Aceh as The Role Model of Democratic Management Success: Critical Discourses Analysis

Chairuddin[1]
M.Manugeren[2]
Jumino Suhadi[3]
[123]Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

[1] chairyaceh57@gmail.com
[2] manugeren@sastra.uisu.ac.id
[3] jumino.suhadi@sastra.uisu.ac.id

Abstract

This study analyzes the news narrative "Aceh Tak Masuk Daerah Rawan Pilkada Serentak, Lima Provinsi Memiliki Potensi Tinggi" using Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model to explore Aceh's portrayal as a role model of democratic success. The research aims to uncover how this narrative influences perceptions of Aceh's stability among local and national audiences, particularly in contrast to its historical association with conflict. This study adopts a qualitative approach, employing Van Dijk's CDA framework, which consists of three dimensions: textual analysis, social cognition, and sociopolitical context. The data were collected through a textual analysis of media discourse and audience surveys involving 47 respondents (37 from Aceh and 10 from outside Aceh). The textual analysis focuses on the structural composition of the news, while the audience survey examines how different groups perceive the narrative. The results indicate that 72.73% of local respondents express pride in Aceh's depiction as a safe and stable region, yet 43.24% remain neutral about its relevance to current realities. Among national respondents, 100% perceive the narrative positively, with 50% strongly agreeing that Aceh serves as a model for democratic management. These findings demonstrate that media discourse effectively challenges stereotypes and promotes a positive image of Aceh, particularly to national audiences. However, local acceptance requires narratives grounded in authentic experiences. This study contributes to discourse analysis by showing how positive discourse can transform public perception, highlighting its potential to promote post-conflict regions as examples of democratic success.

Keywords*: Aceh, Political Success, Critical Discourse Analysis, Van Dijk*

Introduction

The 2024 simultaneous regional elections represent a historic moment in Indonesia's democratic process, involving 37 provinces and 508 regencies/cities. While elections serve as a barometer of political maturity, they also highlight potential vulnerabilities, such as intimidation, threats of violence, and social tensions related to ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations (SARA issues). A report from the Ministry of Home Affairs (CNN Indonesia, 2024) identifies five provinces Jakarta, West Java, East Kalimantan, North Sulawesi, and North Maluku as high-risk areas due to these factors. Amidst concerns over electoral security, Aceh emerges as an anomaly. Unlike other provinces with a history of political turbulence, Aceh is not categorized as high-, medium, or low-risk. This is particularly significant given Aceh's longstanding association with armed conflict, which only subsided following the 2005 Helsinki Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Aceh's peaceful and stable democratic transition raises

important questions about how media narratives construct its political transformation and how these narratives shape public perceptions at both the local and national levels.

The media plays a crucial role in framing political discourse. News narratives can reinforce or challenge stereotypes, influencing how regions like Aceh are perceived. A report from Media Pos Aceh (2024), titled "Aceh Tak Masuk Daerah Rawan Pilkada Serentak, Lima Provinsi Memiliki Potensi Tinggi", presents Aceh as a model of democratic stability, using positive discourse to highlight its governance success. However, to what extent does this narrative align with local realities? How do Acehnese people and the broader Indonesian audience interpret such representations?

To address these questions, this study employs Teun A. Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, which examines media discourse through three dimensions: text structure, social cognition, and sociopolitical context (Van Dijk, 1993, 2006). This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how media constructs Aceh's image and how audiences internalize or contest these narratives.

This research is strategically significant for several reasons. First, Aceh's democratic stability challenges long-standing perceptions of the region as conflict-prone, illustrating the role of media discourse in political identity formation. Second, the study offers empirical insights into how local and national audiences react to positive narratives about Aceh. Lastly, it contributes to critical discourse studies by demonstrating how political narratives can be leveraged to strengthen government legitimacy and regional reputation in post-conflict contexts.

By analyzing the discursive construction of Aceh's political stability, this study aims to uncover the ideological underpinnings of media narratives and their impact on public perception. The findings will offer valuable contributions to media studies, political communication, and post-conflict discourse analysis.

