**Representation of Religious Conflict in Local Media**

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# Abstract

Representation of Religious Conflict in Local Media. Encep Dulwahab, Darajat Wibawa, Enjang Muhaemin, Dyah Rahmi Astuti. Media always tries their best to represent reality for their audiences. With the hope of retaining readers and increasing company revenue. However, sometimes, in representing the reality of religious conflicts, the media are always at odds with the norms, ethics, and code of ethics of journalism itself. The purpose of this study was to determine the representation of religious conflicts in local media, namely the West Java Ahmadiyah conflict which was given in the Pikiran Rakyat in the 2010 to 2011 news coverage. Religion by creating labels against Ahmadiyah as a deviant, misleading, forbidden organization, even worthy of disbandment; Pikiran Rakyat represents the object of its news into two camps, namely the strong and the weak. The strong faction is an organization supported by the government, and the weak faction is the Ahmadiyah which does not receive government protection and support; Pikiran Rakyat has presented news sources in this religious conflict in an unfair and balanced manner, presenting more news sources from the majority than the Ahmadiyah as a minority; Pikiran Rakyat represent solutions that can be done in resolving the Ahmadiyah conflict.

**Keywords**: *Representation, Media, Conflict, Religion,*

**Abstrak**

## Representasi Konflik Agama di Media Lokal. Encep Dulwahab, Darajat Wibawa, Enjang Muhaemin, Dyah Rahmi Astuti. Media selalu berusaha sebaik mungkin untuk merepresentasikan realitas bagi khalayaknya. Dengan harapan dapat mempertahankan pembaca dan meningkatkan pendapatan perusahaan. Namun, terkadang dalam merepresentasikan realitas konflik agama, media selalu bertentangan dengan norma, etika, dan kode etik jurnalistik itu sendiri. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui representasi konflik agama di media lokal yaitu konflik Ahmadiyah Jawa Barat yang dimuat di Pikiran Rakyat pada liputan berita 2010 hingga 2011. Agama dengan membuat label-label terhadap Ahmadiyah sebagai organisasi yang sesat, menyesatkan, terlarang, bahkan layak untuk dibubarkan; Pikiran Rakyat merepresentasikan objek pemberitaannya ke dalam dua kubu, yaitu kubu yang kuat dan kubu yang lemah. Fraksi kuat adalah organisasi yang didukung oleh pemerintah, dan faksi lemah adalah Ahmadiyah yang tidak mendapat perlindungan dan dukungan pemerintah; Pikiran Rakyat telah menghadirkan sumber berita dalam konflik agama ini secara tidak adil dan berimbang, lebih banyak menghadirkan sumber berita dari mayoritas daripada Ahmadiyah sebagai minoritas; Pikiran Rakyat merupakan solusi yang dapat dilakukan dalam menyelesaikan konflik Ahmadiyah.

## **Keywords:** *Representasi, Media, Konflik, Agama*,

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# Introduction

The Wahid Foundation noted that in 2017 there were 28 conflicts triggered by religious issues in West Java (Irfan, 2017). Legal Aid Institutions throughout Indonesia handle 9 issues related to violations of rights to freedom of religion and belief in West Java (Erdianto, 2018).

Based on the Ministry of Religion's records regarding the Religious Harmony Index that West Java is still far below the Religious Harmony Index of other provinces which averaged 73.83 percent, while the West Java Religious Harmony Index fell to 68.5 percent (Nasyit, 2021). Then the results of the Indonesia Political Opinion (IPO) survey that the religious tolerance of the West Java community is very low (Rifat, 2022).

According to Halili Hasan that there are four factors that have influenced the low tolerance and high level of religious conflict in West Java over the last 14 years, namely: regulations on religion, politicization of religion for the sake of group interests and ahead of succession, history of religion that cannot be separated until now, and conservatism of understanding. Islam (in Irawan, 2021).

