

Media framing of Philip Mehrstens: a critical extension of Entman's model

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Abstract The release of Susi Air pilot Philip Mehrstens in September 2024 offers journalism academics an opportunity to reevaluate Robert Entman's (1993) framing model and their relevance to prolonged conflict reportage. This study examined whether media framing continues to function as an adequate analytical tool for understanding coverage of long-standing conflict zones, which is shaped by political rivalry and deep social division. Using a qualitative framing approach, the authors analysed six online news articles published by national media outlets (Detik.com, Kompas.com, and Republika.co.id) and by local Papuan media (Jubi.id, SuaraPapua.com, and TribunPapua.com). The analysis draws on Entman's four framing functions: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgements, and treatment recommendations, to compare how national and local media constructed meaning around the same event. The findings show that while Entman's framing functions consistently organise news narratives and enable systematic comparison, the model is not analytically adequate when used in isolation. Marked differences in framing orientation reveal the decisive influence of ownership structures, ideological positioning, emotional cues, and historical memory. National media prioritised procedural diplomacy, official chronology, and state authority, whereas local media foregrounded indigenous agency, community leadership, and structural injustice. To address these limitations, this study extends three analytical extensions: institutional constraint, emotional and symbolic framing, and cultural and contextual anchoring. Together, these extensions contribute to strengthening the explanatory capacity of framing analysis in long-standing conflict settings.

Keywords: Entman's theory; framing analysis; Indonesian journalism; media studies; Papua conflict

INTRODUCTION

Papua, Indonesia's easternmost region, is rich in natural resources yet has endured political and social instability for more than fifty years. The area, which has undergone multiple name changes from West Irian to Irian Jaya and ultimately to Papua, remains unstable. Chauvel, in Nurhidayat et al. (2023), identifies the primary concerns as Papuan dissatisfaction with integration, elite conflicts, the outwardness of indigenous societies, and stalled development, all of which have fuelled pro-independence sentiments.

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The annual report of the Cartenz Peace Operation Task Force (Kompas, 2023) has recorded 209 armed political and criminal incidents in Papua in 2023, reflecting a continuing pattern of militarised insecurity and protracted low-intensity conflict that has been widely documented in recent academic studies (Konečná, 2025). These incidents surrounded aeroplane shootings by armed criminal organisations (West Papua National Liberation Army - Popularised as KKB by Indonesian Military Authority to pejorative labelling the Papuan Independence Movement), wildfire, and the widely publicised kidnapping of New Zealand pilot Philip Mehrstens by KKB on 7 February 2023. These situations drove Indonesia's media attention throughout the year. In the authors' observation, local and national media have extensively reported Papua's social-political situation, each presenting a wide range of editorial perspectives.

Jubi.id has adopted a critical view and published more than 85 news articles from September 2023 to October 2024 that focused on human rights abuses, marginalisation, and a separatist perspective, often depicting the state as the origin of the conflict. In a similar tone, SuaraPapua.com highlighted indigenous perspectives and critiques of state repression, drawing attention to issues such as criminalisation, environmental exploitation, and resistance to government-backed projects. TribunPapua.com, conversely, adopted a more positive/neutral tone, focusing on state-led development, official visits, and issues of national unity, while consciously avoiding sensitive topics such as separatism.

In national online news, the media outlets took a narrative polarisation. Detik.com provides the fastest reportage, systemic reform urgency, and critical perspective. Kompas.com with formal, institutional, and procedural news coverage, which focuses on official statements, while Republika.co.id has a hands-on approach, which public debates and questioning the government's narrative. These various framings not only show newsroom editorial style but also doctrinal perspective, which highlight how each mass media presents reality differently.

Moreover, it is particularly visible in their reporting of the pilot's release. The discharge of Philip Mehrstens, a Susi Air pilot, on September 23, 2024, was covered across media platforms, presenting their differing editorial stances.

This can be seen in McQuail's (2010), when he conceptualised mass media as a societal institution that both reflects and shapes public life by acting as a cultural and ideological agent, a view reinforced by recent studies showing that media not only capture public attention and shape attitudes but also normalise dominant values and legitimise power relations through routine news production and narrative selection (Couldry & Hepp, 2020; Fuchs, 2021; Fensi, 2025).

Recent scholarship emphasises that media messages are not neutral transmissions of events but are shaped by production routines, circulation logics, and institutional contexts that influence how meaning is constructed and shared (Waisbord, 2020; Suparno et al, 2016) This is particularly evident in reporting on identity and conflict, where framing choices play a decisive role in guiding public interpretation and moral evaluation (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2019).

Recent academics highlight that mass media messages are not neutral at all in their reports of events. Instead, they're shaped by production processes, how they're spread, and the institutions behind them. These factors influence how meaning is created and shared (Waisbord, 2020; Suparno et al, 2016). This is especially clear in reporting on identity and conflict, where framing choices strongly affect how the public understands and judges things (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2019).

Previous studies on conflict journalism suggest that framing serves two main purposes: it highlights some aspects while downplaying others, and it organises complex political and cognitive realities into understandable narratives. As a result, framing theory remains a crucial analytical tool for understanding how media shape public perceptions of prolonged social and political crises, especially in regions marked by historical instability, contested authority, and unequal power relations (Wolfsfeld, 2018).

Recent Research on the 2019 Asrama Papua conflict illustrates how framing shapes public understanding of sensitive issues. Harsa & Rofil (2021) found that Kompas and Jubi create contrasting narratives (one emphasising national harmony, the other highlighting racial discrimination) reflecting their differing audiences and ideologies. Similarly, Konečná's (2025) study demonstrates that Indonesian media often mirror the state narrative by labelling West Papuan pro-independence groups as 'terrorists', thereby sidelining indigenous views and reinforcing institutional power structures.

