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Framing the 'Nguli' Tradition in Islamic Boarding Schools and Al-Amanah Alumni Reception of Tempo.co Coverage

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Abstract

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana Tempo.co membingkai tradisi 'nguli' serta bagaimana alumni Pesantren Modern Al-Amanah di Kota Baubau memaknai bingkai tersebut. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif interpretatif dengan dua sumber data utama: satu artikel Tempo.co edisi 8 Oktober 2025 dan wawancara mendalam terhadap enam alumni yang pernah terlibat dalam kegiatan pembangunan pesantren. Teks berita dianalisis menggunakan empat fungsi framing Robert M. Entman, sedangkan data wawancara dianalisis melalui model encoding-decoding Stuart Hall dan tahapan analisis data Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaca. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Tempo.co mendefinisikan tradisi 'nguli' sebagai kontroversi perlindungan anak, mengaitkan sumber persoalan dengan pelibatan santri dalam pekerjaan konstruksi, menghadirkan dilema moral antara tradisi kepesantrenan dan hak anak, serta menonjolkan pembatasan pekerjaan berisiko sebagai rekomendasi. Pada sisi resepsi, lima dari enam informan berada pada posisi oppositional reading terhadap penggunaan istilah 'nguli' dan framing eksploitasi anak, sedangkan satu informan berada pada posisi dominant-hegemonic. Tidak ditemukan posisi negotiated dalam kategorisasi akhir. Mayoritas alumni membangun pemaknaan alternatif berbasis pengalaman langsung, gotong royong, pengabdian, amal jariyah, dan pembagian kerja sesuai kemampuan. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kedekatan pengalaman dengan realitas yang diberitakan berfungsi sebagai sumber interpretatif yang penting dalam proses decoding khalayak.

This study aims to analyse how Tempo.co frames the 'nguli' tradition and how alumni of the Al-Amanah Modern Islamic Boarding School in Baubau interpret this framing. The study uses an interpretative qualitative approach and two main data sources: a Tempo.co article dated 8 October 2025 and in-depth interviews with six alumni who were previously involved in constructing the boarding school. The news text was analysed using Robert M. Entman's four functions of framing, whilst the interview data was analysed using Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding model and the data analysis stages outlined by Miles, Huberman and Saldaca. The research findings indicate that Tempo.co defined the 'nguli' tradition as a child protection controversy, linked the root of the problem to the involvement of boarding school pupils in construction work, presented a moral dilemma between boarding school traditions and children's rights, and highlighted restrictions on hazardous work as a recommendation. In terms of reception, five out of six informants adopted an 'oppositional reading' stance towards the use of the term 'nguli' and the framing of child exploitation, whilst one informant adopted a 'dominant-hegemonic' stance. The final categorisation identified no 'negotiated' stance. Most alums constructed alternative interpretations based on direct experience, cooperation, service, charitable deeds, and the division of labour according to ability. These findings indicate that the closeness of their experience to the reported reality serves as an



important interpretative source in the decoding process.

INTRODUCTION

Pesantren are Islamic educational institutions with distinctive characteristics that foster both students' religious competencies and social character (Pamungkas et al., 2026; Setiawan et al., 2026; Siregar et al., 2026; Wafi et al., 2025). Beyond formal learning, various daily activities within the *pesantren* environment—such as community service, environmental cleanup, and student involvement in facility construction—are seen as part of a character—building process that instills values of independence, responsibility, cooperation, and dedication (Saini, 2020). These practices have long been part of the *pesantren* educational tradition and are understood as an experience—based learning process that supports the development of students' personalities (Auliani et al., 2025). Over time, student involvement in physical labor gained widespread attention after online media began using the term “nguli” to describe students' work building *pesantren* facilities. This term carries connotations that differ from its meaning within the *pesantren* context, as it is more often associated with manual labor, low wages, and minimal protection. This shift in meaning transformed a practice once understood as part of character education into a publicly debated issue from ethical, legal, and child—protection perspectives.