If you look at the results of research by Rahmawati and Anwari (2013, p.5), it is based on the fact that the mass media in Indonesia also have a large enough influence on religious conflicts. The mass media often acts as a source of information about conflict that is consumed by the community. In addition to mass media, information about religious conflicts can also be easily found on social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Youtube (Venus, et.al, 2019).

There are more or less two issues that always attract the media, namely Christianity and various sects of belief that deviate from Islamic teachings, and they are a minority group, of which the Ahmadiyah group, the Syiah group and the Salamullah group have been widely reported (Rahmawati and Anwari, 2013, p.5).

In other countries, it has also been shown that the media are directly or indirectly involved in religious conflicts. Elizabeth and McCabe (2010); Keum, et. al, (2005); Nelson et. al, (1997) that the media has a great opportunity to reduce tolerance, and vice versa can increase intolerance significantly. Lee Marsden and Heather Savingny (2009, p. 158-157); Christiany Juditha (2011); Manan et.al., (2014, p. 38) also stated that the media has the capacity to present conflict and also has the potential to spread the spirit of peace.

In the news, there are various angles, as Suryana (2019) said, media that supports minorities, there are also media that act in the name of Islam and then support the enforcement of Islamic law. In publishing, they tend to be bombastic and agitative, especially to minority groups who are described as if they are forbidden, groups who speak language and can damage existing religions.

Andarini (2014) that the media are trying to create a negative image of Ahmadiyah, therefore often the media uses news language full of dramas. This is different from the local media, which reports that a smaller group of people like to be called a polite, polite and peace-loving group, even though this group is often pressured, attacked, and acted upon by anarchists by other groups, resulting in loss of property and physical or psychological pain. The same thing is also said by Wijaya et.al (2013, p.184-185) it is true that those who commit a lot of intolerant actions are the majority, and the minority is mostly defensive and even holds back.

Not only in Indonesia, the treatment of minorities by the media is also carried out by the Western media. They represent Islam and Muslims with a negative frame, and Islam is a religion full of violence (Ahmed & Matthes, 2016). Unlike the media in Australia, which represents religion in various forms. The media draw from various aspects of Australian society's life (Weng & Halafoff, 2020).

The explanations above are a phenomenon of how the media represent reality. The media in representing reality has a selection process, there are several elements of reality that are the main concern, and there are several other elements of reality that are left unchecked (Croteau & Hoynes, 1997, p. 134). The issue of the representation of the West Java Ahmadiyah conflict in Pikiran Rakyat is interesting to study. The reason for choosing Pikiran Rakyat as the research subject, is because Pikiran Rakyat is the largest media in West Java society, and circulated between 2010-2011. Pikiran Rakyat is often said to be the newspaper of the Sundanese.

**Theoritrical framework and research method**

This study uses the critical discourse analysis method of Teun A. van Dijk, because it can elaborate deeper discourse elements for the text, and dismantle the process of making texts (Eriyanto, 2006, p.221). Then the news that was selected was the news in Pikiran Rakyat in 2010 and 2011, which in total there were 15 news stories about the Ahmadiyah. In that year, conflicts occurred in various areas in West Java, with the highest frequency compared to the years before or after.

**Result and explanation**

**Heresy, Forbidden and Disbandment**

Based on text analysis of 15 news stories about Ahmadiyah, there are 8 news stories from Pikiran Rakyat which present that Ahmadiyah is a deviant religious organization, forbidden and must be dissolved. It can be seen in the 8 news stories, including: There are 7 Heretical Sects in Bekasi (13 October 2011); Kajari Kuningan Asks Ahmadiyah Manislor to Lower JAI Attributes (05 April 2011); Mayor of Bogor Issues Decree Banning Ahmadiyah (05 March 2011); Regency Government Seals Ahmadiyah Mosque (26 July 2011); Kuningan Muslim Component Asks Ahmadiyah to be Disbanded (27 March 2011); PPP Requests Ahmadiyah Disbandment (July 05 2011); Kuningan Muslims Urge President to Immediately Disband Ahmadiyah (01 March 2011); Bekasi City Government Issues Ban on Ahmadiyah (October 13, 2011).