Aceh's History and Democratic Governance

Aceh has a long history as a region with an inclusive sociopolitical structure. The Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam in the 16th century was one of the most powerful Islamic kingdoms in Southeast Asia, integrating political, economic, and spiritual authority (Bassett & Reid, 1989 ; Muhzinat, 2021). Central to its governance was the tradition of *syura* (deliberation), a collective decision-making mechanism that underscored the Sultanate's commitment to participatory governance (Aspinall, 2020). this historical practice of *syura* laid the groundwork for Aceh's enduring democratic traditions.

Aceh is the only region in Indonesia that was never fully colonized. This success can be attributed to its political independence and participatory political structures, which allowed Aceh to consolidate its social strength (Reid, 2005; Ajis, 2019). A second factor in Aceh's resilience is the role of social solidarity among the community, religious scholars (*ulama*), and the government (Snouck Hurgronye, 1985, Kingsbury, 2006;Sahlan et al., 2019) . The close relationship between political leaders and religious scholars fostered unity among the people in the face of external threats

Following the 2005 Helsinki peace agreement, Aceh demonstrated its capacity to manage local democracy, with special autonomy playing a pivotal role in creating political stability (Aspinall, 2009; Sari et al., 2022). These democratic traditions have formed the foundation for Aceh's success in the 2024 simultaneous regional elections.

Contemporary Concepts in Democratic Management

Democratic management is a governance framework that prioritizes inclusivity, accountability, conflict resolution, and sustainability, all of which were instrumental in

Aceh's transition from conflict to stability after the 2005 Helsinki Agreement. Inclusivity forms a cornerstone of democratic governance by ensuring the active participation of diverse stakeholders, including marginalized groups, in decision-making processes. Rooted in Dahl's theory of polyarchy, inclusivity emphasizes pluralistic representation, addressing power imbalances, and legitimizing authority through participatory practices (Ángel-Osorio et al., 2021). Aceh's adaptation of *syura* (consultative traditions) exemplifies how local wisdom can be integrated into democratic structures, a practice that enhances governance and deepens democratic engagement, as highlighted by (Hofer et al., 2024).

Accountability and transparency are equally critical, as they build trust and legitimacy within democratic systems (Diamond, 1994). Underscored how transparency enables public oversight and strengthens trust in governance. In Aceh, the Special Autonomy Law has institutionalized mechanisms for public monitoring and improved resource management, reflecting. O'Donnell (2010) argument that transparent governance fosters institutional effectiveness and public confidence. These measures not only increased trust in leaders but also ensured a responsive approach to governance.

Conflict resolution is a defining feature of democratic management, particularly in post-conflict societies. Aceh's reconciliation efforts, following the 2005 Helsinki Agreement, combined *adat* (customary law) with modern negotiation techniques, demonstrating the effectiveness of hybrid peacebuilding approaches. Recent studies emphasize the importance of inclusive dialogue and respect for local traditions in fostering sustainable peace (Mac Ginty, 2022; Galtung, 2012) concept of of "positive peace" further highlights Aceh's ability to address both direct violence and systemic inequities, ensuring long-term stability

Sustainability is a vital component of democratic governance, emphasizing the resilience and adaptability of institutions over time. O'Donnell (2010); Rahman et al., 2022) clarified that institutional resilience is essential for enduring governance amidst societal changes. Aceh's blend of Islamic principles and democratic practices has reinforced this resilience, creating a governance framework that is both adaptive and stable (Feener, 2013). By harmonizing traditional values with modern democratic ideals, Aceh has ensured the continuity and relevance of its political system. Recent research highlights the importance of cultural and religious frameworks in sustaining democratic practices in post-conflict societies (Bräuchler, 2023).

