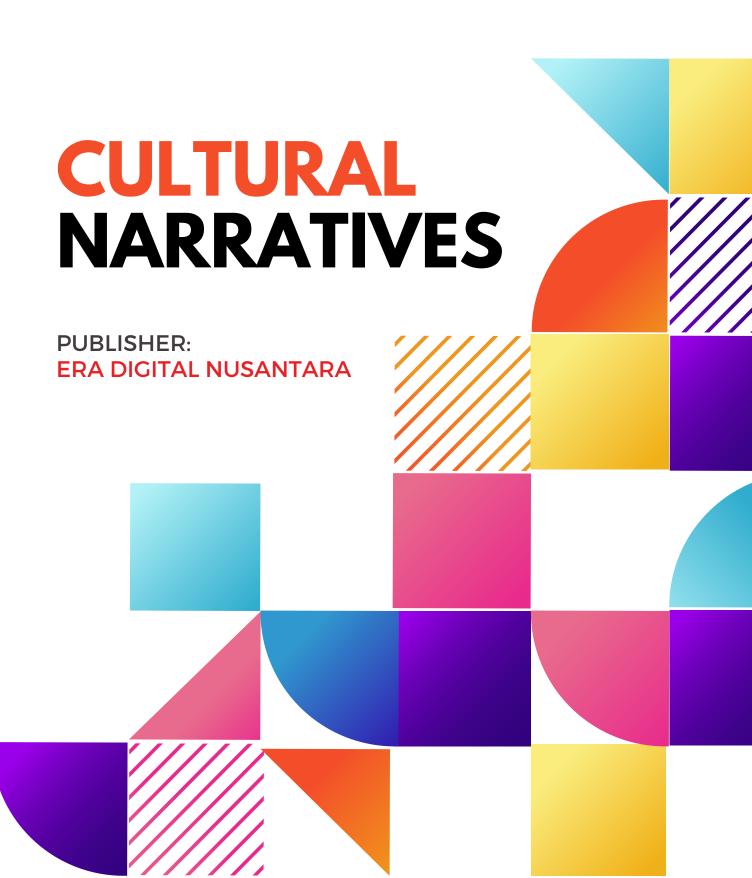




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A Discrimination Discourse on Mongabay.Com: Indonesian Court Jails Environmentalist for Flagging Illegal Farms in Marine Park

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ABSTRACT

This research reveals the discrimination discourse surrounding the Indonesian court's treatment of environmental specifically focusing on the case of Daniel Frits, who was jailed for exposing illegal shrimp farms in Karimunjawa. The primary objective of this study is to reveal how the media, particularly Mongabay.com, represents the court's actions and the implications of this representation for environmental activism in Indonesia. Using a critical descriptive method and qualitative data, the research analyzes the language and source selection in the article titled "Indonesian Court Jails Environmentalist for Flagging Illegal Farms in Marine Park," published on April 4, 2024. Moreover, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis uses as approach in this research. The findings indicate that the language used in the article portrays the Indonesian court negatively, suggesting a bias against activists who challenge illegal environmental practices. The analysis reveals that the court's actions are framed as unjust, contributing to a broader narrative that criminalizes environmental advocacy. This representation not only affects public perception of the legal system but also undermines trust in judicial processes related to environmental protection. The implications of this research highlight the significant role of media discourse in shaping public understanding of environmental issues and the legal challenges faced by activists. This study emphasizes the need for greater awareness and support for activists working to protect Indonesia's natural resources.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is the main source of communication with others. Language helps to perform in society and present thoughts and ideas in front of others. Language offers a variety of purposes in society, including those related to institutions, economy, politics, religion, education, and many other fields. It might be challenging to define how there are numerous roles that languages play in society because language is used naturally. (Liaquat dkk., 2023) stated, in a certain context, the language of action is called discourse.

