

Language, power, and media intimidation: a Foucauldian discourse analysis

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Abstract This article analysed the controversial public statement made by political consultant Hasan Nasbi, "just cook the pig's head", in response to an act of symbolic intimidation toward a journalist. Using Michel Foucault's discourse theory as the primary analytical framework—focusing on statement analysis, historical context, and power relations—this study investigates how language operates as a mechanism of power that normalises symbolic violence, marginalises dissent, and sustains hegemonic authority. The findings show that Nasbi's language is not merely rhetorical but functions ideologically: it delegitimises journalistic victimhood, redefines social norms of seriousness and threat, and enacts a regime of truth that reinforces the asymmetry of power in public discourse. Drawing from contemporary discourse studies, the study argues that such statements reproduce a surveillance-based form of control, wherein symbolic aggression is trivialised, and political accountability is eroded. This research contributes to the growing field of critical discourse analysis by demonstrating how everyday political utterances carry deep ideological functions and shape the boundaries of public meaning, legitimacy, and justice.

Keywords: *discourse; media; panopticism; power; subjectivity; symbolic violence*

INTRODUCTION

Press freedom is a cornerstone of democratic governance, widely recognised as the fourth pillar that not only monitors state authority but also upholds transparency, curbs disinformation, and enhances civic engagement by ensuring the flow of accurate and pluralistic information (Curran, 2002; McQuail, 2010). In contemporary democratic contexts, the media's watchdog role has expanded beyond traditional boundaries, especially in the digital era marked by rapid information flows and algorithmic gatekeeping (Novelli & Sandri, 2024; Putra, 2024). Press freedom enables society to hold power to account, fosters public deliberation, and ensures the diversity of voices in the public sphere (Ahdarrijal & Rahmawati, 2024; Karman & Mudjiyanto, 2024).

Recent studies underscore that an independent media sector significantly correlates with good governance outcomes and democratic resilience (Khosrowjerdi, 2022; Ziliotti et al., 2023). Conversely, in settings where media autonomy is restricted, there is an observable decline in institutional transparency and civic trust (Gede & Rama, 2024; Maharani, 2024). The press plays a critical role in challenging disinformation ecosystems, particularly in transitional democracies such as Indonesia, where digital disinformation and political clientelism often undermine journalistic integrity (Fakih, 2024; Yoedtadi et al., 2024).

Moreover, the framing of the press as an adversary by populist regimes threatens its legitimacy and deters critical reporting (Simon, 2023; Ramzy, 2024). Such conditions necessitate renewed advocacy for ethical journalism and structural reforms that secure editorial independence and legal protection for journalists (Arora, 2023). As media systems evolve amidst

digital disruptions and state pressures, the foundational principles of press freedom remain essential to safeguarding democratic life and maintaining the public's right to know.

In Indonesia, this right is legally protected under Law No. 40 of 1999 in the Press. Nevertheless, the incident involving the delivery of a pig's head to the editorial office of Tempo magazine on March 19, 2025, underscores the ongoing, tangible threats to press freedom. The Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI) classified the incident as an act of terror aimed at silencing journalistic voices (Nicholas, March 20, 2025). Tempo's Editor-in-Chief, Setri Yasa, asserted that the act was not merely symbolic but represented a direct assault on media independence (Tempo, March 24, 2025). This aligns with Habermas' (1989) concept of the public sphere, which emphasises that a functioning democracy requires a media landscape free from coercion, whether structural or symbolic.

Responses emerged from both legislative and executive branches. Tubagus Hasanuddin, a member of Commission I of the Indonesian House of Representatives, stressed that intimidation of journalists is intolerable, as the press plays a critical role in fostering transparency and accountability (Tempo, March 23, 2025). Minister of Communication and Digital Affairs Meutya Hafid similarly condemned the act, reaffirming that press freedom is integral to democracy. This sentiment reflects the perspective of media theorists such as Norris and Inglehart (2009), who argue that press freedom is a key indicator of democratic quality. Irfan Kamil, Chair of the Legal Journalists Association, described the act as a vile form of intimidation that not only endangers individuals but also erodes democratic foundations (Tempo, March 23, 2025). According to a 2023 study by Reporters Without Borders, Indonesian journalists continue to face threats in various forms—physical, verbal, and symbolic.

