

## Ethics violations discourse of the Constitutional Court in Indonesian online media

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**How to Cite This Article:** Sulhan, M. (2025) Ethics violations discourse of the Constitutional Court in Indonesian online media. *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi*, 9(1). doi: 10.25139/jsk.v9i1.9274  
Received: 19-11-2024, Revision: 17-02-2025, Acceptance: 03-03-2025, Published: 26-03-2025

**Abstract** This article analysed the discourse construction of online media following the Constitutional Court (MK) of the Republic of Indonesia's decision No.90/PUU-XXI/2023 in November 2023. Online media have addressed the controversy surrounding the ethical violations resulting from the MK's decision in various ways. Utilising the perspective of Critical Political Economy (CPE) on media institutions, this research assumes there is a diversity of content in online media when reporting on the ethical violations of the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court. The research method employed is Corpus-Assisted Discourse Study (CADS) to analyse the frequency and discourse of news coverage from four online news portals (Tempo.co; Detik.com; Okezone.com; and Kompas.com) from November 1 to December 31, 2023. The findings indicate fluctuations in the frequency of word occurrences and dynamics of discourse in the news content that differ among the four online portals, which are related to the pragmatic interests of the media owners. The diversity in frequency and discourse regarding the ethical violation issues places the four studied media outlets within three corridors of tension in news orientation (normative-descriptive, moderate, and critical-radical).

**Keywords:** critical political economy; corpus-assisted discourse study; media ownership

### INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian Constitutional Court's Decision No. 90/PUU-XXI/2023 regarding the age limit requirements for presidential and vice-presidential candidates of the Republic of Indonesia for the 2024-2029 period has sparked controversy. The ethical violation decision rendered by the Constitutional Court's Honorary Council (MKMK), resulting in the dismissal of Anwar Usman as Chief Justice, sparked quite an interesting media reaction. Throughout November 2023, mass media and digital media in Indonesia reported on the dismissal issue extensively in the context of time and the escalation of news coverage. Besides the high news value, Anwar Usman's dismissal is a news item that is still related to the political situation of the upcoming Presidential Election race contest. The embryo itself has been present throughout the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections. When the MKMK decision was made, public political orientation in Indonesia had become so deeply divided. This division of positions results from the competition leading up to the 2024-2029 Indonesian presidential and vice-presidential elections. Over the past 10 years, the media's position has been marked by controversies of bias towards one of the presidential candidates in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections. Media support, both directly and indirectly, for Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto in the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections is still felt until 2024. Anwar Usman's position as the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court (Mahkamah Konstitusi), being Joko Widodo's brother-in-law, is suspected to be fraught with interests. That position is alleged to repeat the controversy of media bias in various interest agendas. The position of divided support that has not yet fully dissipated is what makes the escalation of news coverage regarding Anwar Usman's dismissal a controversy in its own right at

the end of 2023. An interesting phenomenon concerning the media is the fact of media bias in every case, laden with political implications.

News sparks controversy. The controversy arose because the media has an ethical awareness of the social, political, and economic issues and problems occurring in society. In the context of the ethical violations, the media acts as a 'political socialiser' (Dekker & Meyenberg, 1991) that significantly influences society's political orientation. Research on ethics is abundant. Many studies examined the tendency of media bias towards one candidate during the presidential election race. Besides the increasingly questioned professionalism of journalists, these studies show that journalistic practices are faced with various issues, such as ethics, political economy leading to state or capitalist control over journalistic practices, media ownership concentration, the shift from state control to media owner control, with all its implications (Dhakidae, 1991; Manzella, 2000; Sudibyo & Patria, 2013; Armando, 2014; Kartosapoetro, 2014; Steele, 2015; Tapsell, 2017; Nugraha et al., 2024).

If we examine the aspect of media ethics, most of the above studies have two patterns that become limitations when applied to analyse this research case. First, the ethical dimension in most studies is more understood regarding the technical practices of journalistic work. This research pattern highlights the ethical aspects in the media, particularly on how the media should apply ethical standards in their journalistic practices (Roberts & Black, 2021; Vojinović et al., 2023). The second pattern is a variety of research that views ethics from a broader perspective at the level of media policy as an institution. Some research connects the importance of ethics for the media in order to maintain freedom of expression, the dissemination of information, control the abuse of power, and at a broader level, position ethics as a balance between the levels of freedom and democracy in the relationship between the state and its public (Nandagopal, 2022; Hansson, 2023).

The fundamental flaw of the two research patterns above is the naive of viewing the media as a moral entity. The guardian of truth existing in a vacuum. Media is not viewed in the context of business. The media is not considered an economic entity. Studies like this have not yet examined media institutions within the business corridor, although the basic exposure from Chomsky & Herman (2008) has linked media economic interests with political interests. The main factor reported is the very closed access to the owner (Doyle, 2002; Bagdikian, 2004). The media seem to be separated from the economic narrative. In fact, the media institution is the result of media management. The close relationship between media operations (read journalistic practices) and ethics is due to the dynamic nature of media work (read media institution management practices). That very dynamism places the media in a determinant position in responding to facts and events. Research must serve as a middle ground to fill the gap in seeing the relevance between media content and the agenda-setting that wraps the pragmatic interests of media management. More specifically, it is about how the pragmatic interests of media owners (the group of owners) will be facilitated by directing discourse in such a way for their benefit. Actually, this logic believes that the media will be able to survive in the context of a free market and operate like a commercialised entity (Raeijmaekers & Maesele, 2015; Permana & Alam, 2022; Khoirunnisa & Rusadi, 2023; Sumarni, 2023; Wahdan et al., 2023).

This research used a critical political economy (CPE) approach to examine the diversity of content directly or indirectly related to media ownership. Souisa (2024) in her study places CPE within the group of critical media theory lines. Basically, CPE criticises competition and choice-based models due to the lack of attention to factors that influence competitive conditions. For example, ownership competition, high market entry costs, and political influence, all of which can affect and limit consumer choices (Curran, 2012). The logic of CPE views media as one of the products of industrial capitalism that, in practice, not only provides 'news' but also serves as part of the political and ideological processes of the economic market (Bhayroo, 2008; Garnham & Inglis, 1990). In this context, the early theoretical proponents of this approach focused more on the exploitative and undemocratic aspects of the communication industry (Smythe, 1960; Schiller, 1984; Mosco, 2009).