Discourse is one of the terms that is often used to represent ideas, and perspectives, arranged with the right structure and pattern, so that is easy for the reader to understand (Prawoto, 2022). According to Baryadi (2002), the term discourse was used in linguistics. Discourse, also referred to as a complete unit of text, presents complete information. It can be in the form of written and oral conversation and can reflect social interaction. Discourse includes all concepts or ideas present in the text, which makes it broader than sentences. So,

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it can be said that discourse helps readers understand the author's concept or idea as a whole. The discourses contain political, environmental issue, economic, education, social, health, etc. The diversity of discourses that appear in the media brings considerable cultural changes in the formation of points of view on a topic raised, today's society tends to be more critical of a discourse. There are many perspectives when people understand a discourse. The media has an important role in directing and shaping a community's point of view (Prawoto, 2022). The media can shape perspectives on what is good and bad through discourse. Therefore, people as readers need to understand every piece of information presented in every news discourse (Badara, 2012).

The mass media plays an important role in shaping public opinion and perceptions on relevant issues, including the publication of the critical issue about the illegal shrimp farming. The media can influence how the public understands and assesses the role of human resources in this process. Therefore, it is important to look at how the media represents which side the media plays in understanding the importance of knowing the effects of the illegal farms that had been criticized by the activist.

In Indonesia, where environmental protection is an important issue, activists like Daniel Frits face significant challenges when they expose illegal practices that damage the environment in Karimunjawa, Jepara. Frits was jailed for flagging illegal shrimp farms in Karimunjawa, a marine park that is supposed to be protected. His imprisonment sparked widespread debate and outrage, with many accusing the government of prioritizing economic interests over environmental preservation. Frits, on the other hand, was merely expressing the protests that he and his group wanted to bring to light. This research aims to reveal the government's representation in the article of Mongabay's article, "Indonesian Court Jails Environmental Activist Who Flagged Illegal Farms in Marine Park" (Gokkon, 2024).

Some previous studies on discourse analysis and environmental activism highlights critical themes regarding media representation and its impact on public perception. Bergmann and Ossewaarde (2020) examine stereotypical depictions of youth climate activists in German media, revealing how such portrayals can undermine the credibility and effectiveness of environmental movements. Similarly, Cicilia and Irawan (2023) conducted a critical discourse analysis of political statements in Indonesia, emphasizing the role of social media in perpetuating ethnic discrimination and shaping political narratives. Fauzan (2023) further explored the connection between media and religious discourse in Indonesia, addressing how representations can respond to broader socio-political issues, including Islamophobia. Panjaitan (2020) analyzes the transformation of radicalism discourse into extremist violence, shedding light on the media's role in framing narratives around radical movements. Additionally, Prayogi (2022) discusses the framing of women in media discourse, highlighting the importance of representation in shaping societal attitudes. Rafaely and Barnes (2020) focus on the silencing of African climate activists, illustrating how media narratives can marginalize voices within the climate movement.

Despite these valuable contributions, there remains a significant gap in the literature concerning the specific representation of environmental activists within the Indonesian context, particularly in relation to the legal and political challenges they face. While previous

studies have addressed various aspects of media representation and activism, the intersection of environmental discourse and legal frameworks has not been thoroughly examined. This research aims to fill this gap by analyzing the representation of Daniel Frits, an environmental activist jailed for exposing illegal shrimp farming, in Mongabay's coverage. By employing Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework.

This research aims to critically analyze the representation of the Indonesian government in the article published by Mongabay, titled "Indonesian Court Jails Environmental Activist Who Flagged Illegal Farms in Marine Park" (Gokkon, 2024). Using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, this study will investigate how the language employed in the article positions the Indonesian government as an adversary within the narrative of environmental activism. This methodological approach not only elucidates how media texts reflect social realities but also examines their capacity to shape and influence public perceptions and actions. By exploring the interplay of power and ideology within media discourse, this research seeks to illuminate the ways in which such texts can either reinforce or challenge existing social structures.