Yang & De Rycker (2017), for example, presented how newspapers in Malaysia with their distinct language, framed the Low Yat incident as an ethnic narrative that magnified racial tension. Rahman (2017) found that *Republika Online* framed the concept of jihad to promote a mainstream yet nationalist Muslim identity, showing how media framing aligns with specific ideological goals. Gadekar et al. (2014) showed that six frames, such as fear, safety, and responsibility, shaped how the *Indian Times* portrayed the H1N1 outbreak, turning health reporting into narratives of crisis and human struggle. This framing process illustrates how news media actively construct social reality, especially in sensitive conflict zones like Papua, where reporting is entangled with national identity, state power, and indigenous resistance.

A key approach within framing theory provides a systematic way to evaluate these processes by examining how specific narratives are created and maintained. This framework, proposed by Robert Entman (1993), delineates four essential duties the media execute when framing an issue: defining the problem, diagnosing causes, making moral evaluations, and offering threat recommendations. Applying this view to Papua, the only region in Indonesia where security forces have maintained a strong and enduring presence and a conflict prone area that has long been militarised (Supriatna, 2013), allows a more in depth analysis of how news narratives shape public perception, particularly in contexts where prolonged militarisation, political violence, and centre periphery relations structure governance and public discourse (Elmslie & Webb Gannon, 2018; Aspinall, 2021).

Framing analysis, as described by Entman (1993) and Eriyanto (2002), is a methodological tool for examining how the media construct reality through the selective framing of events, actors, groups, or issues. Its framework shows how media shape perceptions into narratives which reflect preferences rooted in institutional and ideological context.

Online news is not just a report on what happened, but also shaped by institutional news methods, editorial authority, and the goal of strategic communication. News online conveys meanings that are understood by audiences with shared belief systems. This framing process shapes people for structuring audience perception, interpretation, and affective response. Eriyanto (2002) notes that news framing operates on two main mechanisms: selection (deciding what to include/exclude from a story) and salience (amplifying specific elements to influence public interpretation). These occur in language, headlines, pictures, repetition, and hints that convey meaning.

In Entman (1993) formulation, he formalises these systems into four stages: define the problem, diagnose the cause, make a moral judgement, and make a threat recommendation. He further emphasised that the domain operates by framing across journalists, audiences, content, and public opinion, underscoring the mass media's role in developing a shared understanding of reality. In this view, Ananda & Putra (2023) suggest that selection and salience work together to help the public prioritise and understand the most important aspect of news reportage.

Recent framing scholarship shows that selection and salience operate jointly as sense-making mechanisms, enabling audiences to interpret news events while directing attention toward specific actors, causes, and evaluations deemed most relevant by journalists and media institutions (Matthes, 2019; Borah, 2020).

Research supports the model's usefulness. Baber & Paracha (2021) show that Pakistan's mass media framed 'The War on Terror' in line with government narratives, while Ariyanto (2024) found that Indonesian media emphasised the identities of perpetrators to influence public perception. Therefore, framing allows the media to shape issues within a political and institutional context, making Entman's model useful for studying how reality is constructed.

Entman's perspective has influenced communication studies, particularly in Entman's analysis of framing in peaceful media surroundings. However, its limitations become apparent in authoritarian or conflict-prone settings.

Scholars argue that Entman's framework tends to understate structural constraints, political coercion, and power asymmetries that strongly shape media narratives in protracted conflict zones such as Papua (Nahed & Hammond, 2018). In such contexts, journalists often work under intimidation, resource constraints, and surveillance, situations that weaken editorial independence and foster reactive, exclusionary framing practises shaped by institutional vulnerability (North & Fiske, 2016; Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

Framing theory is essential in media studies for examining how mass media shape public perception through narrative structures. Media framing in Papua has played a key role in shaping public understanding of its prolonged political/security crisis. Adiprasetyo & Taqiyya (2023) show that Kompas.com often marginalises Papuan voices while highlighting state statements. Adiprasetyo (2009) also finds that national media works under the influence of the state; therefore, they frame Papuan resistance through nationalist/security lenses. Sari (2016) notes that economic news often portrays Papua as underdeveloped, thereby minimising its political struggles. Anggelina & Triandana (2023) evaluate national and international coverage. They show that Indonesian media, like Detik.com, frame the conflict as terrorism, while international media focus on deeper historical wrongs.

The findings indicate that national outlet media favour episodic, state-centred frames that overlook structural and organisational dynamics, a pattern evident in the 2023 to 2024 Philip Mehrstens hostage case, where reporting diverged in line with political orientation and goals of the organisation.

Existing studies of Asian media representation reinforce these patterns. David et al. (2010) investigated that the Philippine media depict people's debates as polarising and extremely ideological. Yang & Ishak (2012) find that Malaysia's mainstream media campaign about the state's language policy change, meanwhile, alternative media encourage a more critical point of view. Liu (2023) finds that the emotional aspect of COVID-19 news influences how people react, in line with anger/hope/bias as important factors. de Souza (2010) shows that the media in India usually portray NGOs in a positive light because of biases in the system and history. Maslog et al. (2006) stated that portrayals of the Iraq War varied by religious affiliation and source choice, affecting interpretations of the conflict as either a peace matter or a war dispute—mass media framing is rarely neutral. Fensi (2025) argues that media framing tends to reconstruct dominant social narratives and sidelines alternative viewpoints, especially in conflict reporting, where the media's words influence how reality is understood.

Nicolás (2011) highlights the need for situated framing in relation to wider political structures. He noted that an integrated model will strengthen media analysis in conflict regions like Papua. Moreno-Bello (2021) adds that media in such an environment compete with ideologies, which complicates the simple binary logic of the traditional framing model. The local and national media framed the release of Susi Air pilot Philip Mehrstens in September 2024 in various ways. Jubi.id stressing on bribery claims, SuaraPapua.com emphasising on cultural diplomacy, and Republika.co.id questioning state transparency.