Tensions escalated when Hasan Nasbi, Head of the Presidential Communications Office (PCO), responded to the incident by stating that the pig's head should 'just be cooked'. This remark was widely seen as trivialising the seriousness of the threat and drew strong public condemnation. Press Council Chair Ninik Rahayu labelled the comment inappropriate and bordering on hate speech (Tempo, March 24, 2025). Prominent figures such as former Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Susi Pudjiastuti and Labour Party President Said Iqbal urged the President to take disciplinary action against officials who undermine press freedom. The statement was also criticised by Andreas Hugo Pereira, Deputy Chair of Commission XIII, who viewed it as an arrogant dismissal of the press's democratic role (Detiknews, March 25, 2025). When public officials minimise threats to journalists, such responses can be interpreted as attempts to delegitimise the press and may signal a diminished institutional commitment to democratic norms (Schudson, 2008).

This study investigates the government's response to the Tempo magazine incident, with a particular focus on Hasan Nasbi's controversial statement. His remark—"just cook the pig's head"—is analysed through the theoretical lens of Michel Foucault's (1926–1984) concept of power relations. The central aim is to examine how power operates through discourse to normalise an act that fundamentally intimidates and threatens journalistic freedom. Foucault's seminal work, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977), posits that modern power no longer functions through overt physical coercion but through continuous surveillance that encourages self-regulation. This form of disciplinary power, often referred to as the 'panopticon effect', governs individuals without explicit force. Rather than relying on punishment, power establishes norms that individuals internalise and follow voluntarily. In educational settings, for instance, power manifests through curricula, institutional policies, and hierarchical relationships (Ball, 2012).

According to Foucault (1978) power is closely linked with knowledge and discourse. It does not operate through brute force, but through the subtle regulation of personal conduct, including sexuality, by disseminating norms via institutional discourses. Power thus shapes subjectivity and social behaviour without those subjected to it being fully aware of its mechanisms. In this view, law and punishment serve not only as repressive tools but also as instruments for internalising social control. The application of law is influenced by factors such as class, race, and political interest, thus reinforcing dominant power structures (Garland, 1990).

Foucault emphasises that power is both oppressive and productive: it defines what is deemed normal or deviant, right or wrong. Power relations are dynamic and evolve through social interactions. Power is inseparable from knowledge; it produces knowledge that, in turn, constructs social realities (O'Leary & O'Leary, 2002). Disciplines such as medicine, psychology,

and criminology exemplify how knowledge systems shape and regulate individual behaviour without physical violence (Foucault, 1978). As Deleuze (1988) explains, power and knowledge co-produce one another, structuring both identity and social order.

Numerous scholars have applied Foucault's discourse theory to diverse contexts, illustrating its versatility in analysing power dynamics. For instance, Siswadi (2024) explored how power constructs knowledge within educational systems, revealing the subtle mechanisms through which authority shapes learning environments. Wahdan et al. (2023) examined the influence of corporate power on media content, highlighting how political and economic interests commodify information and affect journalistic integrity. Astuti (2023) applied Foucault's framework to gender-based violence, arguing that patriarchal structures legitimise male dominance through normalised discourses. Zakiyah et al. (2024) investigated how institutional knowledge and social dynamics influence family planning decisions, demonstrating the role of discourse in personal health choices. Similarly, Asnur (2023) analysed organisational regeneration, revealing how power strategies regulate member behaviour within institutional settings.

Building upon these studies, recent research has further expanded the application of Foucault's theory. Nadhifah et al. (2024) utilised critical discourse analysis to examine controversies in Islamic boarding schools, uncovering how power and knowledge are constructed and contested within religious educational institutions. Rohimah et al. (2024) deconstructed communication structures in the digital age, analysing public hysteria and governmental surveillance through the lens of Foucault's panopticism. Sri & Habsari (2024) explored cancel culture by analysing online comments on a celebrity scandal, demonstrating how social media discourse enforces moral judgments and societal norms. Putri & Budiraharjo (2020) applied Foucauldian discourse analysis to news reports on high school enrolment policies, revealing the complexities of policy implementation and the competing agendas of various stakeholders. Yolcu (2022) provided a comprehensive review of Foucault's discourse dynamics, emphasising the importance of understanding the relations and structures underlying discourse to reveal power relations.

