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## Michel Foucault's Critical Discourse Analysis of Controversy News in Islamic Boarding Schools

**\*Fitriatin Nadhifah<sup>1</sup>, Sukarno<sup>2</sup>, Nurul Widiyawati Islami Rahayu<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, Jl. Mataram No.1, Jember, East Java, Indonesia  
\*fia451065@gmail.com

Informasi Artikel	Abstract
<b>Received:</b> 25 March 2024	<i>This research aims to analyze the construction of power and knowledge within the polemics that occurred at Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding Schools. The study adopts a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach, utilizing the framework of Michel Foucault's thinking. The primary data source for this research consists of news coverage published by Kompas.com, a leading news website in Indonesia. The collected news articles underwent a rigorous qualitative analysis process guided by the principles of critical discourse analysis and Michel Foucault's framework. Research shows that differences in interpretation and understanding of religious teachings cause controversies in Islamic boarding schools. The construction of power and knowledge in Islamic boarding schools plays a vital role in shaping the views and actions of individuals and the wider community. Islamic boarding schools have authority in interpreting and teaching religious teachings to students, and this includes a hierarchical structure in leadership, decisions taken by kyai or caregivers, and control over the religious knowledge conveyed to students. This research provides a deeper understanding of power, knowledge, and resistance dynamics within the context of polemics. From Michel Foucault's perspective, critical discourse analysis offers a critical view of the relationship between power, knowledge, and discourse in society.</i>
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Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis konstruksi

kekuasaan dan pengetahuan dalam polemik yang terjadi di Pondok Pesantren Al-Zaytun. Kajian ini mengadopsi pendekatan analisis wacana kritis (CDA), memanfaatkan kerangka pemikiran Michel Foucault. Sumber data primer penelitian ini adalah liputan berita yang diterbitkan oleh Kompas.com, sebuah situs berita terkemuka di Indonesia. Artikel berita yang dikumpulkan menjalani proses analisis kualitatif yang ketat dengan berpedoman pada prinsip analisis wacana kritis dan kerangka kerja Michel Foucault. Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perbedaan penafsiran dan pemahaman terhadap ajaran agama menimbulkan kontroversi di lingkungan pesantren. Konstruksi kekuasaan dan pengetahuan di pesantren berperan penting dalam membentuk pandangan dan tindakan individu dan masyarakat luas. Pondok pesantren mempunyai kewenangan dalam menafsirkan dan mengajarkan ajaran agama kepada santri, hal ini mencakup struktur hierarki dalam kepemimpinan, keputusan yang diambil oleh kyai atau pengasuh, dan kendali atas ilmu agama yang disampaikan kepada santri. Penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman lebih dalam mengenai dinamika kekuasaan, pengetahuan, dan perlawanan dalam konteks polemik. Dari sudut pandang Michel Foucault, analisis wacana kritis menawarkan pandangan kritis mengenai hubungan antara kekuasaan, pengetahuan, dan wacana dalam masyarakat.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The world of Islamic boarding schools is an institution of Islamic education rich in the learning of religious sciences, such as classical texts and other Sharia books. Islamic boarding schools are a distinctive educational institution in Indonesia that has grown within the community and has proven its self-sufficiency (Fikri, 2023). According to Masrur (2017), pesantren is a religious institution that provides education, teaches, develops, and disseminates knowledge of Islam. Islamic boarding schools, as one of the traditional educational institutions in Indonesia, have been an integral part of the country's social and cultural landscape for centuries (Hariyadi & Husni, 2019; Rodliyah, 2014). Over time, these boarding schools have evolved beyond mere places for religious instruction, becoming centres of knowledge, power, and societal influence (Nasution, 2020).

Boarding schools boast a unique social structure and hierarchy, where the kyai (caretakers) wield significant authority as spiritual and intellectual leaders (Furqan, 2019).

Additionally, they serve as arenas where religious knowledge and local traditions are contested, questioned, and perpetuated. The construction of power and wisdom within these boarding schools plays a crucial role in shaping their communities' Islamic identity and worldview (Rusydiyah, 2017). Al-Zaytun Boarding School, located in Indramayu Regency, West Java, has garnered public attention due to controversies surrounding the institution. These controversies involve contentious issues, including teachings deemed deviant from religious norms, controversial statements made by the boarding school's management, and accusations of the practice of heretical teachings within the school's environment (Ikhwan & Yuniana, 2022). This has sparked widespread public reactions, raising questions about the boundaries and responsibilities of religious institutions as well as the involvement of local governments in addressing these issues. As a religious educational institution with significant influence, Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School has attracted the attention of academics and researchers to conduct previous studies.