These variations show how editorial agendas and institutional pressures influence media portrayals of conflict. This study examines the adequacy of Entman's framing model in analysing complex representations of long-standing conflicts such as Papua. Specifically, it examines how national outlets (Kompas.com, Detik.com, Republika.co.id) and local media (Jubi.id, Suara Papua.com, Tribunpapua.com) construct meaning through Entman's four framing functions: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies. Through qualitative framing analysis and contextual interpretation, this Research compares local and national news online media coverage of the release of Susi Air pilot Philip Mehrstens to explore how ideological, institutional, and structural factors influence framing practices. Ultimately, this study questions: How does the media framing model remain a sufficient tool for interpreting portrayals of long-standing conflict zones, where journalism is influenced by political rivalries and social divisions?

METHODOLOGY

The authors purposely selected six online news reports based on editorial orientation (critical vs. institutional), geographic coverage (local vs. national), and ideological/vision and mission tone. The selection process followed three main criteria: First, time proximity to the event: news reports published within three days of the pilot's release (20–26 September 2024) were included. Second, article topic: articles had to substantively address the release of Mehrstens rather than merely mention it. Third, audience reach and editorial relevance: inclusion was supported by traffic rankings (SimilarWeb, August–September 2024) and prior academic citations of the media outlets for their framing of Papua-related issues.

Three national and three local outlets were selected to represent a balanced corpus: Kompas.com, Detik.com, and Republika.co.id (national); Jubi.id, SuaraPapua.com, and

TribunPapua.com (local). *Detik.com* and *Kompas.com* were chosen for their high national reach, ranking first and third during the sampling period, while *Republika.co.id* was included for its frequent citation in ideological framing research (Rahman, 2017). Local representation was provided by *Jubi.id* and *SuaraPapua.com*, both recognised for their consistent reporting on indigenous rights and Papuan conflict, as cited by scholars and NGOs (Adiprasetio & Taqiyya, 2023). *TribunPapua.com*, as part of the *Tribun Network*, which is closely linked to the government and represents mainstream regional reporting. This sample ensured editorial diversity and analytical relevance in capturing multiple media responses within a tightly bounded news cycle on Table 1.

Table 1. Corpus of analysed news articles on Mehrtens' hostage release

News outlet	Title news	Date	URL
Local news outlet			
Jubi.id	<i>Dituding ada suap dibalik pembebasan pilot Mehrtens/ Allegedly there was bribery behind the release of pilot Mehrtens</i>	23 Sept 2024	https://jubi.id/pasifik/2024/dituding-ada-suap-dibalik-pembebasan-pilot-mehrtens-menlu-selandia-baru-mengaku-tak-tahu-dan-tak-terlibat/
Suarapapua.com	<i>Pilot Philips Mark Mehrtens Dibebaskan/Pilot Philips Mark Mehrtens Released</i>	21 Sept 2024	https://suarapapua.com/2024/09/21/pilot-philips-mark-mehrtens-dibebaskan-menlu-selandia-baru-kami-senang-dan-lega/
Tribunpapua.com	<i>Pilot Susi Air Dibebaskan KKB/Susi Air Pilot Released by Armed Group</i>	23 Sept 2024	https://papua.tribunnews.com/2024/09/23/pilot-susi-air-dibebaskan-kkb-tokoh-adat-lapago-agus-rawa-kogoya-hentikan-kekerasan-di-papua
National news outlet			
Detik.com	<i>Perjalanan Kasus Pilot Susi Air/ The Journey of the Susi Air Pilot Hostage Case"</i>	21 Sept 2024	https://news.detik.com/berita/d-7551537/perjalanan-kasus-pilot-susi-air-disandera-hingga-akhirnya-dibebaskan
Kompas.com	<i>Bagaimana Philip Mehrtens Akhirnya Dibebaskan?/How Was Philip Mehrtens Finally Released?</i>	22 Sept 2024	https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2024/09/22/05571401/disandera-kkb-15-tahun-bagaimana-philip-mehrtens-akhirnya-dibebaskan?page=all
Republika.co.id	<i>Mengapa Bisa Terjadi Penyanderaan Pilot?/Why Did the Pilot Hostage Situation Happen?</i>	22 Sept 2024	https://news.republika.co.id/berita/sk6ric483/mengapa-bisa-terjadi-penyanderaan-pilot-ini-kata-majelis-rakyat-papua?

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

Robert Entman's four framing functions guided the authors' team to analyse the article. The primary unit of analysis consisted of paragraphs that conveyed substantial meaning or combinations of headlines and leads that encapsulated thematically pertinent content.

Decisions of coding were based on lexical patterns like 'negotiation', 'bribery', and 'peace', along with tone, event sequencing, and source attribution. When interpretations were unclear, memos were used to record the reasoning behind them.

To strengthen reliability, several qualitative strategies were used. Through issuing a memo (used to track analytic decisions when the content was ambiguous), peer debriefing with a

second author (to minimise subjective bias), and revisiting the full dataset after initial coding (to ensure inter-textual coherence). Due to its qualitative design and small sample, the study did not use formal inter-coder reliability testing but emphasised reflexivity and consistency. A sample coding sheet in Appendix A illustrates how Entman's framing functions were applied across the articles.

All analysed materials were publicly accessible online news articles. No human subjects were involved, and no personal or private data were used; thus, no institutional ethical clearance was required. To enhance methodological clarity, Table 2 presents a coding matrix summarising how each article activated Entman's framing functions.