Among the discourses developed by the editor of Pikiran Rakyat regarding representation to Ahmadiyah, it can be seen in the languages ​​used in the news, such as Ahmadiyah is heretical, Ahmadiyah is destroying the teachings of Islam, Ahmadiyah is a religious liar, Ahmadiyah has tarnished Islam, and Ahmadiyah deserves to be dissolved.

The Editor of Pikiran Rakyat represents Ahmadiyah in its news by labeling Ahmadiyah. The editor of Pikiran Rakyat has given its own meaning about religious intolerance to the readers. As Hall (1982) said that the media can make something meaningful or the media can make meaning for an event, an event, through an active process. Starting from the process of sorting, presenting, compiling, and constructing a moment. Media with all the facilities it has, has presented meaning to various realities. Like the Ahmadiyah news that is presented to the reader, with events that have been interpreted by the editors of Pikiran Rakyat, so that the readers understand the events resulting from the meaning of the journalists and the editors of Pikiran Rakyat.

Giving this term, said Hall (1997) as a representation that is done through giving a sign, name or label as a difference with the others (the other). Furthermore, Hall (1997, p. 237) explains that the differences in the designations made by the editor of Pikiran Rakyat against Ahmadiyah, and various other Islamic organizations are the result of good construction, through language in the form of binary opposition.

Wood (1985) says that in labeling, there are processes of control, regulation, and arrangement, most of which the makers themselves are not aware of. The editors of the Pikiran Rakyat do not realize that when they quote a news source's statement, then the news source's statement is packaged in such a way, then the results of the packaging or statement are published in the form of news, then those terms are spread which then become public consumption.

Labeling or more precisely tagging involves power relations. Therefore, marking or labeling is easier to address or assign to people in certain situations (Hobart, 2007, p. 131). Like the editor of the Pikiran Rakyat, in marking or labeling Ahmadiyah, the Ahmadiyah congregation is considered to be people who do not have power, so they are used as objects to receive the labeling.

The labeling carried out by the editors of Pikiran Rakyat on Ahmadiyah, according to the social positioning theory that Pikiran Rakyat has constructed or described the phenomenon of conflict between Ahmadiyah and the religious community. In this case, the editor of Pikiran Rakyat described the Ahmadiyah as a target group to be portrayed negatively in its news (Harre & van Langenhove, 1991, p. 1999).

Giving a name, or more specifically a symbolic marking of the Ahmadiyah congregation in the media, intrinsically experiences internalization in the reader (community) who is used to living with various new vocabularies from the media, new values ​​introduced by the media, and various mass cultures that are so popular. Dominant so that people no longer have the power to reject it, let alone try to test its truth. Then these vocabulary and values ​​are considered as something natural (naturalized) and present in the midst of society (Bailey & Harindranath, 2010, p. 276). Media-reinforced labeling involves hegemony and rulers, so this labeling occurs as something natural (Wood, 1985, p. 351; Hobart, 2007, p. 131).

After the editor of Pikiran Rakyat spread various terms as labels for Ahmadiyah, such as terms for blasphemy, deviant sects, and so on, the term became massive and familiar to the public. Thus, the term quickly became commonplace, and people considered it a natural thing.

According to Ludwig Wittgenstein, the labeling carried out by the Pikiran Rakyat against Ahmadiyah is the same as attaching a stamp to certain objects or goods (1958, p. 26). The editor of Pikiran Rakyat has branded Ahmadiyah as an organization with a forbidden label, a blasphemer of religion, a deviant sect, and so on.