METHOD

This is qualitative research, by using three steps, which are description, interpretation, and explanation. This research is called the critical descriptive method. The data in this research is in the form of words, which indicates that this data is qualitative data. The data in this research are phrases and sentences that researchers took that are related to the topic being discussed, which is negative representation in the news. The data used in this research are news and features on "Indonesian Court Jails Environmentalist for Flagging Illegal Farms in Marine Park" only on the Mongabay online media published on the 4th of April 2024. The limitation of this research is the researchers focus on one source of data to find out negative representation in the media to environmental activists.

The researchers chose to use the data because this data was considered to contain representations to be analyzed critically. Data was collected through several articles that discuss the same theme using the critical discourse analysis approach by Fairclough. Data collection in this study was carried out through several stages, including data identification, data coding, and data writing. From the data obtained, it was followed by analyzing the data. The data that has been collected and has also been classified will be analyzed using the Critical Discourse Analysis approach by Fairclough.

There are three steps to analyzing the data according to Fairclough's Models. They are; text analysis, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice. The text analysis dimension involves the analysis of the language used in the text and includes the features, such as lexical, grammar, and text structure. It deals with the choices of words, the pronouns that are commonly used, and the kind of text structure that is used in the data. Discursive practice deals with the relationship between text and its interaction. It refers to the process of text production, text distribution, and text consumption, such as who produces this kind of text, how the text is distributed to the consumer, and who will be the target of the text. Socio-

cultural practice deals with the socio-cultural background that can influence how a text can be produced.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION Findings

This research aims to reveal the court's representation in Mongabay's report. To obtain the answer, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis theory will be used. In Fairclough's model, there are three steps to analyze data, namely text analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. Text analysis serves to identify the lexical, grammar, and sentence structure used in the news. Discursive practice serves to identify who is involved in the news, such as who produces the news, how the news is distributed, and who consumes the news (Fairclough, 2013).

Text Analysis

Texts have a relationship with ideology, as their form and content reflect traces of the processes and structures of understanding of the recipient or reader of the text. However, we cannot directly "read" the ideology of a text. This is because the meaning of the text is produced through a process of interpretation, which can vary depending on who is reading it (Fairclough, 2013). In the analysis of texts in Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the approach is often limited to sentence-focused language theory, so that texts are only seen as an extension of sentence grammar. Texts can be analyzed through context as well, not always focusing on text structure.

Of the various types of linguistics used by Mongabay in the news "Indonesian Court Jails Environmentalist for Flagging Illegal Farms in Marine Park", there are two tools that mark the representation of themes and characters involved in news articles, namely the word choices and the selection of sources in a direct quote. The word choices have discriminated the Indonesian court with a negative representation because it is considered the mastermind of the polemic that occurs in the news. Meanwhile, in the selection of speakers on the direct quote, Mongabay dominantly chooses the opinion in favor of people who oppose Daniel's arrest. This puts the Mongabay discriminating the Indonesian court. Below is the analysis of aspects of language.

1) An Indonesian court has sentenced an environmental activist to seven months in jail for a Facebook post in which he criticized the growing problem of illegal shrimp farms operating inside a marine park. (Gokkon, 2024)

The phrase 'An Indonesian court has sentenced an environmental activist to seven months in jail' indicates that the court is criminalized someone who is trying to protect the environment by using the phrase 'environmental activist'. This can make the readers think the court is being unfair to the activists.

2) It found the activist guilty of "spreading hate" under a controversial 2008 law on online speech, over a Facebook post in which he denounced the shrimp farms operating inside Karimunjawa National Park, an ostensibly protected area. (Gokkon, 2024)

The phrase 'it found the activist guilty of 'spreading hate" shows that the court positioned the activist as the guilty one. they used the term 'spreading hate' which created a negative framing of the activist.

The phrase 'under a controversial 2008 law on online speech' shows that the author is highlighting the legal basis used in this case, namely Law No. 11 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE). According to the Alliance of Independent Journalists, laws related to cybercrime can be misused to silence freedom of expression and press freedom. Since its enactment in 2008 and its first revision in 2016, the ITE Law has criminalized human rights defenders, journalists, women who are victims of sexual violence, and citizens who express legitimate criticism (Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI), 2024). By using the word 'controversial', it emphasizes that the law is contentious and has the potential to be used unfairly. it also reflects the conflict between free speech and institutional control.