While these studies focus on institutionalised power dynamics in domains such as education (Putri & Budiraharjo, 2020; Siswadi, 2024), media ownership (Wahdan et al., 2023), gender (Astuti, 2023), reproductive health (Zakiyah et al., 2024), and organisational governance (Asnur, 2023), this research offers a different perspective. It analyses how discourse—specifically the phrase “just cook the pig’s head”, serves as a mechanism to normalise acts that undermine press freedom. The public backlash against this statement underscores its deviation from accepted democratic discourse and forms the core of this study's analysis.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach with a focus on discourse analysis, specifically examining the controversial statement “just cook the pig’s head” made by Hasan Nasbi, Head of the Presidential Communications Office (PCO). Discourse analysis in this context serves as a framework for interpreting how power and knowledge are constructed through language (Fensi, 2024; 2025). Drawing on Foucault's (1978) theoretical perspective, discourse is not merely a reflection of reality but a construction influenced by regimes of power. Knowledge is shaped through discourse, and power operates by regulating the production and circulation of knowledge rather than relying solely on physical coercion. This framework guides the investigation of how the statement reflects power relations within political discourse.

This analysis adopts Michel Foucault's discourse theory, which highlights the role of language in constructing and sustaining power relations within society. The research applies three core components of Foucault's analytical framework (Foucault, 1969). First, the analysis of the statement involves a close reading of Nasbi's remark to reveal how language serves to normalise acts of intimidation. It identifies linguistic features that downplay the severity of press suppression and examines how seemingly casual expressions operate as instruments of symbolic power. Second, the historical contextualization of the statement is crucial for grasping its political significance. This includes an exploration of the broader political environment at the time the statement was issued, as well as historical patterns of media intimidation in Indonesia. This contextual layer illuminates how political power is exercised and legitimised through public discourse. Third, the power relations embedded in the statement are analysed to uncover the

institutional and discursive dynamics surrounding it. This entails examining the interactions between state authorities, media institutions, and the public. Foucault's concept of biopower—the governance of populations through indirect and normalised mechanisms of control—serves as a theoretical lens for understanding how Nasbi's statement shapes public perceptions and responses to threats against press freedom.

The research utilises data from a range of textual and audiovisual sources to construct a comprehensive picture of the discourse. Reports from reputable Indonesian outlets such as Tempo and Kompas serve as primary sources, offering detailed coverage of the incident and political reactions. Public comments and reactions on platforms like YouTube provide insight into how the public and political figures responded to Nasbi's statement. YouTube videos and talk shows featuring political commentary are analysed to identify how the incident was framed and circulated within digital media. These sources were selected to capture both the official and popular dimensions of the discourse. Data were analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to uncover recurring rhetorical patterns, ideological framing, and the normalization of power-laden narratives.

The analytical process is centred on Foucault's concept of discourse as a system of knowledge and power. Specifically, the study examined how the phrase "just cook the pig's head" functions to trivialise a politically motivated act of intimidation. By downplaying its severity, the statement contributes to the normalisation of symbolic violence against the press. Discourse is understood here as a structured way of speaking and thinking that organises meaning within a specific regime of truth (Fensi, 2024; Foucault, 1978). Rather than uncovering objective truths, this analysis explores how truth itself is constructed and legitimised through discourse. The statement under investigation exemplifies how political actors deploy language strategically to manage dissent and reframe narratives about media freedom.

This study, therefore, adopts a qualitative, interpretive methodology aimed at revealing the underlying structures of meaning, authority, and control embedded within political language. It investigates how seemingly offhand remarks can reinforce dominant ideologies and shape public consciousness about the role of the media and the limits of democratic expression.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Discourse context

The central focus of this research is the symbolic act of sending a pig's head to the office of Tempo and the controversial response of Hasan Nasbi, the Head of the Presidential Communications Office (PCO). These two events can be interpreted as manifestations of the dynamic interaction between political power—which controls public narratives—and press freedom within the same power structure. Within the context of power relations, the act of sending a pig's head serves as a symbolic form of intimidation directed at a group perceived as a threat due to its media coverage. Actors with greater power often seek to control public discourse through symbolic means, allowing them to avoid direct physical threats while still exerting influence. In this regard, discourse and narrative become tools through which actors can shape public opinion and maintain power. According to Norman Fairclough (1989), discourse should not be viewed merely as a communicative tool but as a mechanism of power that shapes and influences public perceptions in alignment with ideological objectives.