The debate intensified after Tempo.co published an article titled “The ‘Nguli’ Tradition in Islamic Boarding Schools: Does It Constitute Child Exploitation?” on October 8, 2025. This news coverage cannot be separated from the increased public attention following the collapse of a prayer hall at the Al—Khoziny Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo, East Java, which resulted in 67 fatalities and 104 injuries, according to the National Disaster Management Agency. This incident intensified media attention on the physical labor practices of *pesantren* students and spurred narratives regarding workplace safety, child protection, and the responsibility of Islamic boarding schools. In this context, the media not only conveys information but also constructs social reality by selecting and highlighting certain aspects, thereby shaping public perceptions of *pesantren* as Islamic educational institutions.

Studies on media representations of Islamic boarding schools have often used a framing approach. Hidayatullah & Ainiyah (2025) examined the impact of media framing of violence at Islamic boarding schools on the community in Rogojampi, Banyuwangi Regency, showing that framing shaped the community's negative perceptions of Islamic boarding schools. Hariyani et al. (2024) examined framing of the Al—Zaytun Islamic boarding school issue in Tempo and CNN, finding that the media tended to highlight the school's controversial aspects. Haryanti & Anwari (2023) examined the framing by Kompas.com and Tribunnews.com regarding the issue of sexual abuse of female students, showing that media framing influences public perception of Islamic boarding schools and

cases of sexual violence involving religious institutions. A study by Siahaan and Vera (2024) analyzed the framing used by Detik.com and Kompas.com in their coverage of regulations regarding loudspeakers in mosques. The results showed that while both media outlets framed the issue with different emphases, they both constructed narratives that supported social harmony and religious coexistence. Yasir Amrulloh and Jurjani bin Hishamudin (2023) examined the framing of religious moderation on Muhammadiyah.or.id and IBTimes.id, revealing that both outlets framed religious moderation as a value aligned with Islam, local culture, and national spirit.

Previous research on public reception has been extensively studied. Oktiana et al. (2024) examined Generation Z female Islamic boarding school students' reception of VoB's stage performances and found that their reception was diverse, not homogeneous. Gunantara et al. (2024) examined Islamic youth's reception of da'wah meme content, revealing that audiences do not interpret it linearly but process it through religious values, personal experiences, and Muslim youth's moral sensibilities. Inun et al. (2025) examined audience reception of Gus Miftah's da'wah on YouTube and found that religiosity, ideological orientation, and media literacy shape audience interpretation. Mawaddah (2020) examined the reception among Muslim women from Al-Irsyad, Fatayat, and Nasyiatul Aisyiyah regarding the representation of the hijab in television shampoo commercials, revealing the presence of dominant—hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional readings in interpreting media messages. Riambedo (2025) examined the reception among Muslim Generation Z toward the film *Siksa Neraka* (2023), which revealed the existence of dominant—hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional readings in interpreting representations of Islamic eschatology.

Various studies indicate that the media tends to highlight controversial aspects, violence, or legal issues involving Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), thereby influencing public perceptions of these institutions. However, most previous research has primarily focused on analyzing the construction of media texts or their impact on society at large. The perspectives of audiences with direct experience of the reality of Islamic boarding schools—particularly alums—have received relatively little attention in research. This gap suggests that researchers have not studied the relationship between media constructions and audience interpretation in tandem. In fact, boarding school alums have direct experience with the practices reported by the media, giving them a different interpretive framework than the general public. Their educational experiences, internalization of *pesantren* values, and religious identity enable alums not only to receive media messages passively but also to negotiate—and even reject—the meanings the media constructs. Based on this gap, this study offers a novel approach by integrating Robert M. Entman's (1993) framing analysis and Stuart Hall's (1980) reception analysis to examine the relationship between media constructions and audience interpretation.