3) Three of Daniel's allies in the #SaveKarimunjawa campaign — Hasanuddin, Datang Abdul Rohim and Sumarto Rofi'un — were reported in November 2023 to the local police for posting a video of their opposition to the illegal shrimp farms. (Gokkon, 2024)

The phrase 'reported in November 2023 to the local police' uses a passive structure, with the aim of obscuring who the real reporter is, but still implying institutional pressure on activists. The phrase 'posting videos of their opposition to illegal shrimp farms' is used to position the activists as those who are trying to fight for justice through social media. The word 'opposition' indicates that the activists are doing something that is considered against the law by the authorities, in this case opposing something illegal.

4) Three other activists face similar charges in the case, which centers on their efforts to highlight the presence of illegal shrimp farms inside Karimunjawa National Park, which is supposed to be a protected area. (Gokkon, 2024)

The phrase 'Three other activists face similar charges in the case' indicates that the court is not just targeting an activist, but also several activists who are trying to expose the environmental issue. This creates the impression that the court has pattern of going after people who speak out in search of justice, which can make it unfair to the activists.

The phrase 'their efforts to highlight the presence of illegal shrimp farms' indicates that the activists are trying to inform the public about something wrong happening in the protected area. This word choice makes their actions sound positive as they are trying to help make the public aware of the problem. This is in contrast to the court's actions, which sounded negative because they stopped the activists' actions. The phrase 'which is supposed to be a protected area' indicates that the marine park is not being properly secured as it should be. Therefore, this phrase can be identified as a criticism of the authorities.

5) Environmental and human rights defenders stage a protest against the prosecution of four activists from the #SaveKarimunjawa movement. (Gokkon, 2024)

The phrase 'environmental and human rights defenders stage a protest' indicates that many people, especially environmental and human rights are disagreed with the court's decision to prosecute the activists for their actions in raising public awareness of the issue. This implies that what the court did was controversial and considered unfair by the wider community. Then, in the use of the hashtag #SaveKarimunjawa, by including the specific name of the movement. The use of this language gives legitimacy to the activist' struggle. It frames them as part of a campaign that is recognized and morally right, while making the court appear unconcerned or overly serious about the issue.

6) Most of the islands in the Karimunjawa archipelago are included inside the borders of Karimunjawa National Park, which was designated a marine reserve in 2001 and now covers an area of 1,100 square kilometers (425 square miles). (Gokkon, 2024)

The phrase 'designated as a marine reserve in 2001' uses the word 'designated' to indicate that the boundaries of Karimunjawa National Park have legal legitimacy, as a marine reserve that should be protected. According to National Geographic, a marine reserve is a type of marine protected area (MPA). An MPA is a section of the ocean where the government restricts human activity. A marine reserve is a marine protected area that prohibits the removal or destruction of natural or cultural resources (Rutledge & McDaniel, 2024). This suggests that the marine reserve here is not what it should be, which should be protected, but instead is being used as an illegal shrimp farm.

Furthermore, through direct quotes from the statement of a coalition of 21 environmental and human rights groups, Mongabay echoed the voices of the coalition who joined in condemning the actions of the court for arresting the activists. From the available data, Mongabay only mentions who support the activists. Below are some examples of data available for direct quotes in the news.

- 7) "This decision gives a bad image for Indonesian courts," the statement said. "The impact of this decision is very bad for environmental protection efforts in Karimunjawa." (Gokkon, 2024)
- 8) The prosecution further weakens the public's trust in whether there is justice and law enforcement in Indonesia, where the trial against Daniel Tangkilisan was full of legal violations from the beginning and was a trial designed to silence and criminalize Daniel Tangkilisan because of his alignment with environmental protection in Karimunjawa," (Gokkon, 2024).