Table 2. Matrix for coding framing functions

News outlet	Define problem	Diagnose cause	Moral judgement	Treatment recommendation
Jubi.id	Accusations of bribery and manipulation of the elite	Corruption and conflict among the elites	Critical of manipulation and lack of transparency	Look into and expose the corruption that led to the release
Suarapapua.com	Releasing hostages as a humanitarian and peaceful gesture	Initiative by hostage-takers to de-escalate tensions	Stresses diplomacy and relief from New Zealand	Indigenous-led dialogue can bring about peace.
Tribunpapua.com	Local leaders keep calling for peace	Pro-independence groups and the state have problems with each other.	Message of peace via local knowledge	Support cultural reconciliation and traditional leaders.
Detik.com	Long-lasting tensions and instability among separatists	Historical neglect and separatist dissatisfaction	A neutral tone that valorises government restraint	Demand for deeper structural reform
Kompas.com	A security incident needs to be solved through diplomacy	A separatist movement that wants to be recognised by international recognition	An optimistic view of how patient the government is	Encouragement of negotiation and soft power
Republika.co.id	Systemic political failure and the absence of state response	The state has broken trust and historical injustice	Critical of Jakarta and sympathetic to Papuan demands	Demand for inclusive political dialogue and reform

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

Table 3. Contextual additional interpretation process

Additional aspect	Description
Framing	The organising logic that selects, emphasises, and omits information to structure an event as a problem with causes, moral stakes, and possible remedies, guiding how audiences make sense of the story.
Tone and language	The evaluative stance and emotional register communicated through word choice, modality, syntax, quotation, and attribution invite specific feelings and position actors as credible or questionable.
Historical context	The temporal and structural background that links the event to earlier episodes, institutions, and legacies provides continuity and shapes inferences about normality, responsibility, and consequence.
Contrast	The relational cues that differentiate actors, actions, or explanations through lexical choice and narrative arrangement, including subtle variations that signal agency, intention, and hierarchy.
Public response	The representation of audience and stakeholder reactions, including official statements, community sentiment, social media signals, and silence, which functions as feedback that can reinforce or challenge the frame.

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

To accommodate ideological nuance, Table 3 expands the contextual interpretation analysis by integrating tone, historical context, and audience response (informed by our Research advancements) beyond Entman's fundamental functions as outlined.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The author displays the news results, local and national outlets, at first attempt. Then, each result was analysed with Entman theory and several relevant academic paper, as seen on the upcoming subheading.

Framing analysis of local Papuan media news

The authors augmented this results analysis through contextual interpretation to clarify implicit narratives and the broader implications of media representation, as shown in Table 4. The framing synopsis indicates a perceived split within TPNPB, with Sambom's exploration of unhappiness remedies tension between diplomatic and militant strategies. The use of terms at the same time, such as 'alleged bribery' alongside official denial, shapes public doubt about state officials. Also, in a historical context, news reporting situates the hostage crisis within the broader history of Papuan resistance, and articles frame the release as part of an ongoing political fight for global attention. Moreover, in public response, it was fairly quiet, which is what most people thought about the tiredness and normalcy that come with repeated hostage crises in Papua.

Table 4. News unit 1 local news: Jubi.id

Define problems	The article presents the core issue as a bribery allegation made by TPNPB spokesperson Sebby Sambom against local political actors. It introduces conflict between the separatist group and questions of process on the legitimacy of the hostage release.
Diagnose causes	Jubi framing suggests that the negotiated release deviated from TPNPB's stated terms due to unofficial interference. This means the group does not agree on how to fight, and that making choices is hard when fights have been going on for a long time.
Make moral judgment	The story adopts a good tone when it is highlighting Egianus Kogoya's openness to talks and negotiations as preferable to armed fighting. Both separatist and state actors are presented as choosing diplomacy over violence, which is framed as a commendable act.
Treatment recommendation	The article urges inclusive dialogue but treats remedies as neutral choices in an unequal context. Ownership pressure, coercion, and routinised silence narrow the range of solutions that can be publicly proposed

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

Table 5. News unit 2 local news: Suarapapua.com

Define problems	The framing article focuses on portraying Philip Mehrthens's release as humanitarian and peaceful resolution rather than political implications. The main issue concern addressed is the prolonged of the hostage crisis, not internal conflict/bribery.
Diagnose causes	The successful article release is attributed to ongoing diplomatic engagement and local-level mediation. The text disregards political interference and instead commends peaceful negotiations, particularly those initiated by the society.
Make moral judgement	The article presents the event in a favourable moral context, highlighting relief and appreciation, while also depicting politicians and local stakeholders as acting responsibly and with consideration, without any negative connotations.
Treatment recommendation	The article advocates for community-driven, peaceful negotiation, underscoring dialogue and mutual trust. Within an unequal setting, these solutions are presented as impartial. However, they are constrained by pressures of ownership, coercion, and established silence, which effectively marginalises proposals that challenge elite interests or call for transparent accountability.

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

To enhance these results, contextual interpretation was incorporated to clarify implicit narratives and the broader implications of media representation, as shown in Table 5. In framing the resume, the report highlights peace and community involvement, deliberately avoiding politically sensitive narratives to focus on relief and closure. In tone and language, the article paints a negative picture of local politicians, suggesting that bribery may have played a role in Mehrthens' release and implicating elements of the government. Historically, the tone is calm and diplomatic, with statements from the New Zealand government stressing gratitude, peace, and relief. The article in contrast is brief about prolonged hostage crisis briefly, putting the

release within Papua's ongoing conflict while avoiding detailed discussion of separatist motivations or prior violence.

In the historical context, the tone is calm and diplomatic, and the words, particularly in New Zealand officials' statements, stress peace, gratitude, and relief. Also in contrast, the article is brief about the long hostage crisis, putting the release in the context of Papua's ongoing conflict while avoiding detailed discussion of separatist motives or prior violence. Moreover, the public response included a brief note on how the public reacted, with a positive tone suggesting the release was welcomed locally and internationally, especially by diplomats.