The labeling carried out by the editors of Pikiran Rakyat can be interpreted as an effort by the editors of Pikiran Rakyat to fight against the representation of Ahmadiyah which has been going on for a long time. Counter-representations by the media or journalists by Bayley and Hariandranath (2010, p. 277) are referred to as representational strategies and linguistic terms which challenge and undermine those familiar expressions.

**Strong Camp versus Weak Camp**

The Editor of Pikiran Rakyat also represents the Ahmadiyah conflict with polarization, namely the strong and the weak. The percentage is 80% of the portion of news representation for the strong side, 20% of the portion for the presentation of the weak side in reporting on religious conflict in the Pikiran Rakyat in 2010 and 2011.

The strong stronghold that is quite significant from the coverage of the Ahmadiyah in Pikiran Rakyat is seen in including government officials, the majority Islamic community organizations, who are always different or in conflict with the Ahmadiyya congregation, in positions that are exaggerated and given the freedom to express their inner voices, desires, complaints and so on. Meanwhile, the Ahmadiyah were given a little space to defend and clarify the accusations against them. In its reporting text, the Ahmadiyya congregation is positioned as a weak stronghold.

The Editor of the Pikiran Rakyat did not hesitate to say that the strong majority demanded the local and central government officials to disband the Ahmadiyah. Using the title that Ahmadiyah is a deviant sect that deserves to be disbanded, such as in the news, "PPP Asks for Ahmadiyah to be Disbanded", "The Muslim Component of Kuningan Asks Ahmadiyah to Still Be Disbanded", "Muslims in Kuningan Urges President to Immediately Disband Ahmadiyah".

Among the news stories above, the contents are more likely to invite the majority to fill in the news, compared to those from the Ahmadiyya, who are clearly a minority. The news also shows the hegemony of the majority to the minority. As in the news, "PPP Asks for Ahmadiyah to be disbanded." From the title to the content of this news, it really provokes the readers to carry out acts of violence against the Ahmadiyya congregation as a weak stronghold.

Journalists when making news, have constructed two camps between the majority against the minority. The editors also often agree on the Ahmadiyah report which positions two camps, namely the weak and minority Ahmadiyah camps, and the larger and stronger camp, namely the stronghold of Islamic community organizations and the government. And in its reporting, the editor of the Pikiran Rakyat prioritizes what the government and Islamic community organizations want over Ahmadiyah.

Ibrahim (2020, p. 97) says how the representation that journalists build as discourse actors when they construct the Ahmadiyah is powerless, when contrasted with the voices of dominant and powerful bureaucrats and Islamic community organizations. Journalists and the media have excluded Ahmadiyah in the dominant and powerful group in reporting.

**Unbalanced Portion of Speakers**

The Editor of the Pikiran Rakyat in representing the Ahmadiyah conflict, presents more sources from the ruling party and the majority, than from the Ahmadiyya. Approximately 80% of news sources come from government elements, and several organizations that have authority. And there are 20% of the representatives of Ahmadiyah.

The principle of objectivity in reporting is non-negotiable. Kai Hafez (2002) in his research found that there is an agreement between the journalistic culture of the Middle East and Europe, namely that standards of truth and objectivity must be the central values ​​of journalism. This means that journalists everywhere when making news must be in accordance with the reality on the ground, may not support or side with one group. Moreover, covering conflict, journalists and media must be in a more objective and balanced way (Demarest et al., 2020). Journalists also when making news must thoroughly explain the event, not in pieces (Atmahkusumah & Atmahkusumah, 2009, p. 54). If the fragmentary news can be misunderstood by the reader.

The editorial side of Pikiran Rakyat in representing the Ahmadiyah conflict is quite contrasting. This partisanship certainly violates Article 1 of the Journalistic Code of Ethics, namely regarding independence. The Editorial Mind of the People has exhibited non-independent works in the coverage and reporting of the Ahmadiyah. Agree with Kovach and Rosenstiel (2006, p. 122), namely that journalists must be independent of the parties they cover.