Furthermore, in the contemporary era, CPE has become a tool for examining the relationship between the government, industry, and other operational forces, particularly in influencing communication (news content and its consequences). This research supports Souisa (2024) findings by adding the complexity of the 2024-2029 presidential and vice-presidential

race's context as the backdrop for the emergence of diverse media content when reporting on constitutional court's ethical violations.

In the context of political events, the position of partisan media has been widely studied. The main element that has been widely studied in relation to the position of partisan media. It is widely believed that this position tends to produce bias in reporting. Based on the results of various studies on the dimensions of news text mentioned above, this research offers a new effort to analyse the diversity of discourse construction based on the pragmatic political interests of media owners and influential figures within those media institutions. The research context that examines the controversy of ethical violation news will look at the variety of content and discourse on 4 (four) online media portals by questioning the complexity of the news discourse, which is assumed to be influenced by the political and economic interests of the media owners.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research is a constructivist paradigm study with a descriptive qualitative nature. The research object is the news data from 4 (four) media portals (Tempo.co; Detik.com; Okezone.com; and Kompas.com) for the period of November 1 - December 31, 2023, regarding the ethical violations of the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court. The Corpus-Assisted Discourse Study (CADS) method uses linguistic aspects to interpret data through a collection of corpora and corpuses (language banks) used in the researched media reporting. The use of this method is in line with research involving big data conducted by Baker et al. (2008), Morley & Partington (2009), and Partington (2010, 2015). Although the basic principles of utilising big data remain guided by Poynter (2010).

The CADS method in this study is conducted in two stages. First, the determination of the corpus linguistic. This stage includes media selection, determining corpora, creating data sets, and application utilisation. There are four online media outlets as subjects of this research (Tempo.co; Detik.com; Okezone.com; and Kompas.com). The selection of these four online media outlets refers to the list of Indonesia's 13 best news portals for 2023 released by the account akudigital.com. From those 13 best online news portals, 4 (four) portals were then selected whose owners had activities in the political arena that intersected with the interests of the government and political parties at the time the research was conducted. The next step is the determination of the corpus (language bank). The data in this study consists of all news texts from 4 researched media portals from November 1 to December 31, 2023. The next step is creating a data set using the NoLimit dashboard as a data crawling action. This data set includes determining keywords and calculating the frequency of keyword occurrences within the news reporting period. The keywords used as a method to obtain text analysis samples are-constitutional court, nephew, uncle, Anwar Usman, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, Jokowi, Joko Widodo, and nepotism. The processing of keywords and frequency utilises the NoLimit dashboard ([https://dashboard.nolimit.id/social\\_media](https://dashboard.nolimit.id/social_media)).

The second stage of analysis uses a descriptive qualitative analysis strategy on the configuration of significant differences in news coverage frequency from each of the studied online media portals. The analysis strategy is to understand the meaning and significance of the frequency from the language corpus linked to the social, political, and historical context of the phenomenon of Anwar Usman's dismissal and the constitutional court's decision. Comparative aspects include the background of management and ownership, the complexity level of the owners' ideological positions, political orientation, and assumptions of pragmatic business interests. These comparative elements refer to the principles of critical discourse analysis from Fairclough (1995, 2013).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

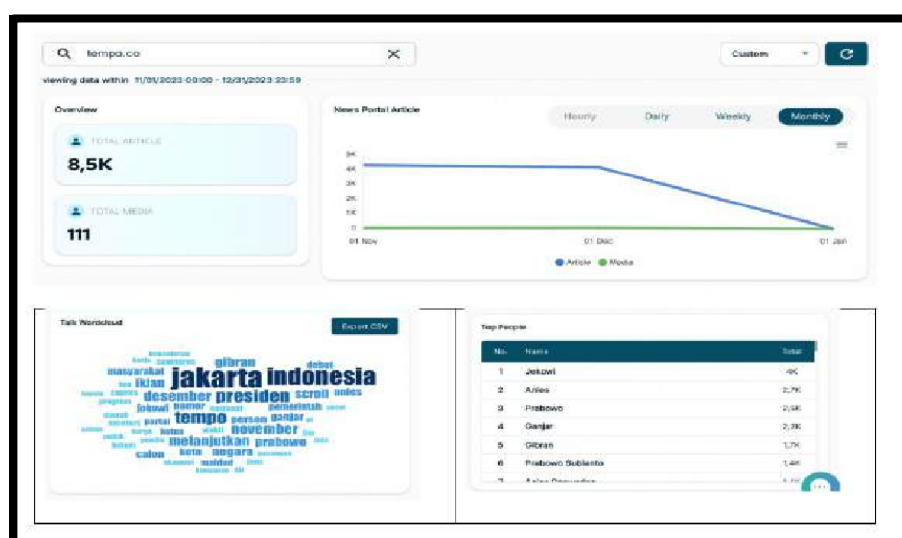
The data displayed in this section results from crawling the frequency of occurrence of controversial words, which are assumed to be the main problem in the research. The controversy in question is how the four researched online media portals discuss the depiction of ethical violations by the Constitutional Court (MK) as a judicial institution. The presented data is descriptive from four researched online media portals.

This research assumes that media institutions play a significant role in supporting the democratic agenda through the images and discourse they produce and disseminate in society. Souisa (2024) reached that conclusion to emphasise the dual role of media organisations, which

has long been the focus of study for political economy scholars. This main opinion stems from the fact that different media funding and organisation mechanisms have significant implications for professional journalism behaviour, as well as the scope of conversation and opinion presented in the public sphere (Mosco, 2009; Hardy, 2014;). The research findings that form the basis of this article reaffirm Souisa (2024) findings. The confirmation manifests in specific cases that depict the sidelining of republican principles that should be inherent in the pillars of media democracy instead of political and economic interests. This research aims to answer the question of the extent to which four major Indonesian online news portals framed the controversy surrounding the constitutional court's decision in 2023 and how this framing reflects the potential existence of pragmatic political and economic interests of the media owners.