Post-conflict Aceh exemplifies the practical application of democratic management principles following the Helsinki Agreement of 2005. The region transitioned from prolonged separatist conflict to a decentralized governance model that embodies inclusivity, accountability, conflict resolution, and sustainability. Through robust mechanisms for public participation and transparent decision-making, Aceh has not only achieved stability but also laid the groundwork for lasting peace and prosperity. Its commitment to conflict resolution, as seen in the integration of *adat* (customary law) with modern negotiation techniques, highlights the significance of embracing local wisdom in fostering reconciliation and long-term harmony.

The theoretical framework underpinning democratic management emphasizes inclusivity, accountability, conflict resolution, and sustainability as critical criteria for effective governance. Aceh's successful incorporation of these principles into its post-conflict transformation demonstrates its relevance as a global model for democratic success. By bridging theory and practice, Aceh provides valuable insights for regions striving to achieve democratic stability, particularly those navigating post-conflict

transitions. Its experience underscores the potential of democratic management to foster resilient and inclusive societies, serving as a testament to the transformative power of good governance.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary framework that examines the relationship between language, power, and ideology in texts. In this study, CDA is applied to investigate how media constructs a positive narrative about Aceh as a model of democratic success, despite its long history of conflict. The model developed by Teun A. Van Dijk emphasizes three key dimensions in discourse analysis: text structure, social cognition, and sociopolitical context (Van Dijk, 2019). Using this approach, the study explores how the media constructs Aceh's image as a politically stable and secure region during elections, and how audiences, both within and outside Aceh, interpret these narratives.

The first dimension, text structure, focuses on how the media text is linguistically and structurally composed to shape the perception of Aceh. The analysis of the news article "Aceh Tak Masuk Daerah Rawan Pilkada Serentak, Lima Provinsi Memiliki Potensi Tinggi" shows that the narrative is systematically crafted to reinforce Aceh's image as a stable region. In terms of macrostructure, the central theme of the news emphasizes Aceh as a safe electoral region compared to five high-risk provinces. This binary opposition strengthens the notion that Aceh has successfully transitioned from a history of conflict to democratic stability. From a superstructure perspective, the news follows a structured narrative, beginning with a headline emphasizing Aceh's security, followed by a classification of high-risk provinces, and concluding with optimistic statements from officials. Regarding microstructure, the news article employs positive lexical choices to describe Aceh, such as "safe," "stable," and "smooth process", while using negative terms for other provinces, such as "intimidation," "threats of violence," and "high vulnerability". Additionally, the use of religious phrases such as "Insya Allah" (God willing) creates cultural resonance with Aceh's predominantly Muslim audience, reinforcing a sense of optimism and legitimacy.

The second dimension, social cognition, examines how this discourse is produced and interpreted by audiences. The news article relies on official sources, particularly from the Ministry of Home Affairs, which enhances its credibility and reinforces Aceh's positive image. However, audience responses to the narrative vary. Based on a survey conducted with 37 respondents from Aceh, 72.73% expressed pride in Aceh's portrayal as a stable region, yet 43.24% remained neutral, suggesting skepticism regarding whether the media representation aligns with their lived experiences. Meanwhile, among national respondents (outside Aceh), 100% perceived the narrative positively, with 50% strongly agreeing that Aceh serves as a model for democratic success. These findings indicate that media discourse is more influential in shaping public perception at the national level, particularly among audiences who rely on media representations rather than direct experience (Islamiyah & Hermaliza, 2024).

The third dimension, sociopolitical context, explores how media discourse aligns with broader political and ideological interests. The portrayal of Aceh as a stable and democratic region serves several key political functions. First, it reinforces government legitimacy, particularly in managing Aceh through special autonomy policies after the conflict. Second, the media acts as a tool for ideological dissemination, where highlighting Aceh's success functions as a narrative strategy to showcase the effectiveness of governance in post-conflict areas. Third, the discourse reshapes Aceh's

historical perception, shifting it from a conflict-ridden region to a model of local democracy and stability in Indonesia. This aligns with recent findings that media narratives play a central role in influencing post-conflict governance discourse and regional identity formation (Hofer et al., 2024; Julaeha, 2021).