The pig's head, as a symbol, functions as a threat signal from the realm of symbolic power. Nasbi's response to the incident can be understood as an attempt to safeguard the stability of symbolic power, particularly by avoiding confrontation with the media. His response, which appears dismissive and not aligned with the strengthening of press freedom, suggests an imbalanced interaction between power and knowledge in society. As Foucault (1977, 1978) argues, such imbalances in the relationship between power and knowledge result in two key consequences: first, the control and limitation of knowledge to serve the interests of those in power, and second, the implementation of normalisation mechanisms, through which power determines what is considered socially 'normal' (See Figure 1).

Nasbi's statement, "just cook the pig's head," can be seen as a manifestation of such a normalisation mechanism. This mechanism serves to normalise the pressure placed on those who challenge the status quo, rendering acts of terror or intimidation as both acceptable and expected. The discourse surrounding the controversial remarks by Hasan Nasbi, specifically his comment: "Just cook it, if it's a pig's head, just cook it. I saw from Fransiska's social media, she

was told to send pork, which means she is not threatened; the proof is that she can joke. For me, we can't respond to anything. That's their problem, who knows with whom," will be analysed to reveal the power dynamics embedded in his statement.



Figure 1: Pig head sent to Tempo
Source: Tempo, 2025

A Foucauldian analysis of Nasbi's statement

Nasbi's statement, "just cook it, the pig is cooked, and we can't respond to anything," reveals a layered discourse that reflects embedded power relations, as theorised by Michel Foucault. Using Foucault's three elements—statement analysis, historical context, and power relations—we can unpack the implications of this utterance more thoroughly.

The phrase used by Nasbi is not merely a casual remark but a discursive act that positions certain subjects in hierarchical roles. The metaphorical language, particularly "the pig is cooked," implies finality and irreversibility, suggesting that any further response is futile. This linguistic construction silences alternative narratives and delegitimises any form of rebuttal or resistance. In Foucauldian terms, the statement functions to delimit what can be said, by whom, and with what legitimacy. It positions Nasbi as a sovereign speaker whose discourse is performative and authoritative.

The statement emerges within the political context of power centralisation in the executive body, particularly the presidential office, where communication is not merely informative but strategic. The fact that the statement targets Tempo and its journalist Fransiska indicates a historical tension between state apparatuses and independent media in Indonesia. This mirrors Foucault's idea that discourse does not exist in a vacuum—it is shaped by institutional histories and functions as a mechanism of power in specific socio-political milieus. The historical pattern of attempts to delegitimise critical journalism forms the backdrop of Nasbi's utterance, reinforcing its discursive authority.

Nasbi, as Head of Communications for the Presidential Office, occupies an institutionally sanctioned position of power. His discourse not only reflects this positional authority but also produces power by shaping public perception and limiting acceptable interpretations of the situation. According to Foucault (1977), power is not only repressive but also productive—it produces knowledge, truth, and discursive norms. In this case, the binary framing of strong/weak and right/wrong, embedded in Nasbi's speech, works to legitimise the state narrative while marginalising dissenting voices. Such binary oppositions contribute to the disciplinary function of power, where social actors are categorised, positioned, and controlled.

In Foucauldian terms, this statement is a discursive event that exemplifies how language operates as a tool of governance. Ethical and humane considerations are subordinated to the maintenance of institutional authority, and the asymmetrical power relation between the state and the press is both reflected and reinforced through discourse. Ultimately, the statement

reveals how power operates not just through coercion, but through the very structures of meaning that define what is sayable and thinkable in public space.