### Tempo.co: The Struggle against Nepotism

Tempo.co is an online media portal under PT Tempo Inti Media Tbk. The founders of Tempo.co are six journalists: Goenawan Mohamad, Harjoko Trisnadi, Fikri Jufri, Lukman Setiawan, Usamah, and Christianto Wibisono. The publisher of Tempo magazine and Tempo.co is PT. Grafiti Pers, owned by Eric Samola. The majority shareholders are Yayasan Jaya Raya and PT. Pikatan, and it is operated by PT. Tempo Inti Media Tbk. Throughout its operation, Tempo.co has inherited the DNA of the Tempo group as a news media that has risen and fallen in its struggle for public interest. Both the magazine and The Daily have proven that this media outlet is always focused on sensitive issues related to arbitrary power by the government. It is not uncommon for cases involving confrontations with the authorities to bring this media outlet to legal warnings, court cases, and even closures during the Suharto era. When the context of the MK's ethical violation occurred, Tempo.co's position was relatively within the circle of Jokowi's supporters (Gibran's biological father). Something that has been happening since 2014. Several direct statements from important figures at Tempo, Goenawan Mohamad emphasised how concerned they were about the 'interference' that Jokowi would undertake. The expressed concern eventually erupted into an extreme opposing position. After the fact emerged that Jokowi seemed to endorse Gibran's candidacy as vice president in 2024, Tempo.co shifted from a sympathetic supporter to a militant critic. The figure who most frequently voices criticism is the founder of Tempo, Goenawan Mohamad. To some extent, there is a relationship between the diversity of Tempo's news discourse in covering the controversy of the Constitutional Court's decision and Goenawan Mohamad's political stance. That position is confirmed by the data generated throughout the November-December 2023 reporting period at Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Tempo.co news data processing related to the MK ethics violation issue  
Source: NoLimit Dashboard data processor, data processed by researchers, July 2024.

Throughout the research period, data was collected from Tempo.co news portal shows that this media outlet has vigorously reported on the controversy surrounding the Constitutional Court's ethical violations. This is evident from the total number of articles reported throughout

November- December 2023, which reached 8.5k, and 111 total media outlets covering the same issue. The same pattern is again visible on the curve at the beginning of November, where articles reached 4k, then decreased at the beginning of December and drastically declined until shifting to the issue of presidential election debates and preparation for voting in February 2024. Regarding the names of Mohamad figures that appear in the media, their frequency is relatively equal to the popular names circulating at that time. Names that appeared frequently include Gibran, Prabowo, Jokowi, Mahfud, and Anis. Meanwhile, the top people in the leading positions are Jokowi with 4k, Anis with 2.7k, Prabowo with 2.5k, Ganjar with 2.2k, and Gibran with only 1.7k. In the context of ownership of this media, the history of Tempo.co has always been under the ownership of Tempo Inti Media Tbk (formerly known as PT Arsa Raya Perdana), namely PT. Grafiti Pers, where Eric Samola was the director in his time, and currently, Goenawan Mohamad serves as the main commissioner of Tempo and PT. Throughout the data analysis process, the stance of the Tempo.co news portal was relatively aligned with Goenawan Mohamad's (GM) stance. Goenawan Mohamad has repeatedly stated in discussions and interviews with journalists that Jokowi lies, that Jokowi has told many lies, and he has expressed disappointment over the fact that Gibran is being supported to run in the presidential election. Goenawan Mohamad, who is a member of PSI chose to leave the fledgling party rather than support Prabowo-Gibran. This critical position influences the main focus of the Tempo.co news portal. So, it is not surprising that the total number of articles about the Constitutional Court exceeds 8 thousand and Jokowi Gibran is among the top people. In other news activities, during that period, Goenawan Mohamad praised and supported the Central Java gubernatorial candidate Andika Prakasa, who the PDIP backs.

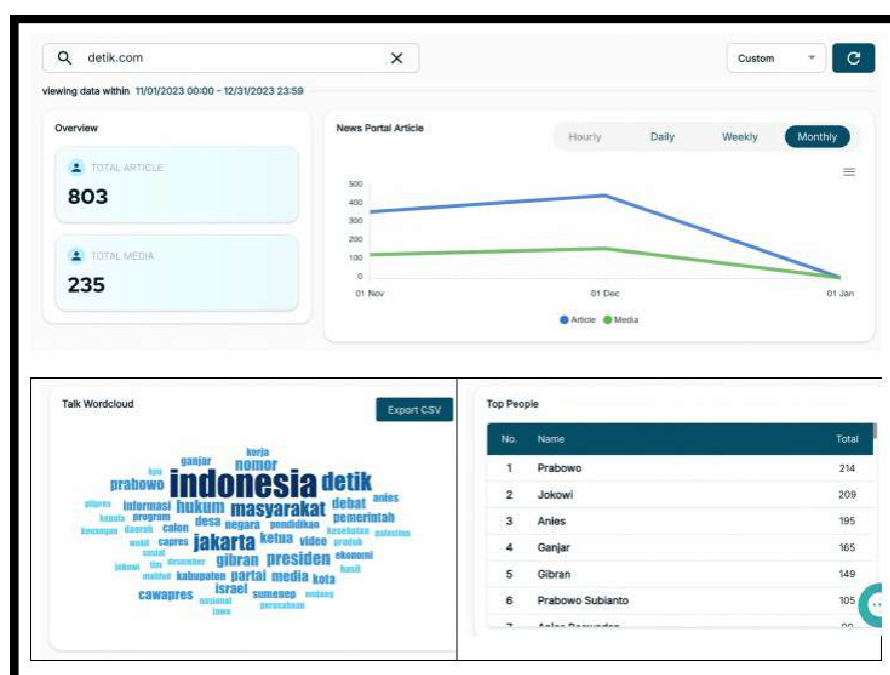
It isn't easy to separate the interests of the Tempo institution as an information business from Goenawan Mohammad's performance. Various studies have repeatedly confirmed this assumption (Steele, 2015). Especially in the case of the controversial ethical violation at the Constitutional Court. In this case, Goenawan Mohamad has been confirmed to hold an openly critical and 'rejecting' view of Jokowi's stance, which allowed Gibran's candidacy to go unchallenged. Thus, the dominance of the MK issue and specific figures can reflect a narrative that is deliberately strengthened, either to undermine the legitimacy of the government or certain figures, or to raise issues that are more beneficial to other parties. It can be concluded for now that the high frequency of articles related to the Constitutional Court and political figures in media such as Tempo.co is not entirely spontaneous but rather follows an editorial strategy that aligns with political and economic interests and the ongoing momentum of the 2024 elections. The ideological stance favouring public interests championed by the Tempo editorial team appears to align with the editorial policy. In the political event of the 2024-2029 Indonesian presidential election, a key figure at TEMPO, Goenawan Mohamad, openly expressed serious opposition to Gibran's candidacy as vice president. A political move by a cultural figure that subsequently influences the position and interests of the Tempo.com editorial team.