Method

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary framework designed to uncover the connections between language, power, and ideology in texts. Developed by Teun A. Van Dijk, this approach operates through three primary dimensions: text, social cognition, and sociopolitical context. The first dimension, text, involves the analysis of discourse structures, focusing on themes, word choices, and stylistic features that reveal underlying intentions and ideological underpinnings (Van Dijk, 2019). Secondly, social cognition examines how discourse producers perceive and internalize ideologies and social realities, highlighting the mental models that inform their narrative construction (Van Dijk, 1993). Lastly, the sociopolitical context addresses the broader societal and political conditions that shape discourse, exploring how power dynamics and institutional structures influence and are reinforced by language (van Dijk, 2006). By integrating these dimensions, CDA provides a comprehensive lens for dissecting the interplay between discourse and societal structures, making it a valuable tool for analysing complex issues such as media narratives, political rhetoric, and cultural hegemony.

This study employs Van Dijk's CDA model to explore how media construct positive narratives about Aceh as a region marked by stability and successful democratic management. Media play a central role in reproducing ideologies and building political legitimacy. According to Fairclough (2013), media discourse reflects power relations through word selection, narrative structure, and reinforcement of specific ideologies.. In the case of Aceh, media outlets highlight post-conflict stability and democratic success. Aceh exemplifies successful local democracy through its special autonomy and social reconciliation. The concept of political stability is supported by community participation, visionary leadership, and the tradition of deliberation (*musyawarah*) (Ericson & Dahl, 1972; Morrison et al., 1999).

Result

Aceh Pos is an online news platform that provides digital news content. On November 22, 2024, Aceh Pos published an article titled *"Aceh Tak Masuk Daerah Rawan Pilkada Serentak, Lima Provinsi Memiliki Potensi Tinggi."* The article highlights that the province of Aceh is not categorized as a high-risk region for the simultaneous elections. This section presents the key findings of the study, which include the structural analysis of the text and the audience perceptions (local and national). The findings highlight how the text's construction and its reception by different audiences contribute to the narrative of Aceh as a safe and stable region during the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections.

Text Structure

The analysis of the text structure reveals how its macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure work together to construct a narrative emphasizing Aceh's stability and safety. Key findings include:

Table 1.Text Structure Analysis

Dimension	Component	Description	Interpretation
Macrostructure	Main Theme	The main theme highlights *"Aceh as a safe and stable region for the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections compared to provinces with high vulnerabilities."*	The text constructs a positive narrative about Aceh's stability, contrasting it with five provinces categorized as high-risk (Jakarta, West Java, East Kalimantan, North Sulawesi, and North Maluku). This reinforces Aceh's image as a model of democratic management. The macrostructure emphasizes Aceh's political stability and democratic resilience, offering it as a benchmark for other regions.
	Purpose	To position Aceh as a successful region in managing post-conflict stability and elections.	
Superstructure	Introduction	States Aceh is not prone to election vulnerabilities. Example: *"Provinsi Aceh tidak masuk dalam daerah rawan Pilkada serentak."*	The introduction creates a positive contrast between Aceh and other regions facing significant risks during the elections.
	Main Content	Provides classification of high-, medium-, and low-risk provinces, elaborating on 24 vulnerability indicators. Example: *"Intimidasi, ancaman kekerasan, isu SARA."*	The main content uses official data and classification to substantiate the claim of Aceh's stability.
	Closing	Includes optimistic quotes from officials, e.g., *"Insya Allah, Pilkada serentak di Aceh akan berjalan lancar dan aman."*	The closing reaffirms Aceh's safety and stability while aligning with cultural and religious sensibilities.
Microstructure	**Lexical Choices**	Positive words: *"aman" (safe), "stabil" (stable),* and *"berjalan lancar" (smoothly).* Religious terminology: *"Insya Allah."*	Positive words highlight Aceh's stability, while religious language builds optimism and cultural resonance with Aceh's community.
		Negative words for other regions: *"kerawanan tinggi"*	The negative descriptions of other regions amplify Aceh's positive portrayal by