Unlike previous studies that merely examined how the media frames issues related to Islamic boarding schools, this study positions alums of the Al–Amanah Modern Islamic Boarding School in Baubau City as active subjects, thereby enabling the study to explain how their boarding school experiences, Islamic values, and social identities influence their acceptance, negotiation, or rejection of media framing. This study aims to analyze Tempo.co's framing of news coverage of the "nguli" tradition within the *pesantren* community using Robert M. Entman's framing model, and to analyze how alumni of the Al–Amanah Modern *Pesantren* in Baubau City receive this framing using Stuart Hall's encoding–decoding theory.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach that combines media framing analysis and audience reception analysis. A qualitative approach explores and interprets the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social or humanitarian issue (Creswell, 2013). This approach was chosen to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the media constructs social reality through news coverage and how audiences interpret these constructions based on their own experiences and social contexts. Framing analysis was used to identify the news framing in Tempo.com's coverage of the "nguli" tradition in *pesantren* settings, analyzed using Robert M. Entman's model. At the same time, reception analysis examined how *pesantren* alums interpret this coverage using Stuart Hall's encoding–decoding theory. The object of this study is a Tempo. co article published on October 8, 2025, titled "The 'Nguli' Tradition in Islamic Boarding Schools: Does It Constitute Child Exploitation?" Meanwhile, the study subjects are alums of the Al–Amanah Modern Islamic Boarding School residing in Baubau City who participated in construction or concrete–pouring activities during their time as students. The researchers selected informants using purposive sampling, considering the relevance of their experiences, their ability to provide in–depth information, and their involvement in the practices covered in the news report. This study involved six alumni as primary informants.

Table 1. Research Informant Data

Name	Sex	Age	Occupation
Informant ZR	Female	24 years old	Quran teacher
Informant FT	Male	24 years old	Temporary teacher
Informant FS	Male	25 years old	administrative staff
Informant JJ	Male	24 years old	University student
Informant SS	Male	24 years old	Water utility technician
Informant MF	Male	24 years old	Class II Probation Officer, Baubau

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in–depth interviews with all informants to explore their experiences, interpretations, and views on the framing of Tempo. co's news

coverage. co's news coverage.co's news coverage. Secondary data were obtained from documentation, including Tempo.co news articles, scholarly literature, books, journals, and other documents relevant to media framing, audience reception, and *pesantren* education. Framing analysis used Robert M. Entman's (1993) four analytical tools: define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and treatment recommendations. Define Problems is a framing element used to identify the actors involved in an event as a key aspect of news coverage, where the cause may refer to what happened (what) or who was involved (who). Diagnose Causes is a framing element used to determine who or what is considered the actor in an event. The "causes" element in this framing can refer to what happened (what) or to the parties involved (who). Make Moral Judgment is a framing element used to provide justification or arguments regarding the definition of the problem established earlier. Treatment Recommendation is the fourth framing element according to Robert M. Entman's theory. This element evaluates journalists' preferences or desired outcomes in addressing a problem and seeks ways or solutions to resolve it. These four elements were used to identify how Tempo.co defines the issue, determines its causes, makes moral judgments, and offers solutions regarding the tradition of "nguli" in *pesantren* settings.

Furthermore, the framing analysis results served as the basis for the interview process to determine how alumni interpret these media constructions. The study analyzed audience reception using Stuart Hall's encoding–decoding model by categorizing informants' interpretations into three interpretive positions: dominant–hegemonic reading, negotiated reading, and oppositional reading. In this study, the informants' reception of Tempo. co's news framing was analyzed.co's news framing was analyzed using Stuart Hall's (1980) three positions of reception, namely: Dominant–hegemonic position, in which the informants accepted Tempo.co's framing that the "nguli" tradition has the potential to lead to child exploitation and that students should be prioritized for learning. Negotiated position: the informant partially accepts the media's framing but continues to interpret the students' involvement as part of character education and mutual aid within the *pesantren*. Oppositional position: the informant rejects Tempo.co's framing by viewing the "nguli" tradition as a form of service and mutual aid, not as child exploitation. Data analysis was conducted in stages through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting information relevant to the research focus, then organizing the framing analysis results and interview findings into research themes. The next stage involved systematically presenting the data to enable a more in–depth analysis of the relationship between media constructions and alums reception. The final step concluding was conducted inductively based on the interrelationships between the results of the framing analysis and the reception analysis. To ensure the research's credibility, the study triangulated sources by comparing interview data with news reports and relevant literature.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Tempo.co's Framing of the 'Nguli' Tradition in Islamic Boarding School Communities