In one of its reviews, this online portal quoted a statement by the writer Samuel Johnson, who once said that every kingdom is one family, and every family is a small kingdom. Johnson's statement accurately describes the situation concluded by the Tempo.co editorial team regarding the actions of the Jokowi family. The relationship between a president and his brother-in-law (who happens to be the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court in 2023), and his eldest son (who happens to be the vice-presidential candidate for 2024 and won the competition) in the scandal of Constitutional Court Decision No. 90/2023 seems to shatter the public's belief that Indonesia is a democratic republic. The public's reason seems to be mocked as these family interests share positions and systematically determine steps to maintain their power. Tempo.co presented this conclusion through a linear reading of the sporadic steps taken by Jokowi to maintain his power. In this case, Tempo.co opposes the interests of the Jokowi regime's power.

### **Detik.com: news is an economic commodity**

The Detik.com news site is a media product that PT Agranet Multicitra Siberkom (Agrakom) created. PT Agrakom was founded by four people: Budiono Darsono, Abdul Rahman, Didi Nugrahadi, and Yayan Sopyan in October 1995 (established in January 1996), and it operates in web services. Of the four names, three are journalists: Budiono Darsono, Abdul Rahman, and Yayan Sopyan (a student at UGM). Meanwhile, Didi is a professional from Bank Exim. The

Throughout November-December 2023, Detik.com was an online media portal that reported quite intensively on the issue of ethical violations at the Constitutional Court. The high attention of the online portal Detik.com to the ethical violation issue in case decision No. 90/2023 can be said to fall into the moderate category. This indicates that Detik.com has access to a strong political network, which may influence certain directions of news coverage or editorial policies, especially related to political topics or figures connected to the CT Corp network. This is evident from the data processed by the research team at Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Data processing of Detik.com news reports related to the issue of MK ethical violations  
Source: NoLimit Dashboard data processor, data processed by researchers, August 2024.

With a total of 803 articles containing researched keywords, Detik.com is not very interested in issues and news related to ethical violations throughout November-December 2023. From a total of 235 media outlets for one month, only 803 articles contained the researched keywords. This means that in each media outlet, Detik.com only reported three or more articles related to the keywords (specifically 3.4 articles). The minimal coverage can be interpreted as the editorial team not prioritising the discourse or as journalistic activities encountering various obstacles in their reporting. However, as a pioneering online media portal in Indonesia, it is unique if the frequency of Detik.com's coverage of cases that attract significant public attention is proven to be very minimal.

From the Talk Wordcloud showing keywords like 'Prabowo', 'Jokowi', and 'Anies', it is evident that most articles focus on political issues in the 2024 presidential election contest. In the period of November- December 2023, intense political coverage can reduce content

variation because the focus is more on the preparation for the presidential election and other related political topics, which may not require much multimedia content or infographics, considering that written articles are more effective in detailing opinions, interviews, or political debates.

Since fully acquiring Detik.com through the purchase of shares in PT Agranet Multicitra Siberkom (the company managing Detik.com) in 2011, the public has questioned CT's intentions and objectives. At that time, CT bought shares of PT Agranet Multicitra Siberkom worth US\$ 60 million (more than 520 billion at that time's exchange rate). Not long after the acquisition, CT was appointed as the coordinating minister for the Economy by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) in May 2014. CT's position replaced Hatta Radjasa, who stepped down to contest as Prabowo Subianto's vice-presidential candidate in the 2014 presidential election against Jokowi-JK. The reason for the acquisition of Detik.com is acknowledged as a strategic business move by CT to 'welcome' the era of media digitalisation. As an entrepreneur, CT sees Detik.com as a business entity that can be further developed by joining CT Corp, which also owns TransTV and Trans7. It is suspected that CT's close and harmonious relationship with SBY has further expanded CT's business empire into various sectors. The typical entrepreneur who always capitalises on momentum and will not oppose the government is a characteristic recognised by CT (Diredja, 2014).

The CT group maintains the connection between the position of entrepreneurs and the government regime. It was proven in November 2019 that CT's daughter, Putri Tanjung, was appointed as a special staff member to President Jokowi. The public also knows that Putri Tanjung has a friendship with Kaesang Pangarep, the youngest son of the president. This appointment as a special staff member indicates a close relationship between the President and CT. In his capacity as an entrepreneur, CT is acknowledged by Boediono (one of the founders of Detik.com) to also have an influence in determining the business model that Detik.com will adopt. If from the beginning the acquisition of Detik.com was understood by CT as part of business expansion in the online media realm, it is hard to deny that economic orientation and profit will become the main priority in editorial decisions. At this point, news reporting speed, the speed of journalists' work, is more considered a requirement to satisfy the audience (netizens) to read and open the Detik.com page. News is a sellable commodity product. This logic aligns with the perspective of the Market-Liberal theory, which forms the basis of media capitalism (Chomsky & Herman, 2008; Raeijmaekers & Maesele, 2015).

Detik.com also has a large capacity to produce content, this relationship may limit the production of visual content or articles, as seen in the decline in the number of articles and media in some periods. From crawling data during the November-December news coverage of the Constitutional Court ethics violation case, it appears that this media does not show significant editorial interest. Their focus is more on efficiency and speed of news distribution, especially considering that Detik.com has a historical advantage in fast news distribution. The decline in content could also be due to factors such as the focus on political news, where detik.com prioritises articles over visual media requiring more time and resources. When public discourse discussed the ethics of the Constitutional Court (MK), Detik.com capitalised on the issue as an economic commodity through neutral and impartial reporting.