From the examples above, it can be seen that the Mongabay only quoting a press statement held by 21 coalitions who are supported the activists.

Discursive Practice

Discursive practice is the way writers use language and discourse in social interactions that have several important functions. It serves as a guideline (regulative practice), a place where ideas emerge and develop (space of emergence), a way of moving context from one situation to another (principle of recontextualization), and part of social action itself (Fairclough, 2013). With all these functions, discursive practice can be a tool for understanding and evaluating the quality of public dialogue, including its success in creating an open public space in the media or texts being written.

Mongabay is an independent media organization that opens access to accurate environmental news created with a global network of local journalists (Butler, 2024). Founded in 1999, Rhet Butler, the founder started the Mongabay of his love for nature and animals. His mission is to raise interest in and appreciation of wild lands and wildlife. For the first ten years, he operated Mongabay on his own, publishing thousands of stories and tens of thousands of photos (Butler, 2015).

Each company has its own mission. This organization aims to raise interest in wildlife and wildlands while promoting awareness of environmental issues (Butler, 2024). This is not in accordance with the issue of the arrest of environmental activists in Indonesia, which is

considered to affect seven community groups in Karimunjawa. They consist of fishermen, cage farmers, tourism operators, communities in the pond environment, seaweed farmers, and seaweed entrepreneurs so Mongabay discriminates the Indonesian court.

Mongabay's mission is to increase awareness and knowledge of environmental issues by providing clear, accurate, and accessible information on environmental topics to the public who care about the natural environment. The organization strives to provide valid evidence about ecosystems and their impacts on people and the environment. Mongabay also aims to help people understand science and environmental issues by providing free access to news in multiple languages. Mongabay's final mission is to raise awareness and build action to protect the Earth's systems by strengthening the knowledge and skills of communities directly affected by environmental change (Butler, 2024).

According to More Than Human Words, Basten Gokkon is a very active environmental journalist in the area around Jakarta, he is also a regular writer at Mongabay, a news site that focuses on environmental conservation issues. As a journalist focusing on social and environmental issues, Gokkon has covered a wide range of topics including conservation, climate change, and sustainability, especially in the Southeast Asian region, including Indonesia. This background allows him to understand the complex interactions between local communities and environmental policies implemented in Indonesia (Chao, 2020).

Gokkon's motivation in writing the articles that are the object of this research seems to be rooted in his dedication to fighting for environmental justice, especially in cases where the law is used to silence the voices of activists. In his articles, he consistently explores the impact of unjust policies on local communities, including activists, and the ecosystems on which they depend. This also reflects Mongabay's goal to raise global awareness of environmental injustice and push for policy changes against illegal activities. By highlighting the detention of environmental activists and its impact on the Karimunjawa community, Gokkon is not only reporting the facts, but also demonstrating a critical stance towards a legal system that is perceived as unjust.

Socio-cultural Practice

Socio-cultural practice is the more broadly studied social and cultural context in which discourses or texts are created, disseminated and understood. This concept includes things like power relations, ideologies and social structures that influence how texts are used and their impact in society. The aim of socio-cultural practice is to see how discourse not only reflects social conditions, but can also reinforce or challenge power and inequality (Fairclough, 2013).

Social situation that occurs during the reporting on "Indonesian Court Jails Environmentalist for Flagging Illegal Farms in Marine Park" in Mongabay also cannot be separated from the contexts which build the news. According to Ridwansyah (2024), there were 827 environmental activists who were criminalized throughout 2014-2023. Wahana Lingkungan Hidup (Walhi) recorded 6 deaths, 145 arrests, 28 suspects, 9 children, 19 women, and 620 injuries ranging from mild to severe due to violence by the authorities. This is because the victims were criminalized for opposing government projects that have the

potential to damage the environment. One example of such a case occurred in 2023, with the arrest of Budi Pego. He was arrested for opposing mining activities in Tumpang Pitu.