Table 6. News unit 2 local news: Suarapapua.com

Define problems	The article frames hostage-taking in Papua as a long-standing political problem that will keep coming up in the news as a high-profile issue. It highlights that the act is a sign of unresolved issues and the struggle for recognition.
Diagnose causes	The kidnapping is seen as a planned move to get attention from around the world for independence purposes. It is portrayed as a symbolic protest strategy aimed at external and state actors.
Make moral judgement	Traditional leader Agus Rawa Kogoya urges moral restraint, warning of the harm caused to religious institutions. He criticised the KKB's actions as dangerous to the spiritual life and to civilians.
Treatment recommendation	The article advocates restraint and dialogue led by community and religious leaders. However, in an unequal context, these remedies are treated as neutral while ownership pressure, coercion, and routinised silence narrow proposals for accountability and reform.

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

We expanded these results through contextual interpretation to clarify implicit narratives and the broader implications of media representation, as shown in Table 6. The framing overview presents a cultural leader as a voice of incident to stress how it affects local conflict resolution and how people respond to it differently. In tone and language, the article promotes peace by discouraging violence from both the Indonesian military and the KKB, reflecting a balanced and conciliatory stance. Also in historical context, the article talks about framing hostage-taking as a conventional tactic in their independence effort, with references to church-targeted violence adding emotional and historical depth. In contrast, the article does not provide enough detail on what community leaders can do to help make peace: only a general tone and a limited exploration of the distinction between perpetrators and peacemakers. Moreover, from a public response standpoint, the public does not seem very upset about these events, suggesting they have become normalised because they occur so often in the area.

To maintain analytical rigour for these local Papuan media, Entman's model of news framing was employed alongside a transparent coding process that included memoing and peer review. The analysis demonstrates that news coverage in conflict zones reflects editorial bias and structural constraints. Jubi.id called the event elite manipulation, SuaraPapua.com called it a form of indigenous diplomacy, and TribunPapua.com, on the other hand, emphasised neutrality and unity, frequently minimising the political origins of the dispute. These patterns show the limitations of Entman's (1993) model, which does not fully capture the role of ownership, ideology, and power in the building of news frames (Sari, 2016; Yang & Ishak, 2012; de Souza, 2010).

In detail, Jubi. id's coverage of Philip Mehrstens' release highlights internal discord within the separatist movement, centring on Sebby Sambom's allegation that Egianus Kogoya accepted bribes from local politicians. This framing elevates the event from a humanitarian resolution to a legitimacy contest, suggesting fractures within the West Papua National Liberation Army (TPNPB). The article defines the problem as a legal breach, via causes rooted in unverified electoral manipulation. Using Entman's (1993) four-function framing model, this narrative shows a corrupt process, detects institutional influence, contrasts diplomatic restraint with alleged misconduct in an ethical manner, and implicitly promotes long-term negotiation. However, this functional clarity also shows that the model cannot adequately capture structural pressures such as content positioning and state influence. The piece's critical tone aligns with the framing techniques identified by Rahman (2017), which involve news platforms selectively

highlighting ideological dissent. By being centred on elite manipulation and omitting state responses, Jubi.id exemplifies what North & Fiske (2016) describe as media hindered by resource problems and systemic inequity. In Papua's contested landscape, framing decisions indicate the need for theoretical models that go beyond textual analysis to examine the power, positionality, and disparities inherent in news production.

However, SuaraPapua.com's coverage of Philip Mehrstens' release adopts a peace-oriented frame that challenges the sufficiency of Entman's (1993) model in conflict reporting. The article presents the event as a humanitarian act achieved through diplomacy, unlike Jubi. ID's critical tone emphasises the agency of the hostage-takers in a non-coercive, dialogic manner. This condition aligns with Anggelina & Triandana (2023), who note that alternative Papuan media highlight indigenous voices and de-escalation over militarised narratives. The moral framing avoids blame, instead spotlighting local actors and the New Zealand government in a positive light, echoing Liu's (2023) findings on emotional framing and empathy. The article's lack of discussion of separatist motives indicates structural challenges that Adiprasetyo (2009) claims even independent media face, including censorship and limited resources. Entman's model captures the practical aspects of framing, but it fails to account for the visual and ideological dimensions that are also present in this context. Yang & Ishak (2012) noted in the Malaysian media that these contexts necessitate framing models that are sensitive to cultural character, structural dynamics, and local agency.

On the other hand, the articles on TribunPapua.com places the abduction of pilot Philip Mehrstens within Papua's ongoing cycle of conflict, suggesting that it is not an isolated event or even a continuation of long-standing tensions between the state and separatists. This way of framing the issue aligns with Sari's (2016) observation that Indonesian media only cover conflict when it receives significant national or international attention.

The article posits that the abduction was orchestrated to garner international attention, a perspective that resonates with Maslog et al.'s (2006) assertion that militant actions in conflict zones frequently serve as calculated efforts to secure global visibility. The incorporation of a traditional leader's perspective, which promotes peace and denounces violence against religious sites, establishes a culturally grounded moral framework, thereby aligning with Yang & Ishak's (2012) findings on the impact of indigenous knowledge in counter-narratives. Rather than adopting a confrontational or excessively state-centric position, the article adopts an empathetic stance, prioritizing community dialogue and religious reconciliation. This focus on local values and leadership reflects Nicolás (2011) advocacy for contextualising framing within wider sociopolitical contexts. Although Entman's (1993) model provides a framework for organising these narrative components, it inadequately accounts for the editorial restraint and cultural embeddedness that influence news production in regions such as Papua. Consequently, the analysis underscores the necessity of expanding framing theory to encompass the intricate interplay of equality, tradition, and institutional limitations within local reporting.