		comparison.
Syntax	*(high vulnerability),* *"intimidasi" (intimidation),* *"ancaman kekerasan" (threats of violence).* Sentences include statistical data and authoritative quotes, e.g., *"73 kabupaten rawan tinggi, 278 sedang, 65 rendah."*	Use of official statistics and formal syntax lends credibility and an objective tone to the narrative.
Stylistic Features	**Positive Style for Aceh**: Phrases like *"Aceh masih dalam koridor aman"* emphasize Aceh's security. **Negative Style for Other Regions**: Terms like *"ancaman kekerasan"* highlight risks elsewhere.	Positive styling builds a stable and safe image of Aceh, while negative terms position other regions as unsafe, strengthening Aceh's contrast.

The text structure of the media article "Aceh Tak Masuk Daerah Rawan Pilkada Serentak, Lima Provinsi Memiliki Potensi Tinggi", applying Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. The analysis is divided into three dimensions: macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure. At the macrostructural level, the article highlights Aceh as a politically stable and secure region, contrasting it with five provinces categorized as high-risk. This contrast reinforces the idea that Aceh has successfully transitioned from a history of conflict to a model of democratic stability. The superstructure of the text follows a structured format, beginning with a headline emphasizing Aceh's safety, followed by a classification of high-risk provinces, and concluding with optimistic statements from officials. This arrangement ensures that readers interpret Aceh's position positively. At the microstructural level, the article uses positive lexical choices such as "safe," "stable," and "smooth elections" to describe Aceh, while employing negative terms like "intimidation," "threats of violence," and "high vulnerability" for other provinces. Additionally, religious expressions such as "Insya Allah" enhance the cultural relevance of the narrative for Acehnese audiences. This structured discourse demonstrates how media strategically frames Aceh's image, influencing public perceptions through linguistic and structural choices.

Findings on Audience Perceptions
Local Audience Perceptions

The local audience, comprising 37 respondents from Aceh, displayed mixed responses to the narrative. The tables below summarize the key findings for each audience group, followed by an in-depth interpretation of their responses and how they contribute to understanding the effectiveness of the narrative.

Table 2. Perceptions of the Local Audience

Aspect	Findings	Interpretation
Positive Reception	- 64.86% (24 respondents) agree that the narrative portrays Aceh positively. - 16.21% (6 respondents) strongly agree.	A significant majority of the local audience appreciates the narrative's attempt to reshape Aceh's image, fostering pride in its progress as a stable region.
Pride in Aceh's Image	72.73% (26 respondents) expressed pride in Aceh being described as a safe and stable region.	Positive language, culturally resonant terms like "Insya Allah," and the contrast with high-risk provinces strengthen the narrative's impact on local pride.
Neutral Responses	43.24% (16 respondents) were neutral about the relevance of the narrative to Aceh's actual conditions.	Neutral responses suggest skepticism among some locals, likely due to a perceived disconnect between the narrative and their lived realities.
Critical Reception	Mixed reactions indicate that direct exposure to local socio-political conditions makes respondents more discerning.	The narrative could benefit from incorporating verifiable and locally relevant data to enhance credibility and resonance with the audience.

The table 2 presents survey findings on local audience perceptions, based on responses from 37 participants in Aceh. The data reveals that 72.73% of respondents expressed pride in Aceh being framed as a safe and stable region, indicating that the positive narrative aligns with local aspirations and identity. Additionally, 16.21% strongly agreed with the portrayal, reinforcing the effectiveness of media discourse in shaping local confidence. However, 43.24% of respondents remained neutral, suggesting that a portion of the Acehnese audience is skeptical about whether the media's depiction accurately reflects the reality on the ground. This skepticism suggests that some Acehnese may still perceive socio-political challenges that are not addressed in the media narrative. The variation in responses highlights that while many locals accept the positive discourse, others require more grounded and authentic narratives to fully align with their lived experiences.