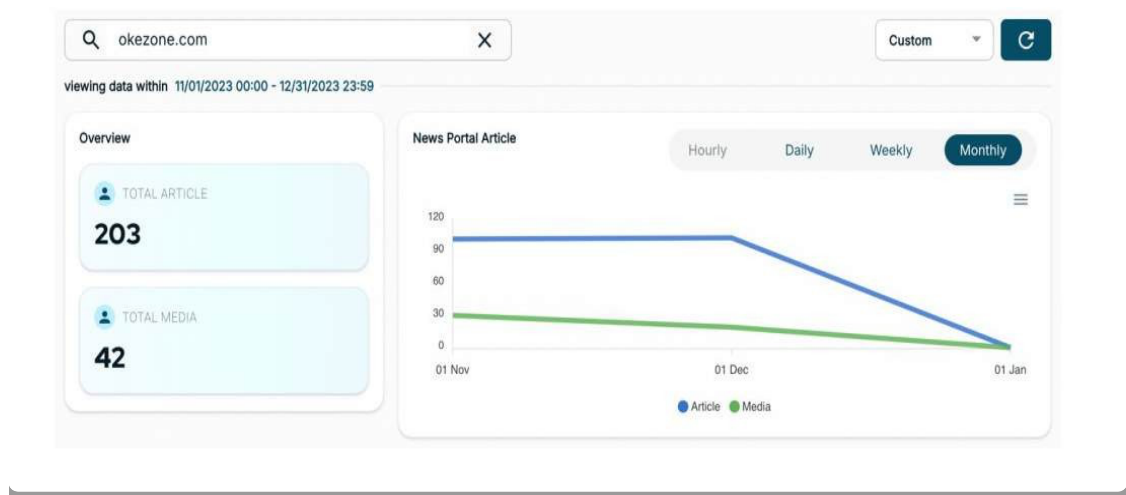
### **Okezone.com: the two-footed politics of party owners**

Okezone.com was officially launched (commercial launch) as a news portal on March 1, 2007. This online portal became the first online business owned by PT Media Nusantara Citra Tbk (MNC). MNC, which was established on June 17, 1997, is led by founder and managing director Hary Tanoesoedibjo (HT). PT MNC Tbk also owns and operates TV media businesses (RCTI, MNCTV, GTV, and iNewsTV), print media (Koran Seputar Indonesia, Sindo Weekly, High-end, Just for Kids, Highend Teen, Network). From the list of media names and the capacity of their owners, the tendency of Okezone.com to be in the vortex of practical political interests is difficult to deny. Interestingly, in the case of ethical violations of the Constitutional Court, the attention of this media portal is irrelevant to the assumption of interest-based attraction. The image below will support this assumption.

The figure 3 presents Okezone.com news frequency data by entering keywords according to the data set covering the period November 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023. Okezone.com generated Okezone.com's and 42 media during this period. The graph on the

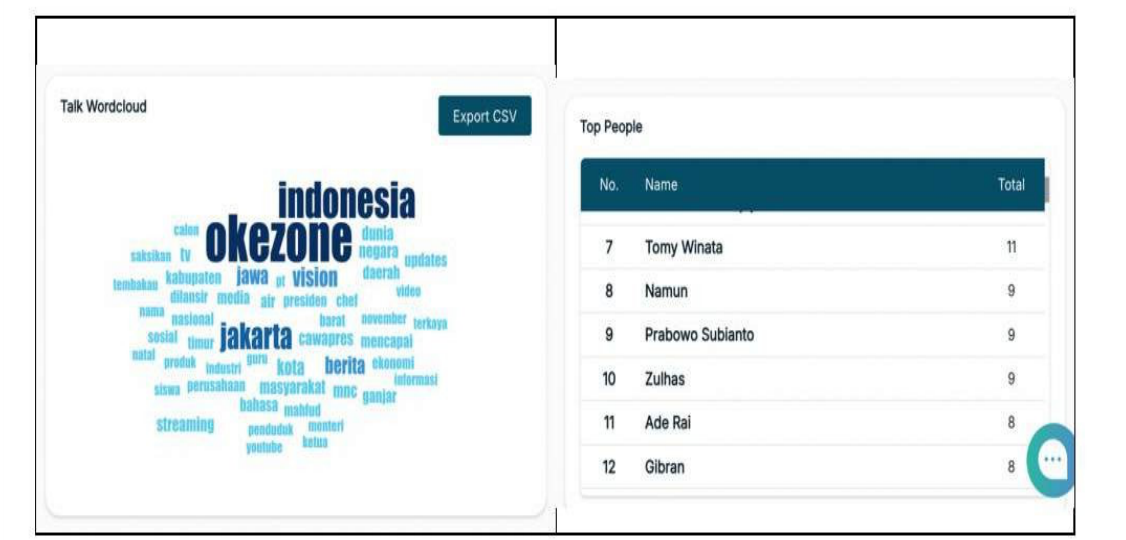


right shows a decline in article and media content as the year progressed. Compared to the other three online media portals studied, Okezone.com has a low level of interest in reporting ethical violations at the Constitutional Court.



**Figure 3.** Okezone.com news data processing related to the issue of MK ethical violations  
Source: NoLimit Dashboard data processor, data processed by researchers, August 2024.