Yasraf Amir Piliang (2003) has the view that objectivity, justice, cover both sides, and fact verification are indeed used by journalists and the media, but they are all used and intended for the authorities. Although the authorities did not directly ask for the media's alignment with him, non-technical factors directed him to do so. Such as buying newspapers in large quantities, advertising diligently, giving bonuses to the editors and so on, which makes the editors rethink if they want to fight them.

The existence of a violation of the Journalistic Code of Ethics by the Editor of Pikiran Rakyat, when carrying out their duties in reporting the Ahmadiyah conflict, was due to the strong economic interests of the media and political power. These two factors make the media heavy to be neutral, independent, as it is, fair and objective. It is the economic interests of the media and the power of political power that will change the direction of media policy, so that editorial policy in particular, cannot be stopped by its shifting orientation, starting from the information conveyed by the media containing the truth to false truth; Conveying objective information becomes subjective; Representing facts becomes twisting facts; Describing reality becomes simulating reality (Piliang, 2004, pp. 133-134). Truth, objectivity, facts, original reality are all hidden, then replaced with truth, objectivity, facts, shadow reality. So, it is indeed difficult and difficult for journalists to uphold justice and be balanced in every news story. It may be as difficult as keeping the facts accurate (Atmahkusumah & Atmahkusumah, 2009, p. 53).

If you look at the results of research conducted by Roberto Herrscher (2002, p. 277), it is necessary to have a clear division of this journalistic code of ethics, namely a journalistic code of ethics for media owners, a journalistic code of ethics for the public and a journalistic code of ethics for professional journalists. This suggestion from Roberto Herrscher may be that journalists do not violate the code of ethics, but this advice will be difficult to put into practice, because the news production process will involve many people, so it requires a universal code of ethics that is not partial.

The key and the foremost role in the representation of Ahmadiyah is journalists. Meanwhile, journalists are influenced by various factors that weigh and how strong they are so that journalists cannot fight back. As also stated by Akbarzadeh & Smith (2005, p. 36) that journalists are shaped by their social environment, influenced by ideology and politics, and some are openly influenced by their religion. These things affect the mindset and direct him to work as a journalist in making news. Based on the results of his research, Muttaqin (2012) shows that the media in reporting on religion tend to be in one religious school or sect. The media sometimes enter and become part of certain religious groups, or vice versa the media become opposite to certain religious groups and are outside of religious groups.

Hall (1982, p. 148) asserts that news is a product of human formation who has been trained and bound in a press institution—in the context of a certain space and time, in a certain society and culture, in a certain set of cultural values ​​and political economy, making it difficult to for journalists free from intervention and journalists who are sterile or untouched by the social and cultural environment in which journalists work. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a bias in the representation of news about the Ahmadiyah conflict in the Pikiran Rakyat.

**Conflict Solution**

Pikiran Rakyat also in their reporting represent ways to resolve the Ahmadiyah conflict, and efforts to reduce the Ahmadiyah conflict. There are more or less 6 news reports that explicitly and clearly explain how the editors of Pikiran Rakyat also participate in reducing conflicts, resolving disputes between Ahmadiyah and Islamic community organizations and government officials, which are motivated by opposing religious sects or beliefs. The news included: 2011 Muhammadiyah and NU Initiative to Resolve Ahmadiyah Conflict (08 March 2011); FUHS Conducts Peaceful Action (June 09, 2010); NU Elders throughout the Cirebon Region will Respond to Ahmadiyah (02 March 2011); Ahmadiyah Repentance Eliminates Conflict (March 16, 2011); Kapolda Asks All Parties to Retain (July 28, 2010); Violence is a Crime (21 April 2011).

The Ahmadiyah conflict as a reality that becomes news material in the Pikiran Rakyat, is presented in several news stories that are different from other news stories. Starting from the statements of news sources, descriptions of each statement of news sources, although in this news, news sources are still dominated by people who have influence or authority. However, the messages conveyed by news sources mostly make readers aware of the importance of maintaining ukhuwah Islamiyah, readers are aware that even violence will not solve problems, and differences do not have to lead to divisions among fellow citizens.