Framing analysis of local Papuan media news

The results therefore incorporate contextual interpretations to clarify underlying narratives and the wider implications of media representations as summarised in Table 7. The report's follow chronological structure from the abduction to the eventual release, thereby highlighting the prolonged nature of the negotiations and their complexity. The report's tone is neutral and adopts a factual tone, relying solely on official sources to project objectivity and credibility. Detik's article situates the Mehrstens case within Papua's enduring conflict by referencing earlier TPNPB statement and unsuccessful rescue efforts, thereby demonstrating the kidnapping as part of protracted struggle rather than an isolated incident.

The researchers enhanced the analysis by situating interpretations within a broader context, thereby elucidating implicit narratives and the wider ramifications of media portrayal, as illustrated in Table 8. The article's tone and language are characterised by an institutional, measured approach, employing formal diction and referencing official sources to promote objectivity and enhance its credibility. Within the historical framework, the article links the hostage crisis to Papua's persistent political and security challenges, as well as previous conflicts, by referencing historical precedents and statements from governmental figures. The article emphasises the state's composure and strategic patience, avoiding alternative perspectives and focusing on the resolution rather than ideological divisions. Furthermore, from the perspective

of public reaction, the article simply reports the public's happiness and gratitude for Mehrrens' safe release. Nevertheless, the framing is constrained by its reliance on official narratives, as alternative viewpoints are largely absent.

Table 7. News unit 1 national news: Detik.com

Define problems	The article says that kidnapping is a long-term security crisis that is a sign of the larger conflict in Papua. It situated the event within both a humanitarian issue and a threat to national stability.
Diagnose causes	The unresolved political atmosphere stems from the TPNPB's refusal to accept Indonesian sovereignty. That kidnapping is being called a strategic act tied to demands for worldwide attention, as well as political concessions.
Make moral judgement	Detik's article is mostly factual, but it contrasts militant actions with state diplomacy, and suggests that peaceful solutions are morally better. The government's restraint is implicitly framed as responsible and effective leadership.
Treatment recommendation	The article favours coordinated, nonviolent negotiation over military force. In an unequal context, these recommendations are presented as neutral even as ownership coercion, pressure, and routine silence limit demands for independent inquiry, oversight, and structural change.

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

Table 8. News unit 2 national news: Kompas.com

Define problems	The article describes the prolonged hostage situation as both a humanitarian and political crisis that reflects the ongoing instability in Papua. It highlights the difficulty the government faces in resolving the 15-month crisis without resorting to force.
Diagnose causes	The crisis's origins reveal a connection between TPNPB's rejection of Indonesian governance and its pursuit of international legitimacy. The protracted nature of the impasse, as the article posits, stemmed from stringent security measures, diplomatic initiatives, and the delicate nature of the negotiations.
Make moral judgement	The narrative implicitly commends the state's forbearance and diplomatic endeavours, thereby presenting them as morally commendable. This is contrasted with the TPNPB's employment of hostage-taking, suggesting that nonviolent approaches represent the superior moral stance.
Treatment recommendation	The article characterises backchannel diplomacy as a neutral intervention, while simultaneously acknowledging that pressures for ownership, coercive tactics, and established silence impede proposals for transparency, oversight, and accountability.

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

The authors escalated these results analysis through contextual interpretation to clarify implicit narratives and the broader implications of media representation, as shown in Table 9. In the framing recap, the article presents the incident as a result of long-term political failure rooted in structural conflict rather than as an isolated act of crime. In tone and language, the article is formal and emphatic, foregrounding the Papuan perspective while avoiding sensationalism. It has also triggered people to discuss each other. In a historical context, the hostage crisis is situated within Papua's long history of contested integration and current marginalisation. Also, in contrast to the mindset, *Republika*'s article sets the state's narrative of unity against the MRP's framing of political failure, inviting readers to question and reflect critically on official claims. Finally, in the public response approach, the article, although not detailed, reflects growing frustration among Papuans and highlights a widening narrative gap between local and national crises.

Further analyses show *Kompas.com* emphasised neutrality and unity, frequently minimising the political origins of the dispute. But *Detik.com* and *Republika.co.id* adopted somewhat more critical tones, yet institutional boundaries still influenced their framing. These patterns collectively show the limitations of Entman's (1993) model, which does not fully capture the role of ownership, ideology, and power in the building of news frames. In Papuan contexts, framing transcends narrative techniques to unveil profound political, social, and emotional tensions

(Adiprasetyo, Justito, Taqiyya, 2023; Nicolás, 2011).

The Detik.com article's analysis of the Mehrtens hostage crisis employs an institutional perspective, positing that the incident represents both a significant security threat and evidence of Papua's persistent instability. This assessment resonates with Adiprasetyo & Taqiyya's (2023) finding that Indonesian media frequently frame conflicts as procedural issues, thereby neglecting their underlying political causes. By framing the event around separatist desire and systemic governance failures, these support Yang & Ishak's (2012) claim that dominant media often privilege state centred responses and minimise dissenting narratives. Unlike overtly partisan outlets, Detik.com maintains a neutral tone, relying on official statements to balance views from both state and militant actors. Its understated moral evaluation subtly endorses diplomacy over force, reflecting Liu's (2023) argument that emotional restraint can help preserve media credibility in polarised environments. However, the article's omission of civil society and indigenous perspectives narrows its interpretive scope, a limitation highlighted by de Souza (2010) in analysing conflict reporting. While Entman's (1993) framework helps map the article's core narrative functions, it does not fully account for the editorial constraints and structural pressures that also shape its framing. This example highlights the need to refine framing theory. It should consider the institutional pressures and political sensitivities that shape media discussions in areas of conflict, like Papua.