The site only published 203 articles in the total articles section, with the highest activity in early November. Article production continued to decline in late December, possibly due to a slowdown in editorial output or fewer newsworthy topics at the end of the year. The total media section shows the publication of 42 media items, such as videos and infographics, which remained stable but declined slightly towards the end of December. This figure is much lower than total articles, indicating a focus on written content. The media processing chart above visualises this trend, with a sharp drop in articles after mid-December and a more gradual decline in media items. The sharp decrease in Okezone.com's attention over the 2- 2 month period of the news coverage is in line with the frequency of minimal mention of names directly related to the issue of the Constitutional Court Chief Justice's ethical violations. While online media portals place names Wordcloud, such as Gibran, Anwar Usman, and nephew, in the main position (top 5 order of use), the mention of Gibran's name by Okezone.com throughout the 1-month news coverage was not in the top 5. As shown in the visual results of talk word cloud in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Results of Talks Wordcloud Okezone.com on the position of the name related to the controversy of ethics violation of the Constitutional Court November-December 2023  
Source: NoLimit Dashboard data processor, data processed by researchers, August 2024



From the data at Figure 4, it appears that throughout the news period studied, Okezone.com mentioned Gibran's name minimally. The popularity of this name is far below Tommy Winata, and Zulhas. This shows that the frequency of Okezone.com's coverage of the Chief Justice's ethical violation case is very low compared to Tanoesoedibjo online media portals studied. The assumption underlying this finding is that throughout the case of ethical violations of the Chief Justice, this form of editorial policy is related to the position of the media owner, Hary Tanoesoedibjo (HT).

The tendency is that media affiliated with HT through the control of MNC Group shares, basically carry out unique journalistic practices in responding to the development of this ethical violation situation. The assumption about the consideration of political economy position is worth examining. First, the status of share ownership in the giant media group. It is known that HT owns Okezone and Sindonews through MNC Group's digital media division. This figure has a great opportunity to direct the media operation strategy. Apart from being a businessman, HT is an active figure in the political world. His position marks his activeness in the political world as Chairman of the Perindo party. The party supported Jokowi's government in 2 periods of government. HT's eldest child, Angela Tanoesoedibjo was appointed Deputy Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy in Jokowi's 2nd term (2019-2024). HT's work in politics is also followed by most of his family. In the 2024 Legislative elections, HT brought 6 members of his family to compete for DPR (House of Representatives), and DPRD (Regional Representatives) seats in various electoral districts. All failed to get seats in each electoral district.

Throughout the issue of MK's ethical violations, several Okezone.com news articles linked the case to the response of the Perindo party. As in October 2023, in the midst of the issue of ethical violations at the Constitutional Court, this online portal displayed a photo of the General Chairman of the DPP Perindo Youth, Victor Sianipar complete with emblems and jackets symbolising the Perindo Party. The same thing also happened to the news of HT's figure. This online media often displays news by inserting stories about HT's business and political activities. Interestingly, the series of Okezone.com news coverage has a shift in tone between the period before the qualification of Gibran as a vice-presidential candidate and after the issuance of Constitutional Court Decision No. 90/PUU-XXI/2023.

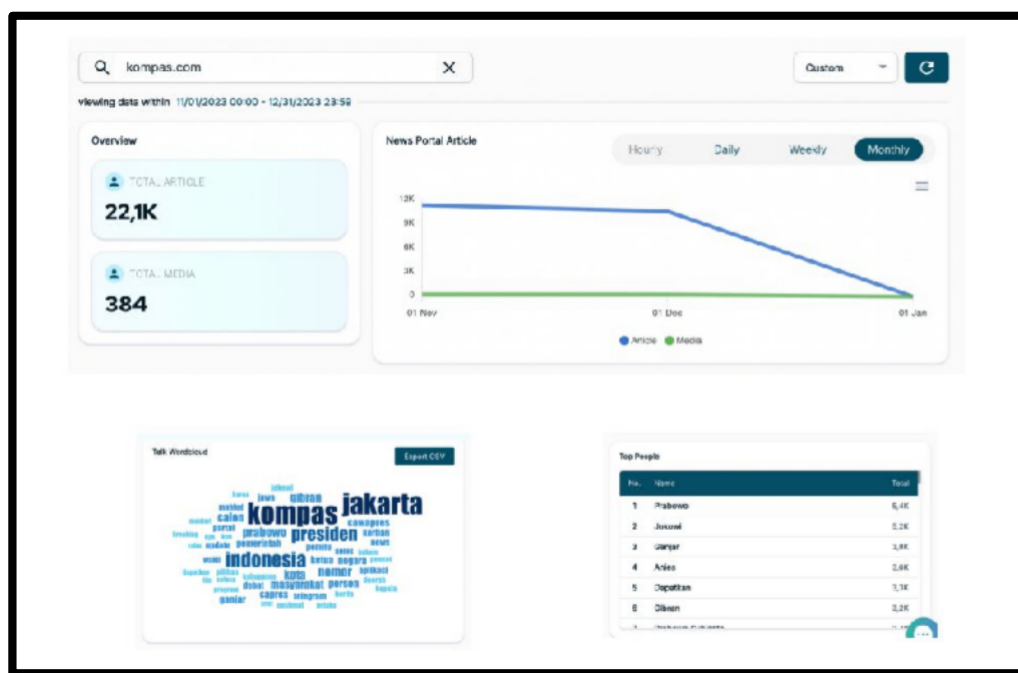
The relationship between Okezone as a media portal and the actions of HT and the Perindo Party often appears in the news. As long as the case of ethical violations at the Constitutional Court occurred, the public saw that Okezone should have been able to play the issue of ethical violations of the Constitutional Court throughout the month to increase public attention to the Perindo party. Research on Okezone.com's frequency and tone of reporting on the issue, this portal seemed to refrain from sporadically reporting on the issue of MK violations. This research assumes that this position is related to the assumption of 'playing it safe' by the editorial policies of Okezone.com and Sindonews.com (both owned by MNC Group). Research on Okezone.com's news discourse shows that this online media shifted their news focus to issues not directly related to the discourse on ethical violations of the Constitutional Court throughout November- December 2023.

### **Kompas.com: 'crab journalism' negotiating interests**

'Crab' journalism is a term that refers to the journalistic practices of Kompas in their journey to overcome various political intrigues and interests. The journalistic style adopted by Kompas, according to authors Sen & Hill (2007) is 'playing it safe'. All journalists and editors are always careful in packaging the news. This caution occurred because of the trauma of the New Order government's ban on January 21, 1978, after Kompas wrote a headline about the student movement. At that time, student activities were considered by the Soeharto government as a resistance movement. Kompas stopped publishing for two weeks. The founders at that time, including Jacob Oetama and P.K. Ojong, tried hard to save Kompas. Until February 5, 1978, the government accepted their apology. Kompas resumed operations. This condition, according to Sen & Hill (2007), became the momentum for Kompas to maintain that their writings did not cross the line continuously in the sense of fighting the ruler (regime). This is where the term 'crab journalism' emerged in the following period.