Utilizing news coverage data from Kompas.com as a primary data source in this research holds significant urgency and interest for several reasons. Firstly, Kompas.com is one of Indonesia's leading and most reputable news websites, known for its credible and comprehensive reporting. Thus, the news coverage published by Kompas.com provides a reliable and widely accessed source of information on the controversies surrounding Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School. Secondly, the specific news article titled "Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School Controversy, Ridwan Kamil Waits for MUI Fatwa" highlights a pivotal moment in the ongoing controversies, indicating the involvement of influential figures such as Governor Ridwan Kamil and the awaited fatwa from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). This news article encapsulates critical developments and perspectives relevant to the broader discourse surrounding the controversies at Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School.

The decision to conduct a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the news coverage from Kompas.com aligns with the research's aim to understand how power operates through language and narrative construction in reporting. By analyzing the language, framing, and narratives used in the news coverage, researchers can uncover underlying power dynamics, ideologies, and discursive strategies employed by various stakeholders, including media outlets, to shape public perceptions and interpretations of the controversies. This approach enables a deeper exploration of how power relations are negotiated and reinforced through discursive practices in the public sphere, shedding light on the broader socio-political implications of the controversies surrounding Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School.

In the case of Al-Zaytun Boarding School Controversy, Ridwan Kamil Waits for MUI Fatwa, the title suggests a significant development in the controversies surrounding the boarding school, involving governmental and religious authorities, thus warranting closer examination (Ikhwan, 2017). The broader societal implications and public discourse surrounding controversies at Al-Zaytun Boarding School underscore the importance of analyzing such news coverage to understand its reverberating effects on public opinion, policy-making, and social dynamics.

The grand theory used in this research is Michel Foucault's critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective. This approach aims to uncover the construction of power and knowledge within the discourse surrounding Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School and to understand how the interactions of various stakeholders, including the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and local government, influence the community's understanding of controversial issues at the boarding school. The research problem focuses on investigating how the construction of power and knowledge in the discourse surrounding Al-Zaytun Boarding School shapes people's understanding of controversial issues, as well as examining the role of interactions between relevant parties, such as the MUI and regional governments, in shaping narratives and policies related to the controversy.

Several previous studies have been conducted to understand various aspects related to this boarding school, such as educational approaches, social influence,

the role of religious institutions, and the dynamics of relationships with the surrounding community (Syukri et al., 2019). However, in the context of the current controversies, further studies linking to emerging issues are still needed, including the role of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and the local government's response to these controversies (Rahmah & Prasetyo, 2022). This research is novel compared to previous studies as it delves into the specific context of emerging controversies at Al-Zaytun Boarding School and employs a critical discourse analysis approach to uncover underlying power dynamics and resistance within the discourse. It seeks to provide a deeper understanding of power, knowledge, and resistance dynamics in the context of controversies involving the boarding school.

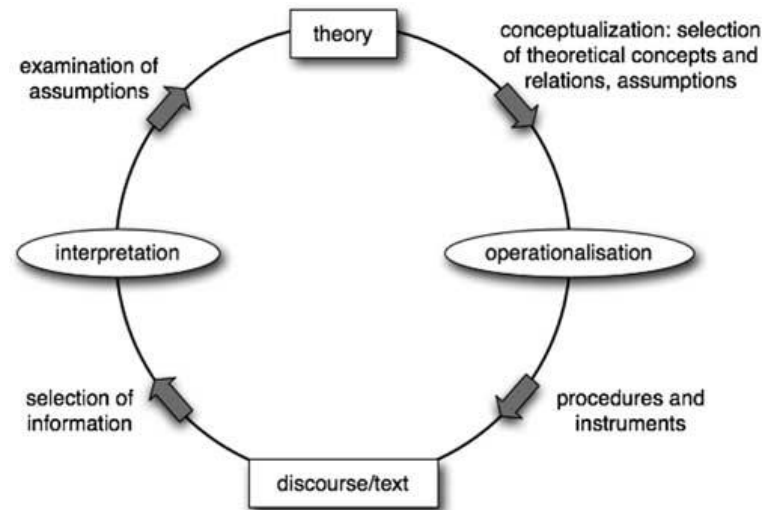
In line with this, this research aims to analyze the construction of power, knowledge, and resistance in the context of controversies at Al-Zaytun Boarding School using a critical discourse analysis approach based on Michel Foucault's perspective (Foucault, 2021; Van Dijk, 1993; Weissenrieder & Fairclough, 1997). This research will analyse news coverage published by Kompas.com, one of the leading news websites in Indonesia, providing the latest reports on the developments of controversies at Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School. In this critical discourse analysis, attention will be paid to narrative construction, language use, and the selection of perspectives in reporting related to ongoing issues at Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School. Furthermore, this research will also explore the role of the Indonesian Ulema Council and the response of the local government, particularly Governor of West Java Ridwan Kamil, in handling these controversies. Thus, this research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of power, knowledge, and resistance dynamics in the context of controversies involving Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School. Considering the profile of Al-Zaytun Boarding School as a controversial religious educational institution and the role of Kompas.com as a credible news source, this research will analyze news related to the controversies at Al-Zaytun Boarding School published by Kompas.com. Thus, this research is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of these controversies and the related social, religious, and political implications. In this