A framing analysis of the Tempo.co article entitled "The 'Nguli' Tradition in Islamic Boarding Schools: Does It Constitute Child Exploitation?" was carried out using Robert M. Entman's model, which comprises four elements: define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements, and treatment recommendations. The results of the analysis show that Tempo.co frames the practice of involving santri in the construction of *pesantren* facilities as an issue related to alleged child exploitation. This framing is constructed by emphasising child protection, workplace safety, and the rights of santri as students who should focus more on their studies.

Table 2. Results of the Framing Analysis of Tempo.co's Coverage of the 'Nguli' Tradition in *Pesantren* Environments

Robert M. Entman's Framing Components	Results of the Framing Analysis of Tempo.co
Define Problems	The 'nguli' tradition is framed as a controversial issue, debated as a form of child exploitation following the collapse of the prayer hall at the Al Khoziny <i>Pesantren</i> .
Diagnose Causes	The causes of the problem are linked to students' involvement in physical construction work, which is deemed a potential safety risk and has sparked debate over child protection.
Make Moral Judgement	The reporting presents two perspectives: protecting children's rights and the value of cooperation as part of character education in <i>pesantren</i> .
Treatment Recommendation	The proposed solutions include restricting students' involvement in high-risk physical labour, increasing supervision, and strengthening the concept of a child-friendly <i>pesantren</i> .

In defining the problems, Tempo.co framed the tradition of 'nguli' in *pesantren* as a controversial issue that has sparked public debate, particularly after a building collapsed at Al-Khoziny *Pesantren*. The reporting linked the involvement of students in physical labour to allegations of child exploitation through the use of terms such as "differing views", "allegations" and "child exploitation". This framing positions 'nguli' as an issue where *pesantren* tradition intersects with child protection concerns. In diagnosing the causes, Tempo.co identifies students' involvement in construction and concrete-pouring activities at the *pesantren* as the primary cause. The reporting highlights that students carry out this practice collectively, including as a way to fill their spare time, and links it to the collapse of a building at the Al-Khoziny Islamic Boarding School, which had only recently been concreted.

This framing assumes that students' involvement in construction work can pose safety risks and raises doubts about construction safety standards. In terms

of making moral judgement, Tempo.co presents two differing perspectives on the tradition of 'nguli' in *pesantren*. On the one hand, the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Commissioner of the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI), and *pesantren* administrators emphasise the importance of child protection and view the involvement of students in heavy physical labour as potentially leading to exploitation. In contrast, the Chair of the Sidoarjo NU Regional Council and parents of students view this practice as part of character education, cooperation, and *pesantren* tradition. Thus, the reporting frames nguli as a moral dilemma between preserving *pesantren* traditions and protecting children's rights.

On treatment recommendations, Tempo.co emphasised the need to limit students' involvement in risky physical labour and strengthen child protection within the *pesantren* environment. The report recommended that construction work requiring professional expertise should not involve students, while cooperation could still be instilled through activities appropriate to students' age, ability, and safety. This framing directs the solution towards adapting the 'nguli' tradition to the principles of a child-friendly *pesantren* without undermining the values of character education. Based on this analysis, Tempo.co frames 'nguli' as an issue that raises concerns about students' involvement in physical labour. The root of the problem is attributed to the tradition of involving students in constructing *pesantren* facilities, which is viewed as potentially posing safety risks.