This 'crab journalism' remains the basis of journalistic practices carried out by Kompas to all other publishing elements under the Gramedia business group. Including Kompas.com, which is a form of online media. Kompas.com is an online media portal that emerged from

monetising the National Daily Newspaper Kompas. This online portal is part of the media giant Kompas Gramedia. Since the controversy over the issuance of Constitutional Court decision No. 90/2023 in October, Kompas.com has intensely provided coverage and news. The following Figure 5 are the results of processing through NoLimit's crawling dashboard data on the intensity of Kompas.com's news throughout November-December 2023.



**Figure 5.** Kompas.com news data processing related to the issue of MK ethical violations  
Source: NoLimit Dashboard data processor, data processed by researchers, August 2024

Based on data on the frequency and tone of news coverage on the issuance of Constitutional Court Decision No.90/2023, the online news portal Kompas.com has intense interest. Evidently, during November-December 2023, there were 22.2 K total articles containing the issue. 384 total media contain things related to the issue, both displaying images, visuals, graphics, and others. The consistency in reporting the issue of ethical violations is one proof that Kompas.com is a storyteller-oriented media. The principle of guarding issues that have high news value is one of the strategies in their crab journalism.

The findings of the worldcloud top data crawling results (figure 5), show that the words that appear dominantly are President, Gibran, Prabowo, Anies and Ganjar. For top people Prabowo occupied the first position with a total of 5.4k, Jokowi 5.2k, Ganjar 3.8k. Anies 3.6k. Meanwhile, Gibran, who is arguably the main figure in the issue of ethical violations of the Constitutional Court, only received a total of 3.2k top people. This figure is far below the names Prabowo and Jokowi. Anwar Usman, an important figure in this article and case, did not appear in the top people. The low frequency of appearance of the two main names in the Constitutional Court case in Kompas.com's coverage shows caution not to publish news that is directly connected to this sensitive issue. This is an indication that their 'crab journalism' has played well. This media took the principle of caution under the pressure of controversy from the public's ambivalent attitude. This is inseparable from the historical elements of how this media institution was established and developed in the past.

Historically, Kompas.com is part of the large corporation PT Kompas Cyber Media (KCM), a subsidiary of the Kompas Gramedia Group. Lilik Oetama sits there as the CEO. Kompas Gramedia (KG) is in full partnership with Detik.com, Chairul Tanjung as the main commissioner. Tribunews.com is part of Kompas.com, but it can be seen that the total number of tribune news articles about MKMK is only 52. This data shows that Kompas.com is quite intense in posting articles about MKMK directly on their leading media name, Kompas.com. The analysis of Kompas.com's news discourse in this study shows that this online media positions itself as a

neutral storyteller of ethical violations of the Constitutional Court (MK) without having significant political and economic orientations.

Of the 4 (four) online media portals studied, crawling data shows different news frequency throughout November-December 2023. The differences are assumed to be interrelated with the political positions and interests of the managers and owners of each portal. Table 1 displays the differences between the four portals.

**Table 1.** News configuration of the four examined online media news coverage<sup>1</sup> November - 31 December 2023

No	Online Media Name	Frequency	Influential Figure
1	Tempo.co	8.5K	Goenawan Mohammad (GM)
2	detik.com	803	Chairul Tanjung (CT)
3	Okezone.com	203	Hary Tanoesoedibjo (HT)
4	Kompas.com	22.1 K	Jacob Oetama

Source: Author Data Processing (2024)

Although other elements significantly influence editorial policy orientation (editorial priorities, news value, human resources, etc.), this study focuses on the pragmatic political economy considerations of media institution owners (owners) that also influence news content selection decisions. Referring to the results of processed data on interest and news frequency from the four online media portals studied, this article affirms Souisa (2024) findings that the market structure very well serves media owners with political agendas or interests with centralised media ownership. If, in the study, Souisa targeted the relationship between centralised media ownership and direct and indirect effects on the decline of diversity in media content, this article refers to the fact that centralised media ownership has a direct impact on interest orientation and an indirect effect on political interests that affect media owners. This is what led to the diversity in the frequency and tone of the news coverage of the four online portals in response to the frenzied news coverage of the Constitutional Court's ethical violations during November-December 2023.

### Media position in the midst of ethical controversy issues

There are three assumptions from the Okezone.com in the high and low interest in the news coverage of the various media studies on the issue of ethical violations of the Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court above. The first is the consideration of the political (business) agenda of each media. It can be seen that Kompas as part of the Kompas Gramedia Group, which has strategic partnerships with Detik.com and Chairul Tanjung's business leadership, certainly has business or political interests. With many articles about the Constitutional Court and political figures such as Prabowo, Gibran, Ganjar, Anies, and Jokowi, this media may be trying to influence public perception. More frequent news can boost the image or weaken certain parties ahead of political momentum. The moment in question is the presidential and vice-presidential elections for the Republic of Indonesia 2024-2029 in February 2024. It is difficult to dismiss the link between the practical political interests of the owners of media institutions (as well as online portals under the main company) with the editorial policies that guide the reporting of each media. The same thing happened to Tempo.co and Okezone in two extreme ranges of political and economic interests per the character and vision of each media.

Second, there is an attempt to direct the public narrative. With the dominance of the Constitutional Court topic in a certain period, Kompas.com and other media attempted to direct the public's focus on constitutional issues that might be related to the political or policy upheaval that they wanted to highlight. The presence of names such as Prabowo, Jokowi, and Gibran in the article reflects how the media tries to direct public attention to certain political actors, while figures such as Anwar Usman, who may have a crucial role, are not brought to the surface.

Third, highlighting certain figures. The imbalance in mentioning the names of Gibran, the Constitutional Court news could reflect certain editorial interests or political affiliations. For example, Prabowo and Jokowi appearing dominantly in the news could indicate that they are figures in the spotlight for readers or have connections with parties who have interests in the media. Gibran, who is associated with the Constitutional Court issue, appearing lower, could be

deliberately placed in this position to maintain political balance or to build the narrative gradually.