study, the news source used is an article titled "Controversy of Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School, Ridwan Kamil Awaits MUI Fatwa," published by Kompas.com on June 15, 2023. This article was written by Bandung Contributor, Dendi Ramdhani, and edited by Teuku Muhammad Valdy Arief.

The aim of the discourse analysis research from Michel Foucault's perspective is to reveal the construction of power and knowledge around the Al-Zaytun Boarding School and understand the impact of the dynamic interactions of various parties, including the MUI and local government, on the community's understanding of controversial issues at the boarding school. The research problem of this discourse analysis research is how the construction of power and knowledge in the Al-Zaytun Boarding School discourse influences people's understanding of controversial issues, as well as the role of interactions between related parties, including the MUI and regional governments, in shaping narratives and policies related to the controversy. Discourse analysis research from this background is essential because it provides an understanding of the message or information from the news "Controversy of Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School, Ridwan Kamil Awaits MUI Fatwa," published by Kompas.com on June 15, 2023.

## II. METHODS

The research adopts a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach, utilizing the framework of Michel Foucault's thinking. CDA allows examining power dynamics, knowledge production, and discursive formations within societal contexts. (Foucault, 2021). This approach will uncover the construction of power, knowledge, and resistance in the context of Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School controversies. The research will utilize news coverage data published by Kompas.com as the primary data source. Critical discourse analysis aims to understand how power operates through language use and narrative construction in reporting. The research will involve identifying and analysing language use, word choice, narrative construction, and perspective selection used in news coverage related to the controversies. The following is an analysis diagram in Michel Foucault's critical discourse analysis.



**Figure 1.** Critical discourse analysis of Michel Foucault

Data obtained from Kompas.com will be analyzed in-depth, considering the theoretical framework and concepts proposed by Michel Foucault. The research will explore how the construction of power, knowledge, and resistance emerges in news coverage and how it affects public perceptions and assessments of the controversies. By employing the critical discourse analysis approach and referring to Michel Foucault's theoretical framework, this research is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the construction of power, knowledge, and resistance in the controversies at Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School and enrich academic discussions on the relationship between religious institutions, media, and social dynamics in Indonesia.

### III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### **Islamic Boarding School Construction Influences the Dynamics of Controversy**

Controversies arise due to differences in interpretation and understanding of religious teachings. The construction of power and knowledge within Islamic Boarding Schools (*Pondok Pesantren*) can influence individuals' and communities' perspectives and actions on a broader scale. In the context of Al-Zaytun Boarding Schools, controversies arise due to differences in interpretation and understanding of religious teachings. The construction of power and knowledge within the boarding school plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' and communities'

perspectives and actions on a broader scale. Islamic boarding schools, as religious institutions, have the authority to interpret and teach religious teachings to students. This construction of power includes hierarchy within the leadership structure, decisions made by kyai or caretakers, and control over the religious knowledge conveyed to students.

The construction of knowledge also plays a significant role. Islamic boarding schools have curricula and teaching methods that can influence students' perspectives and understanding of religious teachings (Zahroh, 2021). The knowledge produced and controlled by these religious institutions can shape students' perceptions, interpretations, and spiritual practices (Utama, 2020).

Differences in the interpretation and understanding of religious teachings among students and caretakers of Islamic boarding schools can be a source of controversy. Students with an alternative or critical views on the teachings and practices in Islamic boarding schools may feel limited in expressing their thoughts and beliefs due to the construction of power and knowledge that control and restrict the space for dialogue and discussion.

In this context, it is essential to consider how the construction of power and knowledge in Islamic boarding schools can influence the dynamics of controversies. Efforts to build a more inclusive, open, and fair understanding through dialogue and discussion that considers differences in the interpretation and understanding of religious teachings can be crucial in alleviating conflicts and promoting tolerance.