National Audience Perceptions

The national audience, consisting of 10 respondents from outside Aceh, demonstrated uniformly positive perceptions:

Table 3. Perceptions of the National Audience

Aspect	Findings	Interpretation
Universal Positivity	100% (10 respondents) agreed that the narrative is relevant to Aceh's current conditions.	The narrative's emphasis on Aceh's stability and progress strongly resonates with the national audience, leading to unanimous positive reception.
Influence on Perception	50% (5 respondents) stated the narrative influenced their perception of Aceh. 50% (5 respondents) strongly agreed with Aceh's role as a	Positive framing using terms like "safe" and "model of democratic success" highlights Aceh's transformation and solidifies its reputation as exemplary.

	democratic model.	
Contrasts with Other Regions	Emphasis on Aceh's safety compared to high-risk provinces highlights its democratic success.	This contrast reinforces the narrative's impact, positioning Aceh as exceptional and inspiring in the context of Indonesia's democratic progress.

The table 3 presents survey results from 10 respondents outside Aceh, offering insights into national audience perceptions of the media narrative. The findings show that 100% of national respondents agreed that the narrative aligns with Aceh's current conditions, indicating that the media successfully shapes external perceptions of Aceh as a model of democratic success. Moreover, 50% of respondents strongly agreed that Aceh serves as a benchmark for successful democratic governance, highlighting the persuasive power of positive discourse in shaping public opinion at the national level. Unlike the local audience, who expressed a degree of skepticism, the national audience overwhelmingly accepted the media's framing of Aceh. This contrast suggests that media narratives are more effective among audiences who rely solely on media portrayals rather than personal experiences. The findings underscore how media plays a crucial role in constructing regional identities, particularly in post-conflict societies like Aceh, where external narratives often shape national recognition.

Each finding presented in above tables supports the study's central argument that media discourse significantly influences public perceptions of Aceh's political identity. The first table demonstrates how textual structures strategically frame Aceh's stability, while the second and third tables reveal the varying degrees of acceptance between local and national audiences. While local respondents partially accept the media narrative but remain critical, national respondents fully embrace the portrayal of Aceh as a stable democratic region. This suggests that positive discourse is more effective at influencing audiences who do not have direct exposure to Aceh's realities. These tables validate the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, demonstrating how media constructs political narratives that influence both local and national perceptions of Aceh.

Discussion

The findings reveal how the narrative and its structural elements shape perceptions of Aceh as a safe and stable region, highlighting the interplay between direct experiences and media framing for different audiences. To critically and deeply analyse this news report, Teun A. Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model is applied. According to Van Dijk, CDA goes beyond mere critical analysis; it also incorporates critical theory and its practical applications. The fundamental assumption of critical discourse analysis asserts that language serves various functions and has diverse implications (Haryatmoko, 2017); Akbar et al., 2022). It can be used to command, influence, describe, transform, manipulate, mobilize groups, or persuade audiences.

Text Structure Analysis

This dimension focuses on the structure of discourse, which includes macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure. Each aspect highlights different layers of meaning and organization in the text.

Macrostructure of the text are included the topic, theme, and gist (Islamiyah & Hermaliza, 2024;Yanti et al., 2019; Van Dijk, 2019) this elucidates that the concept of macrostructure serves a more restricted purpose. The analysis of the text structure

reveals how its components work together to construct and reinforce the narrative of Aceh as a safe and stable region. The macrostructure of the text focuses on the overarching theme of Aceh's stability, highlighting it as a region free from vulnerabilities during the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections, in contrast to five high-risk provinces. This theme frames Aceh as a model of democratic success, with the primary purpose of influencing audience perceptions by showcasing Aceh's post-conflict resilience and political stability.