In line with the diversity of media positions when responding to issues with high political content, this study found a tendency for the various positions of each studied media. Referring to the depiction of the orientation of media positions according to Critical Political Economy (CPE) theory, this research finds justification for the fundamental premise that news media do not only provide 'news' but have become 'part of the political and ideological processes of the market economy' (Bhayroo, 2008). This premise corroborates a series of basic assumptions of the theory (Smythe, 1960; Schiller, 1984; Mosco, 2009), which essentially focus on the exploitative and undemocratic aspects of the communications industry.

Since the trend of reporting based on big data processing, we have seen variations in the high attention of certain online media portal institutions to the issue of ethical violations that occurred at the Constitutional Court. This position of interest is not necessarily parallel to the orientation of political interests that are based on the political position of the owner (owner of the media company). From the beginning, the discourse on ethical violations was not solely viewed in a legal context. This means that the two names that appear in the discourse (Anwar Usman and Gibran Rakabuming Raka) are inseparable from the constellation of political tensions ahead of the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election. These two names represent the power of Joko Widodo as the ruling president at that time. The position of all online media will clearly be affected and aware of the complexity of this condition.

In the context of the relationship between political tension and the contestation of the 2024 presidential election, the discourse of ethical violations from the Constitutional Court judges finds a link with the position and political affiliations of media owners (uniquely, coincidentally, also party owners!). This research departs from the assumption that the owners of media portals, on average, have certain pragmatic political interests both directly and indirectly in responding to and reporting on the issue of ethical violations committed by the Constitutional Court. Indeed, the discourse of ethical violations in online media portals becomes a stage for the practical power ideology of the media owners. Three arbitrary positions can be seen in the configuration of the trend of media coverage.

In the first position, the extreme media portal group asserts its position to go head-to-head with Jokowi. Here, the group is represented by Tempo.co. This critical portal group has long seen (even reminded) that Jokowi will use (more politely let) Gibran advance in the 2024-2029 political event. However, the consequences will make the president face the party where he has been sheltered all this time. Tempo.co pays excellent attention to the issue of ethical violations, even to the point that the presidential election agenda shifted to the presidential debate moment in January 2024. This ethical issue is discussed and used as the main frame of various media affiliated with the Tempo group. Even on this issue, Tempo is the only group that is at odds' with other media network groups. This group can be called a critical-radical group.

The second position is what I call the moderate media portal group. This group is represented by the Kompas Gramedia network group, which can play a unique role despite being at the radical extreme of the first group. This group played an interesting role when responding to the issue of ethical violations of MK judges. One portal such as Kompas.com paid relatively high attention to the issue. The descriptive and narrative storytelling patterns used by their media networks show caution in reporting. Also unique is what is played by the media group under MNC, whose majority shares are owned by Hary Tanoesudibjo (HT). HT's position is so unique because of his missed political calculation as Chairman of the Perindo party. In the 2014 presidential election, the Perindo party stood in line with Prabowo-Sandiago Uno. All media within the MNC group were mobilised to support the pair. Even so, they lost. In the 2024 presidential election, the Perindo party switched to supporting Ganjar-Mahfud. This decision was not made without consideration. Throughout Jokowi's administration, Perindo was known as a party that supported every presidential policy. HT's daughter served as deputy minister of Tourism and Creative Economics. The bond between HT, and Jokowi is quite strong. Until the 2024 presidential election, HT found Jokowi's signal of support for Ganjar and, of course, PDI-P. This reference made HT and Perindo choose to join Ganjar's group. Turning his back on Prabowo. A choice that later seemed regrettable. Jokowi turned to support Prabowo. This is what makes the case of violation of MK ethics have its own complicated meaning for Perindo, HT, and automatically all elements of the media network that are in the power of this group.

The third position is a group with a slow narrative response to the issue of violations of MK ethics. In this group, there is Okezone.com, which relatively represents similar media such as Tribun.com and Sindonews.com. Parallel to this position is Detik.com. It is called narrative because the average response of the online media portals above to the issue of ethical violations is descriptive, using fact-reporting patterns.

Network analysis of the ownership history of some of these media shows strong network links between the MNC group, Bakrie Group, and CT Corporation (Trans) over the media included in this group. For example, Viva.com and Oke.com are two media that are majority owned by the MNC group. The research team's assumption for this third group is that media institutions practice content diversity to keep their news portals in the mainstream audience segment. This means that it does not fall into the trap of homogenising content. This is a unique strategy in the economic corridor. However, in the context of political constellations, this practice is a clever two-legged stool. This means there is no reason for all media portals to be used as mounts for practical political and economic interests. In turn, this is a surefire strategy to play a position to continue to exist in the realm of business economics. Meanwhile, news elements with practical political content that are 'risky' editorially choose to place them on other online media portals but remain in the status of the leading ownership network. This is the normative-descriptive group.

## CONCLUSION

In the end, this study found a quite unique intersection between the complexity of the frequency of research media reports in their editorial policies (meaning through news articles) and the orientation and reorientation of their political position when the issue of ethical violations at the Constitutional Court (MK) spread during 1 November-31 December 2023. From the beginning, the discourse on ethical violations in research was not solely viewed in a legal context. This means that the two names that appear intertwined in the discourse (Anwar Usman and Gibran Rakabuming Raka) cannot be separated from the constellation of political tensions leading up to the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election. These two names represent Joko Widodo's strength as the ruling president then. The diversity of reporting discourse in all the researched media shows editorial awareness of the complexity of this condition. In the context of the relationship between political tensions leading up to the 2024 Indonesian presidential election, the discourse on ethical violations by the Constitutional Court judges found a connection with the position and political affiliation of the media owners (uniquely coincidentally, they are also party owners!). This research shows that media portal owners, on average, have certain political interests, both directly and indirectly, in responding to and reporting on the issue of ethical violations committed by the Constitutional Court. This position has more or less influence over the editorial policies of each media institution.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thank you to the UGM Department of Communication Sciences for funding research and publications. Thank you also to NoLimit Dashboard for providing data from the media and analysis results; this is one of the important pillars in developing the research we carry out.

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