Controversies can emerge as forms of resistance to perceived controlling authorities of religious knowledge and practices. Groups or individuals with alternative or critical views on teachings and practices at Islamic boarding schools may trigger controversies as a form of resistance to existing hegemony. Controversies at Al-Zaytun Boarding Schools can also be understood as resistance to perceived controlling authorities of religious knowledge and practices. Groups or individuals with alternative or critical views on teachings and practices at the boarding school can act as triggers for controversies as a form of resistance to existing hegemony.



Authorities in Islamic boarding schools, such as kyai or caretakers, can interpret and teach students religious teachings. However, not all students passively accept this authority (Zuhriy, 2011). There are groups or individuals with different or even critical views on the teachings and practices carried out at Islamic boarding schools. These groups or individuals may perceive a dominant hegemony within the boarding school, where existing authorities control religious knowledge and practices, creating gaps in students' expression and participation. Controversies that arise represent resistance to this hegemony, where they attempt to challenge and question dominant understandings and advocate for recognition and space for their perspectives (Jannah, 2019).

This resistance can take various forms, such as rejecting inappropriate teachings, forming alternative groups or communities with different views, or even using social media to voice criticisms and perspectives not represented within the Islamic boarding school environment. Controversies as forms of resistance can trigger changes and transformations within Islamic boarding schools. Resistance to hegemony can open space for more inclusive dialogues, discussions, and debates, questioning and reforming existing understandings. This can be an opportunity to enrich religious knowledge and practices that are more pluralistic and responsive to social and contextual changes.

The narratives formed by religious institutions, media, government, and society can influence perspectives, interpretations, and perceptions of controversies at Al-Zaytun Boarding School. The constructed discourse can reinforce polarization and conflicts among the various involved parties. Discourse and narratives are crucial in understanding controversies. Religious institutions, media, government, and society actively shape narratives and discourse that influence perspectives, interpretations, and perceptions of these controversies.

Religious institutions, as the primary authority in the boarding school, play a central role in shaping narratives about the teachings and practices of religion taught there (Fahham, 2020). They can influence students' and surrounding communities' views on correct, wrong, orthodox, or heretical. Narratives formed by religious institutions can reinforce specific identities and values, leading to

polarization and conflict with groups or individuals holding alternative views (Budiasmoro, 2014).

Furthermore, the media also shapes narratives and discourse surrounding controversies. Through reporting and representation, the media can influence public opinion, expand the reach of narratives formed by religious institutions, and reinforce or change societal views on the controversies at the boarding school. The government also plays a role in controversies at Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School. Government policies, statements, and actions can influence conflict dynamics and determine boundaries or reactions to these controversies. The government may mediate or attempt to regulate controversies through various possible interventions. The society also plays a role in the power structure. Society's views, beliefs, and social interactions can shape the dynamics of controversies. Society's reactions to controversies can also influence the direction and intensity of conflicts.

It is essential to know that the narratives and discourse formed by religious institutions, media, government, and society are not always neutral or objective. They can reflect particular interests and perspectives that can reinforce polarization and conflicts. Therefore, individuals and society must adopt a critical and reflective approach to the narratives presented and be open to various viewpoints and interpretations to obtain a more holistic and inclusive understanding of the controversies.

Controversies at Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School may result from complex interactions among involved powers, including religious institutions, government, media, and interconnected societies that influence one another. Controversies cannot be understood in isolation but must be seen in the context of existing power structures. Power is not a singular entity but comprises networks involving various societal elements.

Religious institutions are central in Islamic boarding schools as guardians and disseminators of spiritual teachings. They have authority and control over the spiritual knowledge and practices taught at the boarding schools (Fiqih, 2022). This authority can influence students' perspectives and actions and affect the

dynamics of controversies. The government also plays a role in controversies. Government policies, statements, and actions can influence conflict dynamics and determine boundaries or reactions to these controversies. The government may mediate or attempt to regulate controversies through various possible interventions. Media is also an essential factor in the power structure (Jauhari, 2015). Through reporting and representation, the media can influence public opinion, expand the reach of narratives formed by religious institutions, and reinforce or change societal views on the controversies at the boarding school. The society also plays a role in the power structure. Society's views, beliefs, and social interactions can shape the dynamics of controversies. Society's reactions to controversies can also influence the direction and intensity of conflicts.

The complex interaction between religious institutions, government, media, and society in the power structure creates complex controversies. Tensions, conflicts, and competition to influence narratives and knowledge about religious teachings are key factors in the controversies at Islamic boarding schools (Aliano & Adon, 2023). Understanding this power structure is essential for holistically examining and analyzing controversies at Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School. Viewing interactions between religious institutions, government, media, and society allows us to understand the dynamics of controversies due to the power struggles and conflicts within them.