Language as a tool of power in political discourse

Michel Foucault (1969) emphasises that language is not a neutral medium for communication but a discursive practice that produces reality. In Hasan Nasbi's statement—"just cook the pig"—the phrase acts as a performative utterance, not merely conveying meaning, but doing something: normalising symbolic violence, trivialising intimidation, and marginalising dissent. This statement should not be viewed as a personal expression, but as part of the production of a regime of truth—social truths that are constructed and legitimised by power structures (Foucault, 1972). By reducing a symbolic act of violence to a culinary joke, the statement shifts the meaning of violence into something laughable, subtly erasing the victim's experience (Tempo journalist) from public discourse.

Historically, this statement emerged within a context of increasing polarisation and mounting pressure on press freedom in Indonesia. In today's mediated political communication landscape, power operates not only through direct action but through the repetitive control of narratives in mainstream and social media. Within this context, "just cook the pig" becomes a part of a strategic political communication approach that does not confront criticism directly but neutralises symbolic violence through humour and normalisation. It reflects how political language in the digital era has evolved into a tool of perception management, rather than simply policy articulation. Wodak & Meyer (2016) describe this practice as discursive legitimation—a strategy of framing power acts as socially acceptable. Similarly, Gee (2018) argues that such utterances also enact institutional identities, positioning the speaker (a state official) as someone entitled to define what should and should not be taken seriously.

According to Foucault (1978), modern power no longer functions through direct prohibition but through the production of truth, the regulation of meaning, and the internalisation of social norms. In this case, Nasbi uses language to position himself as a discursive authority who can redefine or dismiss the meaning of violence. By downplaying the incident, he contributes to redefining the boundaries of intimidation and determining who has the right to articulate suffering. As Fensi (2023) notes, such utterances serve as instruments of ideological transmission, subtly embedding norms, values, and 'truths' within public consciousness via language.

Marginalisation of subjects

Nasbi's statement, "I saw from Fransiska's social media, she was told to be sent pork, which means she is not threatened," illustrates how power operates discursively to marginalise subjects, particularly through gendered and institutional dynamics. Drawing from Foucault's discourse analysis framework—specifically the analysis of the statement, historical context, and power relations—this section examines how the subject (Fransiska, a Tempo journalist) is discursively constructed and politically subordinated.

The use of phrases such as "just cook it" and "the pig is cooked" prior to Nasbi's main statement reflects what Judith Butler (1990, 2004) identifies as performativity—the repetitive use of language to construct social realities. These statements trivialise the symbolic violence of sending a pig's head, turning it into an object of mockery and normalcy. The repetition of the word 'cook' is not neutral; it becomes a linguistic tool for deflection, shifting the discourse from intimidation to humour, from violence to banality. This rhetorical move marginalises the subject by redefining the seriousness of the threat. Furthermore, the mention of "Fransiska's social media" is a strategic discursive element that reinforces gendered assumptions. It reframes the subject's reaction as emotional, performative, and thus less credible—an example of what Lazar (2005) calls patriarchal discourse, where women's voices are undermined by framing them as irrational or exaggerated.

The historical context of this statement cannot be separated from the broader landscape of press intimidation in Indonesia. Over the past decade, the press has frequently been subject to indirect threats, including digital harassment, doxing, and symbolic violence, such as what Tempo experienced. The sending of a pig's head, loaded with cultural and religious provocation, is part of this continuum. Nasbi's response must, therefore, be viewed not merely as a personal comment but as a state-endorsed minimization of a wider culture of intimidation.

In Foucauldian terms, this is part of the archive—the set of statements that define the boundaries of acceptable discourse at a given historical moment (Foucault, 1972). The normalization of violence through humour and dismissal have precedent in political communication, where official statements often function to suppress counter-narratives and delegitimize dissent.

Foucault, (1977) emphasises that power is productive, not merely repressive—it constructs subjects by defining what can be said and who can say it. In this case, the subject (Fransiska) is not treated as an autonomous journalist with legitimate grievances but as a symbol that can be reframed through state discourse. Nasbi, as a high-ranking government official, uses his institutional authority to redefine truth: that no threat occurred, and that humour is proof of safety.