Table 9. News unit 3 national news: Republika.co.id

Define problems	The article portrays the protracted hostage situation as indicative of failures within both security protocols and governmental response, thereby raising questions regarding the Indonesian government's capacity to manage the Papua crisis. As a result, this incident seems to expose broader political and structural inadequacies.
Diagnose causes	The article attributes the crisis to three primary factors, as determined by the Papuan People's Assembly (MRP): persistent political disenchantment, diminished public trust, and Jakarta's perceived disregard for the region. People believe that the crisis is a product of Indigenous problems that were never fixed.
Make moral judgement	The article does not endorse the hostage taking, and it does suggest that the act reflects anger toward the central government. The moral critique targets the state's inability to deliver justice and substantive political discourse.
Treatment recommendation	The article urges dialogue and inclusive governance centred on Indigenous voices, yet in unequal contexts these appear neutral as ownership pressures, coercion, and routinised silence narrow calls for transparency, oversight, and accountable reform.

Source: Authors' compilation (2025)

The Kompas.com article discusses Philip Mehrtens' release from an institutional perspective, focusing on the Indonesian government's patience and adherence to the rules. The analysis demonstrates the outlet's adherence to governmental perspectives, mirroring Adiprasetyo and Taqiyya's (2023) characterisation of media functioning "under the shadow of the state," wherein dissenting opinions are subordinate to the imperative of national cohesion. Utilising Entman's (1993) framework, the study characterises the primary issue as a hostage crisis, attributes responsibility to separatist endeavours seeking international validation, endorses a peaceful resolution as a principled stance, and promotes negotiation as the optimal strategy. Nevertheless, this orderly framing reveals the limitations of Entman's paradigm, which cannot adequately account for deeper ideological filters. Yang & Ishak (2012) suggest that in Malaysia, claims of procedural neutrality often suppress political diversity, a pattern that can also be seen in this context. The lack of indigenous and civil society perspectives limits the scope of the discussion and reinforces the existing legal framework. Sari (2016) makes a similar point, noting that national media tend to downplay local complexities in favour of development-driven narratives. Although Kompas.com performs the model's four functions, its operations are constrained by editorial guidelines influenced by institutional affiliations. This highlights the necessity of employing more comprehensive models to examine framing within politically sensitive and contentious contexts, like Papua.

The Republika.co.id article frames the Mehrtens hostage situation as a symptom of deeper political issues in Papua, rather than a standalone event. The article cites the Papuan People's Assembly (MRP) to highlight how persistent grievances and systemic disregard have been

ignored for years. This perspective echoes Yang & Ishak's (2012) argument that alternative news sources frequently amplify underrepresented voices and champion narratives that challenge the prevailing consensus. Using Entman's (1993) four-function model, the article identifies the core issue as persistent political dissatisfaction, traces its causes to policy failures, historical injustices, and a lack of trust, presents state inaction as ethically troubling, and advocates for more inclusive political dialogue. At the same time, this case illustrates the limit of Entman's framework, which literature review highlight that the model does not fully capture the Influence of ideological regulation and structural constraints on media framing. *Republika's* more interpretive coverage points to an unusual degree of editorial independence within the Indonesian media landscape (Adiprasetyo & Taqiyya, 2023).

Framing comparisons

The divergence between national and local news outlet coverage shows more than vocabulary and style, but it also shows how deep the media's vision and mission (ideological) division is. The divergence between local and national coverage reflects more than stylistic or lexical differences; It reveals deep ideological divisions. National media often uphold official narratives through formal language, while local news online underlines indigenous voices and questions dominant notions of national identity. These differences expose competing claims to narrative authority.

The framing of Philip Mehrstens' release by six Indonesian news outlets reveals how editorial agendas and structural constraints shape media narratives in conflict zones. *Jubi.id* emphasised internal conflict and elite manipulation through bribery claims, while *SuaraPapua.com* framed the release as peaceful diplomacy led by Indigenous actors. These approaches reflect how marginalised voices seek space outside national platforms.

Kompas.com and *TribunPapua.com* concentrated on legal neutrality and national unity while overlooking the political roots of the issue. Contrastingly, *Detik.com* and *Republika.co.id* adopted a more critical stance, though their coverage remained constrained by institutional limitations. The above patterns show that Entman's (1993) model does not adequately explain how ownership, ideology, and power shape framing. In Papua, framing is more than just a way to tell a story; it also reveals underlying social, political, and emotional dynamics (Adiprasetyo, Justito, Taqiyya, 2023; Nicolás, 2011; Sari, 2016; Yang & Ishak, 2012; de Souza, 2010).

Drawing on these ideas, Entman's model, although structurally robust, provides just a limited perspective on media dynamics in war zones. This research illustrates how power, ideology, and institutional limitations influence not just framing decisions but also narrative authority and suppression. Rather than repeating prior critiques, it advances them through empirical analysis, arguing for an evolved framing model that better captures the complexities of postcolonial and conflict-zone journalism.

Local outlets, such as *Jubi.id* and *SuaraPapua.com*, emphasised elite manipulation and peaceful diplomacy, respectively. *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com*, two major news sources, used a neutral and procedural approach. In contrast, *Republika.co.id* offered a more critical view, focusing on the government's transparency. These differences suggest that journalism in politically sensitive areas, like Papua, requires more than just looking at the basic story structures. Framing functions occur within power-laden media ecologies that privilege certain truths over others.

Different narrative trajectories in news coverage indicate competing legitimacy claims, discursively constructed through selective storytelling and omission, reflecting broader media trends where ideological alignment shapes event portrayal and actor visibility, especially in politically charged environments (Alfarisi & Ayu Puspitasari, 2024). The present study examines how power and position determine frame selection, rather than addressing these differences to avoid theoretical duplication.

For instance, *Jubi.ID's* emphasis on bribery can be interpreted as more than just an investigative piece; it's a deliberate editorial move, a pushback against Jakarta's dominant narratives. *Kompas.com*, for instance, leans heavily on verified timelines and official statements. This approach signals a long-standing alignment with the national government, favouring reliability and procedural integrity over a diverse range of viewpoints. Also, what is displayed in the news and how it is presented is influenced by who owns the media, how the culture of journalism, and government pressure.