Here, the editor of Pikiran Rakyat as an influential media in West Java, and a popular media in West Java, can help the government in resolving the Ahmadiyah conflict, as also shown in the results of research from Olayinka, et al (2015, p.12) that the parties state apparatus should be willing to accept the position and role of the media, starting from reporting and teaching the public in resolving conflicts. When the government is aware of this role, the government can maximize the media to convey messages of peace.

The Editor of Pikiran Rakyat can be a medium to reduce the Ahmadiyah conflict, on the other hand, it can also exacerbate the Ahmadiyah conflict. It can be seen in the reports in other news texts, the editor of Pikiran Rakyat who uses the term disbandment, indirectly this can trigger mass action to commit anarchy. However, as in the news of conflict resolution, the editor of Pikiran Rakyat can quell the emotions of the masses. This is the media according to the results of a study by Christiany Juditha (2011); Elizabeth and McCabe (2010); Keum, et. al, (2005); Nelson et. al, (1997); Lee Marsden and Heather Savingny (2009: 158-157); Manan et.al., (2014: 38); Dimitra L. Milioni et. al. (2015:240) that the media has the capital and role to spread the spirit of peace and reduce conflict. On the other hand, it can play a dysfunctional role, i.e. exacerbate problems, and trigger emotions so that conflicts arise.

Richard C. Reuben (2015, p. 80) states that reporting on conflict has an impact on public understanding of conflict. If the media is wrong in presenting conflict to the public sphere, then the conflict can last forever. On the other hand, if the media can create awareness among the people in conflict, the conflict can be quickly resolved.

However, the editor of Pikiran Rakyat and conflict cannot be separated. Conflict issues are still a source of news that has high appeal. The Ahmadiyah conflict in West Java is no exception. However, no matter how high the interest and interest of the editors of Pikiran Rakyat towards conflict, it is best not to make it a source of news with news that destroys the harmony and peace of religious life. As Dimitra L. Milioni Vaia Doudaki et al (2015) say, conflict in society comes in various forms, so this conflict is of great interest to the media. But don't let these conflicts be presented in the media, in a confrontational way with a more interesting goal. It is better to present this conflict by taking into account the elements of the impact on the news.

**Conclusion**

Based on the discussion of this study, it found four important and interesting notes related to the representation of religious conflicts in Pikiran Rakyat, including: *first*, in representing the Ahmadiyah conflict, Pikiran Rakyat cites statements, regulations, and issues that are currently busy in society, all of which call for hate speech against people. the Ahmadiyya congregation. Even more extreme, Pikiran Rakyat also uses terms from regulations and statements from news sources presented by the main sources, namely stating that the Ahmadiyah organization is heretical and misleading the public, is prohibited from carrying out various activities and must be disbanded.

*Second*, Pikiran Rakyat represents the Ahmadiyah conflict by positioning the majority against the minority. The majority of these are people who are against and the central government to the regions as the authorities, positioned in conflict with the Ahmadiyah who is weak and has no support from anywhere.

*Third*, Pikiran Rakyat presented informants in every report about the Ahmadiyah conflict disproportionately. Pikiran Rakyat present many informants as the main source of news from elements of the government, elements of society who are against the Ahmadiyya. Meanwhile, the representation from Ahmadiyah itself is very small.

*Fourth*, although there are few, there are some reports in the People's Mind that represent how solutions can be done in resolving the Ahmadiyah conflict. Including some successes in resolving the Ahmadiyah conflict without violence.

In reporting on religious conflicts, in this case Ahmadiyah, the media should not use a normative approach, but can use a solution journalism or peace journalism approach. It is important for the media to consider the effects of their reporting, and prioritize how when reporting on this conflict is oriented towards peace, not making this conflict an opportunity for profit.

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