This aligns with Ahmed, (2017) critique of affective politics, where emotions like sarcasm and laughter are used by the powerful to dismiss systemic issues. Moreover, gender is central to this power dynamic: Butler (2004) argues that gender is continually constructed through language and power relations. Here, the state uses gendered discourse to silence dissent, suggesting that emotional expression or humour negates actual violence. The result is a discursive marginalisation—Fransiska becomes a subject whose experiences are filtered, reframed, and diminished by the very power she is attempting to challenge. Her visibility is weaponised to undermine her credibility, illustrating how discourse is used to maintain hegemonic control over knowledge and public perception.

Regulation of social relations

Hasan Nasbi's statement—"for me, we can't respond to anything. That's their problem, who knows with whom"—functions as a discursive act that regulates social relations within asymmetrical power dynamics. Drawing on Foucault's theory of power as diffuse, non-centralised, and enacted through discourse (Foucault, 1978), this analysis identifies three interrelated mechanisms through which power is exercised: invisibility, fragmentation, and non-intervention.

The phrase "that's their problem" signifies discursive withdrawal—an intentional detachment from the issue at hand. In Foucauldian terms, this reflects a strategy of disavowal, wherein the subject of power (Nasbi, as a state figure) renounces responsibility while maintaining influence. As Wodak & Meyer (2016) argue, such distancing language is often employed in elite discourse to obscure complicity while preserving narrative control. The performative detachment—"we can't respond to anything"—operates as a linguistic technology of power (Foucault, 1972), using language to shape social relations without confrontation. It reframes political responsibility as optional, rendering structural violence invisible. While the speaker feigns neutrality, the utterance itself constitutes an act of power, defining the limits of accountability and relevance.

This statement must be contextualised within Indonesia's broader history of media repression and governmental evasion. Symbolic acts of intimidation against journalists—such as the delivery of a pig's head—have often gone unpunished, exposing a pattern of state indifference.

Nasbi's remark aligns with this discursive tradition of non-intervention, where silence or detachment operates as policy. This echoes Foucault's (1978) notion of biopolitical governance, where power regulates populations not through overt repression but through mechanisms of neglect and categorisation. Dean (2010) further explains that such governmentality operates by shaping normative expectations, determining what qualifies as a 'public issue' or a 'private matter'.

Foucault's concept of power as relational and capillary implies that power permeates all social relations, even through its apparent absence. Nasbi's rhetorical non-involvement—"that's their problem"—is not mere avoidance; it is a subtle mechanism of control. It allows the speaker to appear detached while still directing the interpretive frame of the event. This aligns with Rose's (1999) argument that contemporary governance functions not only by regulating behaviour but by shaping subjectivity—how individuals perceive their position about power. Nasbi repositions himself outside the sphere of accountability, modelling a subjectivity of detached authority. This discourages institutional responsibility and reinforces a political culture in which threats to the press are peripheralised.

In short, Nasbi’s discourse does not eliminate power—it recalibrates it. By disavowing responsibility, he does not retreat from power but reconfigures it into a more insidious form. The phrase “that’s their problem” thus operates as a regulatory discourse—governing social relations by normalising exclusion, shaping public perception, and sustaining inequality under the guise of neutrality.

Panopticon mechanism in political discourse

Hasan Nasbi’s statement—“just cook the pig’s head”—can be examined through the lens of Foucault’s concept of the panopticon, a metaphor for modern surveillance and social control (Foucault, 1977). In this schema, individuals internalise the gaze of authority and behave as if constantly observed, even when direct surveillance is absent. This mechanism disciplines not only bodies but also thoughts and speech, shaping what is publicly sayable, hearable, and normalised.

The phrase “just cook the pig’s head” trivialises symbolic violence. Rather than condemning intimidation, Nasbi’s remark normalises it, even framing it humorously. This rhetorical manoeuvre is not neutral; it reflects a broader power strategy to manage public perception by framing acts of violence as mundane. Foucault (1978) emphasises that discursive formations establish boundaries of ‘truth’ and ‘normalcy’. Here, repetition of the verb ‘cook’ metaphorically transforms a threatening act into something banal, reducing its political significance. Brown (2015) identifies such rhetorical flattening as a technique of depoliticisation—wherein political violence is emptied of meaning through irony or dismissal.

