critical tone. It implicitly associates Firli with unethical behavior. The rhetorical question ‘Etis atau tidak?’ serves as a moral judgment, inviting readers to question the ethics of the KPK's action.

Another lexical contrast can be seen in Kompas's justification: ‘Rapat kerja ini bagian dari struktur penggunaan APBN dan mendukung program pemulihan ekonomi nasional (PEN)’ (This work meeting is part of the state budget usage structure and supports the national economic recovery program (PEN)). This sentence reframes the meeting as a state-sanctioned necessity, aligning it with national policy, thus legitimizing it. In contrast, Tempo presents a counter-ethical view: ‘Rapat mewah ini digelar di tengah masyarakat yang sedang kesulitan akibat pandemi.’ (This luxurious meeting was held while society is struggling due to the pandemic). The juxtaposition of ‘rapat mewah’ (luxurious meeting) and ‘masyarakat yang sedang kesulitan’ (struggling society) constructs a negative image by highlighting a disconnect between the elites and the people.

The discursive practice focuses on how texts are produced and consumed (Abdul et al., 2020). The articles reflect the editorial ideologies of the respective media. Kompas.com is known for cautious and balanced reporting. Its lexical choices, such as ‘bagian dari struktur penggunaan APBN’ (part of the state budget structure), indicate an attempt to present a rationalized institutional perspective. Tempo.co, on the other hand, foregrounds critical voices, such as Novel Baswedan, a former KPK investigator. By quoting him directly in the headline and repeating ‘etis atau tidak,’ Tempo clearly positions itself as a watchdog media committed to questioning power. This contrast reveals the interdiscursive layering within each article: Kompas borrows the language of bureaucracy and policy; Tempo integrates activist and

Table 2 Summary of Linguistic Features and Ideological Framing

Pronoun Use	‘Pimpinan KPK’ (neutral)	‘Firli Bahuri Cs’ (personalized, informal)
Headline Framing	Descriptive, institutional: budget, meeting, response from ICW	Evaluative, provocative: individual focus, ethical question
Diction	‘penggunaan APBN, pemulihan nasional’ (formal, policy-oriented)	‘rapat mewah, etis atau tidak, masyarakat kesulitan’ (ethical-emotional)
Ideological Stance	Justifies institutional actions, maintains legitimacy	Challenges ethics of public spending, highlights class dissonance
Voice & Source	Quotes institutional actors (KPK officials)	Quotes critical actors (Novel Baswedan, activists)

populist discourses.

At the sociocultural level, the analysis interprets the texts within the broader social and political context, particularly following the post-revision of Law No. 19 of 2019, which weakened the KPK’s authority. (Haryono & Setyawan, 2020). Kompas, through cautious legitimizing language, aligns with institutional efforts to restore public trust in the KPK after legal setbacks. Tempo, emphasizing moral disapproval, resonates with public frustration over the decline in anti-corruption efforts and government accountability during the pandemic. The ideological function of each report is thus clear: Kompas stabilizes, while Tempo disrupts.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals how Kompas and Tempo, two of Indonesia’s most influential media outlets, framed the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in sharply contrasting ways during its October 2021 working meeting in Yogyakarta. Through Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework, the analysis demonstrates that Kompas constructed a positive public image of the KPK, emphasizing its compliance with state functions and economic recovery goals. At the same time, Tempo framed the same event as emblematic of institutional insensitivity and ethical failure. These divergent portrayals reflect not only distinct editorial ideologies, Kompas leaning toward a conciliatory, government-aligned narrative and Tempo upholding a critical, investigative stance, but also the broader socio-political tensions surrounding the KPK’s legitimacy after the 2019 legal revisions.

These findings highlight the significant role of media discourse in shaping public opinion and institutional legitimacy, particularly during crises when institutional trust is fragile. By exposing how linguistic choices and narrative strategies reflect ideological alignments, the study highlights the importance of critical media literacy in interpreting news and understanding the subtle ways in which media can mediate or polarize public trust. In addition to its empirical contributions, this study makes a significant contribution to discourse analysis by illustrating how Fairclough’s CDA framework can

illuminate the interplay between textual, discursive, and sociocultural dimensions in shaping institutional narratives. Future research could broaden the scope beyond two outlets, include longitudinal tracking of evolving representations, and investigate audience reception to understand the societal impact of such portrayals. Theoretically, applying multimodal CDA or combining Fairclough’s model with framing theory could deepen understanding of how media power operates in shaping institutional images in Indonesia and beyond.

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**Data Availability Statement:** The data that support the findings of the research are available in publicly accessible media platforms, specifically from Tempo and Kompas online news sources. These data were derived from the following resources available in the public domain: <https://www.tempo.co> and <https://www.kompas.com>.

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