Superstructure refers to how text is arranged schematically to convey a message. Superstructure or schematic to describe the general form of a discourse text (Van Dijk, 2019). The superstructure of the text follows a clear schematic arrangement, beginning with a positive introduction that positions Aceh as distinct from vulnerable regions. The main content provides detailed classifications of risk levels across provinces, supported by statistical data and references to 24 indicators of vulnerability, such as intimidation, threats of violence, and SARA issues. The text concludes with optimistic statements from officials, such as "*Insya Allah, Pilkada serentak di Aceh akan berjalan lancar dan aman*," which align with cultural and religious values, further reinforcing the narrative of stability.

At the microstructure level, the text uses positive language, such as "safe," "stable," and "smoothly," to depict Aceh in a favorable light, while religious terminology like "*Insya Allah*" resonates deeply with the predominantly Muslim audience in Aceh. In contrast, negative terms like "high vulnerability," "intimidation," and "threats of violence" are employed to describe other regions, accentuating Aceh's positive image through comparison. The syntax incorporates statistical data and authoritative quotes, such as "*73 kabupaten rawan tinggi, 278 sedang, 65 rendah*," lending credibility and an objective tone to the narrative. Stylistically, the text uses persuasive language to highlight Aceh's security and normalizes minor democratic frictions as a natural part of political dynamics.

In summary, the interplay between the macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure ensures a cohesive narrative that builds Aceh's image as a region of stability and success. The use of logical organization, supportive data, and culturally resonant language effectively positions Aceh as a model for democratic governance, influencing perceptions at both local and national levels.

Social Cognition

This dimension focuses on the mental processes and ideologies that influence the production and reception of texts.

1). Teks Production

Media-generated texts behave as an extension of the governmental narrative. The author employs official statistics from the Ministry of Home Affairs and assertions by an individual (Safrizal) to establish credibility and foster a favourable perception of Aceh. The decision to concentrate on Aceh signifies endeavours to bolster the regional government and cultivate public confidence in political stability in the area.

2). Understanding the Text by the Audience

The reception of the narrative differs significantly between local and national audiences, reflecting variations in their direct experiences with Aceh and reliance on media portrayals. The local audience, comprised of respondents from Aceh, shows a mix of pride and neutrality, shaped by their familiarity with the region's socio-political realities. In contrast, the national audience, which primarily relies on

mediated narratives, exhibits consistently positive perceptions of Aceh as a model of post-conflict stability and democratic governance.

a) Local Audience

The responses from the local audience indicate a complex engagement with the narrative. The majority of respondents feel pride and positivity, suggesting that the narrative successfully counters historical stereotypes of Aceh as a conflict-prone region. However, the 43.24% of respondents expressing neutrality reveal a critical stance among some locals, likely shaped by their firsthand knowledge of Aceh's socio-political realities. These findings suggest that while the narrative resonates emotionally, its credibility could be enhanced through the inclusion of more concrete evidence and data aligned with local experiences.

From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, the macrostructure of the text highlighting Aceh's democratic success effectively appeals to the audience's collective pride. However, the neutral responses underscore the importance of grounding the narrative in authentic, relatable content to strengthen its impact on sceptical segments of the population.

b) National Audience

The national audience exhibits uniformly positive responses to the narrative, with all respondents agreeing that it aligns with Aceh's current conditions. This highlights the narrative's effectiveness in reshaping perceptions of Aceh as a safe, stable, and democratic region. The use of positive language and the strategic comparison with high-risk provinces amplify Aceh's transformation as a post-conflict success story.

From a CDA perspective, the microstructure of the text its choice of words like "safe" and "model of democratic success" plays a pivotal role in shaping these perceptions. The national audience's reliance on mediated narratives further enhances the text's ability to construct a favourable image of Aceh, as their understanding is less influenced by direct experience. The contrast with high-risk provinces strengthens the audience's view of Aceh as an exceptional example of democratic governance in Indonesia.

The differences in responses between the local and national audiences underscore the interplay between direct experience and media influence. The local audience's more varied responses reflect their exposure to Aceh's everyday realities, making them more critical of narratives that lack tangible alignment with their lived experiences. In contrast, the national audience's uniform positivity demonstrates the persuasive power of mediated narratives, particularly when supported by strategic framing and optimistic language.