Detik.com's editorial approach, which carefully navigates between state and separatist perspectives, suggests how audience expectations and institutional norms shape editorial practice. SuaraPapua.com's moral framing is shaped by a narrative approach that draws heavily on Papuan identity and a continuing call for peace. When engaging with these materials, we recognise that our interpretation is mediated by distance—both in terms of academic position and language. This distance can influence how we read local indigenous journalism, especially when subtle symbolic or emotional cues are embedded in non-mainstream reporting. For this reason, reflexivity is a crucial part of framing analysis, especially in a context shaped by sovereignty struggles and historical trauma.

The analysis is supported by prior research, including the works of Liu (2023), Adiprasetyo (2009), and Yang & De Rycker (2017), which offer valuable comparative perspectives and help situate the contextualisations of the results. This method of presenting the subject is especially crucial for audiences outside Indonesia, who often lack intimate familiarity with the nation's cultural and political contexts. For them, context is more than just background information; it is also a key framework for interpretation.

From the evidence examined, it becomes clear that Entman's framework, while still offering a useful entry point, cannot by itself capture the tangled interplay of power, identity, and constraint that shapes these cases. The four functions form media narratives but neglect how disparate power relations, concentrated ownership, and institutional constraints affect publishing. These gaps underscore the need for the framework to maintain its relevance in settings like Papua, where political instability and violence are pervasive. Therefore, this Research proposes three key extensions to the model. They address gaps that the original four functions cannot fully explain.

First, institutional constraints operate as a fifth function, making visible ownership pressure, political coercion, censorship routines, and newsroom hierarchy, explaining the patterned absences of indigenous and civil society voices and the dominance of official chronology in national outlets. This dimension shifts analytical attention from what is framed to the structural conditions that delimit what can be framed, revealing how organisational dependence, regulatory environments, and informal power relations shape editorial decisions. By focusing on institutional limitations, this model accounts for the omissions, silences, and narrative similarities that extend beyond the explanatory reach of text centred analysis.

Second, emotional and symbolic framing serves as a pervasive mechanism, monitoring elicited emotions like relief, fear, pride, and shame, while also charting symbols such as national unity, terrorism designations, and cultural authority; this process illustrates how effective responses direct accountability and preferred solutions. This layer highlights how affective cues work alongside narrative structure to guide audience interpretation, moral alignment, and perceived responsibility. Rather than treating emotion as incidental, this extension shows how affect actively channels preferred remedies and legitimises particular political responses, especially in conflict reporting, where emotion often substitutes for deliberation.

Third, cultural and contextual anchoring provides an interpretive lens that situates frames within local history, identity politics, and postcolonial memory, reads lexical choices such as 'liberated' and 'was released' as signals of agency, and clarifies why similar events are read differently across local and national arenas.

This approach clarifies why the same events are understood differently in local and national media. Variations in meaning stem from interpretation through different historical trajectories and cultural contexts. By embedding framing within lived memory and collective identity, cultural anchoring explains the persistence of certain narratives and the resistance to others across time and media arenas. Evidence from the six articles confirms that function-level coding is necessary but not sufficient in conflict settings, as institutional constraints determine who speaks and who is silenced, emotion and symbolism guide how audiences are guided, and culture and context explain why meanings persist across time and place. The protocol is straightforward—apply Entman's four functions first, then layer the three extensions with explicit indicators and short memos on ownership and pressure, affective and symbolic cues, and local history and identity, and finally synthesise across tiers to trace how power, affect, and history shape frames. This keeps the model parsimonious yet more explanatory and portable, and in Papua it accounts for the primacy of official voices in national outlets, the legitimisation of

diplomatic remedies through relief and order, and the persistence of reconciliation talk alongside muted public response.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Entman's media framing model remains useful for identifying how journalists structure meaning through problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and proposed remedies in reporting on long-standing conflicts. In the coverage of Philip Mehrstens' release, these four functions consistently organised both national and local news narratives, allowing systematic comparison across outlets. In this limited sense, the framing model remains analytically valuable. However, the findings also demonstrate that Entman's framework is insufficient on its own for explaining media portrayals in conflict zones shaped by political rivalry, social division, and unequal power relations. In Papua, framing extends beyond narrative structure to reveal the influence of ownership pressure, institutional alignment, emotional appeal, and postcolonial memory. National media largely privileged official voices, procedural diplomacy, and state authority, while local outlets articulated alternative meanings rooted in Indigenous identity, community diplomacy, and historical injustice. These patterns cannot be fully explained by textual framing functions alone.

To address these limitations, this study advances three extensions to the framing model. Institutional constraint explains how ownership, political influence, censorship routines, and newsroom hierarchy shape patterns of visibility and silence. Emotional and symbolic framing clarifies how affective cues guide moral alignment and legitimise preferred responses. Cultural and contextual anchoring situates framing within local history and identity politics, explaining why similar events are interpreted differently across media arenas. Together, these extensions preserve the clarity of Entman's framework while making it responsive to power, emotion, and history. Media framing therefore remains a sufficient analytical tool only when it is theoretically expanded to reflect the structural and historical conditions of conflict journalism.

This study implies that analysing media coverage of Papua requires framing approaches that go beyond textual structure to incorporate institutional power, emotional dynamics, and historical context, in order to capture how meaning is produced and constrained in a protracted conflict setting. For journalists covering Papua, the findings underscore the importance of reflexive newsroom practices to avoid normalised silences and to ensure that indigenous and civil society perspectives are meaningfully represented.

Moreover, future study suggests going beyond analysing text. It should include power dynamics, emotional aspects, and historical context. Media organisations and journalists should become more self-aware to avoid normalised silences.

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