Furthermore, the media makes a moral judgement that protecting children's rights must be the top priority in providing education at *pesantren*. As a solution, the reporting calls for an evaluation of involving students in physical labour to ensure that safety, health, and children's rights are upheld. These findings indicate that the term 'nguli' is a key element in constructing the news coverage. The use of this term conveys a different connotation compared to the terms commonly used within *pesantren* contexts, thereby potentially shaping public perception that construction activities involving santri are synonymous with the exploitation of child labour.

Alumni Perceptions of the Use of the Term 'Nguli'

Alum perceptions were analysed using Stuart Hall's encoding – decoding theory through in – depth interviews with six alums of the Al – Amanah Modern Pesantren in Baubau. The analysis showed that the term 'nguli' elicited varied responses depending on the informants' experiences and understanding of life at the pesantren.

Table 3. Categories of Public Reception regarding the Use of the Term 'Nguli'

Informant	Reception Position	Interpretation
ZR	Dominant – hegemonic reading	Accepts the term 'nguli' as a description of physical labour within the pesantren environment.
FT	Oppositional reading	Rejects the term 'nguli' because it carries connotations of paid labour and is seen as putting pesantren in a negative light.

FS	Oppositional reading	Considers the term 'nguli' too crude and inappropriate for practices tailored to the students' abilities.
JJ	Oppositional reading	Interprets the activities as cooperation and Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah), not manual labour.
SS	Oppositional reading	Considers the term 'nguli' to have negative connotations and not to reflect educational activities at the pesantren.
MF	Oppositional reading	Rejects the term 'nguli' because the activities are viewed as a form of service and responsibility of the santri towards the pesantren.

The research data consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through *in-depth interviews* with all informants to explore their experiences, interpretations, and views regarding the framing of Tempo. co's news coverage.co's news coverage. Secondary data were obtained from documentation in the form of Tempo.co news articles, scholarly literature, books, journals, and other documents relevant to media framing, audience reception, and *pesantren* education.

Framing analysis used Robert M. Entman's four analytical tools: *define problems*, *diagnose causes*, *make moral judgments*, and *treatment recommendations*. According to Haryanti & Anwari (2023), *Define Problems* is a framing element used to identify the actors involved in an event as a key aspect of news coverage, where the cause may refer to what happened (*what*) or who was involved (*who*). *Diagnose Causes* (Identifying Causes) is a framing element used to determine who or what is considered the actor in an event. The "causes" element in this framing can refer to what happened (*what*) or to the parties involved (*who*). *Make Moral Judgment* (Making Moral Judgments) is a framing element used to provide justification or arguments regarding the definition of the problem established earlier. *Treatment Recommendation* (Emphasizing Solutions) is the fourth framing element according to Robert M. Entman's theory. This element evaluates journalists' preferences or desired outcomes in addressing a problem and seeks ways or solutions to resolve it. These four elements were used to identify how Tempo.co defines the issue, determines its causes, makes moral judgments, and offers solutions regarding the tradition of "nguli" in *pesantren* settings.

Furthermore, the framing analysis results served as the basis for the interview process to determine how alums interpret these media constructions. The study analyzed audience reception using Stuart Hall's *encoding-decoding* model by categorizing informants' interpretations into three interpretive positions: *dominant-hegemonic reading*, *negotiated reading*, and *oppositional reading*. In this study, the informants' reception of Tempo. co's news framing was analyzed.co's news framing was analyzed using Stuart Hall's (1980) three positions of reception, namely: *Dominant-hegemonic position*, in which the informants accepted Tempo.co's framing that the "nguli" tradition has the potential to lead to child exploitation and that students should be prioritized for

learning. *Negotiated position*: the informant partially accepts the media's framing but continues to interpret the students' involvement as part of character education and mutual aid within the *pesantren*. *Oppositional position*: the informant rejects Tempo.co's framing by viewing the "nguli" tradition as a form of service and mutual aid, not as child exploitation.