From the data above, the phenomenon of criminalization of environmental activists often occurs in Indonesia. In the context of activist protests against activities that have the potential to damage the environment, activists are often faced with pressure from governments that are more concerned with economic progress than environmental welfare. This shows that criminalization of activists is one of the government's ways to suppress opposition related to sensitive environmental issues. As this case relates to the environment that is supposed to be protected, Mongabay wrote this news by implicitly discriminating against the court.

Discussion

This study critically examines the representation of environmental activist Daniel Frits in the media, specifically through the lens of Mongabay's coverage of his imprisonment for exposing illegal shrimp farming in Karimunjawa. The findings indicate that the language and framing employed in the article position the Indonesian government as an adversary in the narrative of environmental activism. This is achieved by highlighting the challenges faced by activists in a context where economic interests often overshadow environmental concerns.

The results of this research contribute to discourse on environmental activism by illustrating how media representations can shape public perceptions and influence the legitimacy of activist movements. Using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework, this study emphasizes the role of media in constructing narratives that either support or undermine environmental advocacy. This finding is consistent with previous research that has stressed the potency of media discourse in influencing societal attitudes toward activism (see Bergmann & Ossewaarde, 2020; Rafaely & Barnes, 2020). However, in contrast to other studies that concentrate on youth activism or specific social issues, this research emphasizes the distinctive challenges confronted by environmental activists in Indonesia, particularly within the context of legal ramifications for dissent.

Notwithstanding these contributions, the study is not without limitations. The analysis is based solely on a single media article, which may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives and narratives surrounding environmental activism in Indonesia. The exclusive focus on a single case also restricts the study's ability to generalize its findings to other contexts or activist movements. To enhance the comprehensiveness of future analyses, it is recommended that subsequent research broaden the scope of analysis by examining a more extensive array of media sources and activist cases. This approach would facilitate a more profound understanding of how environmental issues are represented in Indonesian media.

In short, this research could also explore the implications of these media narratives on public policy and environmental governance in Indonesia. By investigating how media representations influence public opinion and governmental responses to environmental activism, future studies can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between media, activism, and policy-making. Ultimately, this research lays the groundwork for further exploration into the critical role of discourse in shaping the landscape of environmental activism in Indonesia and beyond.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study is that the researchers highlighted how Mongabay's article on the criminalization of environmental activist Daniel Frits for exposing illegal shrimp farms in Karimunjawa negatively represented the Indonesian courts. Based on Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, it is clear that the language used in the article, such as the choice of words and direct quotations in the news story, portrayed the court's actions in an unfair manner against the activists who voiced their opinions about the illegal ponds. Then on Discursive practices, Mongabay.com as an environmentally-focused platform, in line with its mission to advocate for environmental protection, further influenced how the news was framed. In addition, the socio-cultural context, where environmental activists in Indonesia often face criminalization for opposing destructive practices, adds to the perception that the legal system prioritizes economic interests over environmental interests. This research underscores the power of media discourse in shaping public perception, especially regarding sensitive issues such as environmental protection and the role of activists in advocating for change.

The findings indicate that Mongabay, as an environmentally-focused platform, not only reported on the events but also shaped the narrative in a manner consistent with its mission to advocate for environmental protection. This framing is particularly significant in the sociocultural context of Indonesia, where environmental activists frequently face criminalization for opposing practices that threaten ecological integrity. The study highlights the critical role of media discourse in influencing public perception, especially regarding sensitive issues such as environmental protection and the challenges faced by activists advocating for change.

The implications of this research are powerful, highlighting the need for a more complex understanding of how media representations can influence public opinion and policy on environmental issues. By showing the interaction between media discourse and the legal system, this study calls for greater awareness of the potential biases inherent in media narratives and their impact on environmental advocacy. Future research should expand upon these findings by examining a broader range of media sources and activist cases to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the representation of environmental activism in Indonesia. Additionally, investigating the effects of media narratives on public policy and the legal treatment of environmental activists could further illuminate the dynamics at play in the intersection of media, activism, and governance. Ultimately, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on the power of media in shaping societal attitudes and responses to environmental challenges.

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