### **Michel Foucault's Critical Discourse Analysis**

The analysis results shed light on the intricate interplay between power, knowledge, and controversies within Islamic boarding schools, particularly exemplified by the case of Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School. It becomes evident that controversies often stem from disparities in the interpretation and dissemination of religious teachings, which, in turn, are deeply intertwined with power dynamics inherent within these educational institutions. Constructing power structures, hierarchies, and authoritative figures like the *kyai* significantly influences students' perceptions and behaviours, shaping the broader community's outlook on religious matters. Moreover, the formation and control of knowledge within these institutions play a pivotal role in shaping students' religious practices

and beliefs. Resistance against perceived hegemonic powers within Islamic boarding schools is also a significant theme. Groups or individuals with alternative viewpoints challenge existing authority structures, triggering controversies as a form of resistance. This resistance takes various forms, including rejecting certain teachings, forming alternative communities, or utilizing social media to voice dissenting opinions. Such controversies often catalyse change within these institutions, fostering more inclusive dialogues and debates and potentially leading to reforms in religious education practices.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights the influential role of narratives constructed by religious institutions, media, government, and society in shaping perceptions of controversies. These narratives are not neutral but rather reflect vested interests and perspectives, sometimes exacerbating polarization and conflicts. It underscores the importance of adopting a critical and reflective approach to understanding these narratives, encouraging openness to diverse viewpoints and interpretations for a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying issues. The discussion also delves into the complex interactions among various power structures—religious institutions, government, media, and society—that contribute to controversies. Controversies at Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School are not isolated incidents but are deeply embedded within existing power networks, where tensions, conflicts, and competition for influence shape the discourse surrounding religious teachings. Understanding these power dynamics holistically is crucial for effectively analyzing and addressing controversies within Islamic boarding schools. The findings emphasize the need for a nuanced understanding of the interplay between power, knowledge, and controversies within Islamic boarding schools. By recognizing the multifaceted nature of these dynamics and engaging in critical dialogue and reflection, stakeholders can work towards fostering more inclusive, tolerant, and informed educational environments.

Furthermore, other approaches can be used to analyze this controversy, such as Jurgen Habermas' theory of communicative action, Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and symbolic struggle, and

Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony (Said, 1978). Other approaches that can be used to analyze the controversy at Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School include:

1. Jurgen Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action: This approach emphasizes the importance of inclusive, open, and fair dialogue as a foundation for addressing controversies and achieving mutual understanding. In the context, this approach can encourage more rational communication, supporting respectful dialogue and negotiation among the parties involved in the controversy (Habermas, 2013).
2. Edward Said's Concept of Orientalism: This theory directs attention to the Western perspective on the East. In the context, this concept can help understand how controversies relate to interpretation, stereotypes, and the formation of negative images of certain religious institutions. Analysis of Orientalism can uncover assumptions and discrimination that may occur in the controversy.
3. Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital and Symbolic Struggle: This approach highlights the role of symbolism in power struggles and struggles to control and dominate social fields. In the context, this theory can be used to analyze conflicts of cultural capital and symbolic struggle among various actors within religious institutions, society, and government (Huhn et al., 1996).
4. Antonio Gramsci's Concept of Hegemony: This concept emphasizes that power is repressive and can be achieved through cultural hegemony and ideological domination. In the context, this approach can help understand power struggles and efforts to establish hegemony in the religious, cultural, and political contexts involved in the controversy (Gramsci, 2013).

By considering these approaches, we can have a more comprehensive insight into the controversy at Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School and the factors involved in the dynamics of the conflict. Each approach provides a unique perspective and can assist in analyzing various aspects of the controversy more deeply.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The controversies surrounding Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School revolve around the construction of power and knowledge within Islamic boarding schools, highlighting how differences in interpretation and understanding of religious teachings can lead to conflicts. Authorities within these institutions, such as kyai or caretakers, wield significant power in interpreting and disseminating religious knowledge, influencing students' perspectives and actions. This power dynamic can limit dialogue and discussion, stifling alternative or critical views. Moreover, controversies often arise as forms of resistance to perceived hegemony, challenging dominant understandings and advocating for the recognition of diverse perspectives. These resistances manifest through various means, including rejecting teachings and utilizing social media to voice criticisms. Religious institutions, media, government, and society shape the discourse and narratives surrounding these controversies, reflecting interests and perspectives that may reinforce polarization and conflicts. Understanding these entities' complex power structures and interactions is crucial for comprehensively analyzing the controversies and their implications. Alternative approaches, such as Jurgen Habermas' theory of communicative action, Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and symbolic struggle, and Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony, offer unique perspectives for deeper analysis of the controversies at Al-Zaytun Islamic Boarding School, enriching our understanding of the conflict dynamics.

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