These findings highlight the importance of balancing emotionally resonant narratives with factual authenticity. While positive framing fosters pride and reshapes perceptions, particularly among external audiences, grounding such narratives in verifiable local realities ensures greater credibility and impact for the local population. The combination of these strategies can enhance the effectiveness of media discourse in reinforcing regional and national cohesion.

3). Reflective Ideology

This news article exhibits a pro-status quo perspective, favouring both the Aceh regional government and the national government. The security in Aceh serves as evidence of the efficacy of the authorities' policies and management. The employment of affirmative statements bolsters the government's endeavour to construct a

narrative that Aceh has transitioned from a conflict zone to a stable and harmonious region.

Social Context

This section analyses how the text relates to broader political, historical, cultural, and media contexts, highlighting its influence on shaping perceptions of Aceh as a stable and successful region in democratic governance.

The 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections mark Indonesia's largest democratic event, posing significant challenges to regional stability. Amidst this context, Aceh is highlighted as a "safe area," contrasting with other regions categorized as high-risk. This narrative serves as a political strategy to showcase Aceh's success in managing democracy following its post-conflict transformation. By emphasizing Aceh's stability, the text reinforces the effectiveness of its local governance and positions the region as a model for democratic resilience and stability in Indonesia.

Aceh's historical journey is marked by resilience and transformation. For decades, the region endured armed conflict with the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), a struggle that culminated in the 2005 Helsinki Agreement. This peace accord marked a pivotal turning point, reshaping Aceh's image from a conflict-prone region to one of stability and peace. Moreover, Aceh's historical distinction as a region that was never fully colonized highlights its strong governance and deeply rooted social structures based on Islamic traditions. This legacy of resilience, coupled with strategic leadership and cultural solidarity, has enabled Aceh to preserve its identity while successfully adapting to democratic governance, establishing its reputation as a model for post-conflict transformation.

Culturally, Aceh's identity is inseparable from its religious heritage. Known as the "*Serambi Mekkah*" or "The Veranda of Mecca," the region reflects its predominantly Muslim population in its governance and societal values. Religious terminology, such as "*Insya Allah*" (God willing), is embedded in the narrative, resonating with the cultural values of the Acehnese people and reinforcing optimism about the region's political stability. This cultural alignment not only enhances the narrative's authenticity but also strengthens its appeal to the local audience.

The role of the media is equally critical in constructing Aceh's positive image. By portraying Aceh as a success story of democracy and stability, the media supports the government's ideological objectives. This framing positions Aceh as an example of post-conflict recovery and democratic achievement, bolstering national unity while celebrating Indonesia's broader democratic progress. In doing so, the media reinforces the legitimacy of Aceh's transformation, presenting it as a region that has transitioned from conflict to becoming an exemplar of stability and effective governance.

Conclusion

Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that the text contains ideological elements aimed at creating a positive perception of Aceh and influencing both local and national audiences politically and socially. From the textual dimension, the text systematically constructs a positive narrative about Aceh's stability by employing a clear logical structure, statistical data, and carefully selected quotations from officials. These elements reinforce the impression of Aceh as a region that has successfully navigated post-conflict challenges. Moving to the social cognition dimension, the narrative appears strategically crafted to build trust in both the Aceh regional government and the central

government. Readers are encouraged to perceive Aceh as a safe, stable, and well-managed region that has effectively handled its political dynamics. Lastly, from the social practice dimension, the text reflects Aceh's socio-political transformation, emphasizing its journey from a conflict-ridden area to a stable and peaceful region. This transformation is further highlighted by showcasing Aceh's success in local democracy amidst national, challenges, such as the complexities of conducting simultaneous elections. Collectively, these dimensions demonstrate how the text shapes public perception by portraying Aceh as a role model of political stability and effective democratic governance.

Acknowledgement

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