In today’s digital media landscape, surveillance is no longer top-down but distributed. Nasbi’s statement—“that’s their problem, who knows with whom”—operates within this panoptic environment, where all actors simultaneously surveil and are surveilled. Media institutions now serve as panoptic towers (Lyon, 2018), generating visibility that encourages conformity through the fear of exposure, rather than the fear of punishment. Nasbi’s discursive disengagement reflects strategic silence under surveillance—a calculated choice that allows him to perform neutrality while reinforcing dominant power structures.

Table 1: Dimensions of power relations & practices

Dimensions of Social Relations	Text	Elements of Foucault's Power Relation		
		Analysis	Historical Context	Power Relations
Power relations in the Statement	Just cook it, the pig is cooked, and we can't respond to anything	A discursive Act that Positions certain Subjects in Hierarchical Roles	Attempts to Delegitimise Critical Journalism Forms	Power Shaped Public Perception and Limiting Acceptable Interpretations
Language as tools of power	Just cooked the pig	“Just Cook the Pig” as a performative act	The Neutralization of Violence in Political Communication	Language as an Instrument of Ideological Control
Marginalized subjects	I saw from Fransiska’s social media that she was told to send pork	Linguistic Construction and Performativity	Press Intimidation and Political Silence	Gender, State Authority, and Control of Truth
Normalization/ regulation of social relations	For me we can't respond to anything. That's their problem, who knows with whom	Power through Disavowal and Discursive Withdrawal	The Politics of Media Intimidation and State Silence	Non-Involvement as a Technology of Control
The Panopticon Mechanism in the Statement	That's their problem, who knows with whom	The Language of Normalisation	Surveillance and Media as the New Panopticon	Internalized Surveillance and the Reproduction of Power

Source: Researcher, 2025

Nasbi’s discourse reflects the internalisation of panoptic logic. The passive tone—“we can’t respond to anything”—manifests self-disciplining power: a form of withdrawal that appears benign but ultimately stabilises existing hierarchies by normalising silence in the face of intimidation. Foucault (1977) notes that the most effective power operates without coercion, by shaping expectations and internalising norms. Nasbi’s remark must therefore be understood not

as an offhand comment, but as an articulation of panoptic power—where symbolic violence is legitimised through everyday speech. Zuboff (2019) similarly argues that the power of surveillance lies not in censorship, but in rendering dissent unthinkable (See Table 1).

Text and implications of power discourse

This section synthesises key findings from the previous analysis—namely, power relations in discourse, language as a tool of power, subject marginalisation, regulation of social relations, and the panopticon mechanism—by examining their broader implications in the context of political communication and symbolic violence.

Media, often imagined as a neutral platform for public deliberation, actually functions as a symbolic arena of power where narratives are contested and legitimacy is negotiated. Nasbi's dismissive language—"just cook the pig's head"—should be read not as a casual remark, but as a deliberate performance of authority that defines the tone and frame of acceptable discourse. As Dijk (2008) argues, discourse in media contexts does not merely reflect power; it enacts it by determining access to representation and voice. By trivializing the symbolic violence aimed at Tempo, Nasbi reinforces a dominant narrative that delegitimizes victimhood, and re-centres political actors as the arbiters of what counts as serious or trivial.

When Nasbi remarks that "if only the pig's head was cooked", the controversy that follows reveals how norms are constructed through discourse. According to Foucault (1978), power does not merely repress—it produces norms by defining what is normal, abnormal, acceptable, or deviant. In this case, the tension arises because Nasbi's language clashes with broader societal norms about civility, gender, and symbolic violence. Here, discourse becomes a battleground: Nasbi's utterance attempts to destabilise existing moral norms by reframing a threat as a joke. As Butler (2004) notes, power often maintains itself not through violence, but through reiterations of language that desensitise the public and shift moral boundaries.

Nasbi's argument—"she can joke, so she is not threatened"—exposes a deep contradiction in the discourse of freedom of expression. In this framing, the victim's ability to appear humorous becomes a justification for denying harm, thus rendering the expression of threat invisible. According to Ahmed (2017), such rhetorical strategies are common in power discourses that dismiss lived experiences by framing them as overreactions or emotional noise. This reflects how freedom of expression is unequally distributed, contingent upon one's position in power hierarchies. The ability to define what 'counts' as fear, trauma, or resistance becomes a political privilege.

Nasbi's statement—"we can't respond to anything"—is not a declaration of powerlessness, but a strategy of discursive withdrawal. In Foucauldian terms, this reflects governmentality—a mode of power that governs not through coercion, but through non-intervention (Foucault, 1991). Such statements function to deflect responsibility while simultaneously shaping the contours of what is discussable in the public sphere. As Dean (2010) observes, neoliberal governance often manifests in the refusal to act under the guise of respecting autonomy, when in fact it maintains control by disengaging from justice.

Finally, the statement "that's their problem, no matter who it is with" illustrates how language becomes complicit in normalising social injustice. By framing structural intimidation as a private or irrelevant issue, Nasbi's discourse severs collective responsibility and sustains impunity. According to Žižek (2008), ideological language functions precisely in this way: by making the unacceptable seem inevitable or unimportant. This form of discursive negligence contributes to the erasure of victims, the reproduction of silence, and the continuation of symbolic violence under the veil of indifference.

The implications of Nasbi's statements, when viewed through the Foucauldian lens, are clear: they do not merely reflect power—they produce and regulate it. Through language, norms are constructed, responsibilities evaded, and violence made invisible. The casual tone masks a deeper ideological function: the maintenance of asymmetrical power relations, justified through discourse that delegitimises the experiences of the weak and reasserts the dominance of the powerful (See Table 2).

Table 2. Implications of power discourse on text

Text	Implications of Power Discourse
"I saw from Fransiska's social media, she was told to send pork, which means she is not threatened, the proof is she can joke"	The use of language that belittles a serious event is part of the game of power relations.
"Just cook the pig's head"	Power relations determine the assessment and response to whether a situation is normal or abnormal.
"She can joke, which means she is not threatened"	Power relations in freedom of expression are limited by power structures that are in strong social positions.
"We can't respond to anything"	Inability to take responsibility in power relations.
"That's their problem, who knows with whom"	Ignoring serious social issues in a power relationship.

Source: Researcher, 2025

CONCLUSION

The statement "just cook the pig's head" is not merely a spontaneous or personal remark; it exemplifies the normalisation of discourse within a field of power. Drawing on Foucault's theory, this utterance reveals how power operates through language—not by overt coercion, but through the subtle legitimisation of certain narratives while silencing others. Discourse normalisation refers to the process by which particular perspectives, behaviours, or responses are repeatedly presented as natural, acceptable, or trivial, thereby rendering alternative voices exaggerated, emotional, or irrelevant.

In this context, language functions as a technology of governance—it structures perception, assigns meaning to actions, and delineates the boundaries of what is speakable and thinkable. The statement operates as a discursive act that marginalises victims, particularly the journalist in question, by reframing symbolic intimidation as insignificant. This is not merely a matter of personal opinion; it is the construction of social reality through discourse, where power determines what constitutes harm, who has the authority to define it, and whose voices are acknowledged.

Moreover, power is not confined to centralised institutions but is embedded within dispersed social relations. It operates through everyday language, social expectations, media representations, and the mechanisms that allow—or deny—individuals the discursive space to articulate their experiences meaningfully. The repetition of casual or dismissive language in the public sphere serves to normalise violence, obscure institutional accountability, and safeguard dominant interests.

Although freedom of expression exists in principle, it is in practice constrained by discursive boundaries shaped by cultural, religious, and political norms. As Foucault argues, power does not repress truth but rather produces regimes of truth—truths that are legitimised by power and circulated as common sense. Strategic avoidance of direct engagement, often justified as maintaining public neutrality or order, is itself a political act: it sustains the status quo while disguising its complicity.

In conclusion, discourse is not merely a reflection of social reality but a mechanism for shaping, regulating, and preserving power relations. It determines who is authorised to speak, what is deemed hearable, and how social tensions are framed. The ostensibly harmless act of trivialising a threat becomes a potent instrument through which power reasserts itself—quietly, efficiently, and with profound consequences for democratic life and social justice.

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