The research findings indicate that five out of six informants adopted an *oppositional reading*, while one informant adopted a *dominant-hegemonic reading*. Most informants rejected the term *nguli* because they see it as having negative connotations—referring to manual labor, wage work, and labor relations—that do not align with their experiences as boarding school students. Informant FT considered the term *nguli* too harsh and potentially damaging to the *pesantren*'s reputation, as students' involvement in construction activities was voluntary and based on each student's physical capabilities, including assigning alternative tasks to students unable to perform physical labor. A similar view was expressed by informant FS, who argued that the term *nguli* is inappropriate for describing the students' activities because work assignments are based on individual physical condition, ability, and capacity, meaning not all students are given the same workload. Informant JJ even interpreted these activities as a form of *ukhuwah Islamiyah*—Islamic brotherhood and cooperation—because students do not carry out the entire construction process like professional workers, but instead assist laborers according to their age and ability, such as fetching water, carrying tools, or helping with specific tasks.

Furthermore, SS views the term *nguli* as too negative because it can give the impression that students are positioned as workers. In contrast, the concrete—pouring activity is understood as part of their service and a form of worship in support of the *pesantren*'s facility development. Informant MF expressed a more emphatic view, refusing to use the term *nguli* because the students' involvement in construction is understood as responsibility, contribution, and service to the institution that has provided them with an education for many years. Thus, most informants' rejection of the term *nguli* is not merely a matter of word choice but also reflects different interpretive frameworks between media narratives and the empirical experiences of *pesantren* alums. For the majority of informants, construction activities are not interpreted as manual labor but rather as practices of mutual aid, devotion, character education, *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, and charitable deeds (*amal jariyah*) carried out collectively, tailored to the students' ages and physical abilities, and performed together or under the guidance of more experienced staff. These findings show that the *pesantren* experience serves as a strong interpretive framework in the *decoding* process, leading most alums to adopt an *oppositional reading* stance against the dominant meaning attributed to the term *nguli* in media coverage.

Meanwhile, one informant adopted a dominant—hegemonic reading, as they tended to accept the media—constructed meaning of the term 'nguli' as a form of physical labour carried out by santri within the *pesantren* environment. The

informant stated: "In the past, we wouldn't have accepted it because we certainly thought of it as amal jariyah, but now that it's possible, it could be described as nguli." (Informant ZR) This finding suggests that the informant's experience as a *pesantren* alumnus shapes how they interpret the terms used in news reports.

Alumni Perceptions of the Framing of the Issue of Child Exploitation

In addition to the use of the term 'nguli', this study also analyses alumni perceptions of Tempoco's framing of the casting practice as allegedly involving the exploitation of children. The interview findings indicate that the informants neither fully accepted nor rejected the narrative the media constructed.

Table 4. Categories of Public Perception regarding the Issue of Child Exploitation

Informant	Reception Position	Interpretation
ZR	Dominant – hegemonic reading	Acknowledging that the involvement of santri in physical labour may be categorised as child exploitation, and suggesting that construction work be carried out by professional staff so as not to disrupt the learning process.
FT	Oppositional reading	Reject the notion of exploitation because the work is carried out under supervision, tailored to the students' abilities, and with due regard for safety.
FS	Oppositional reading	Reject the notion of exploitation because the work is carried out on a rotational basis, involves many students, is supervised by professionals, and is not perceived as a burden.
JJ	Oppositional reading	Interpret the activity as voluntary community work; therefore, it cannot be categorised as child exploitation.
SS	Oppositional reading	Rejecting the issue of exploitation because the media's assessment is deemed not to take into account the context and practices taking place in <i>pesantren</i> .
MF	Oppositional reading	Assessing the activities not as exploitation, but as a form of responsibility and devotion by students to the <i>pesantren</i> , carried out on an occasional basis.

The research findings indicate that informants held two distinct perspectives on media coverage of santri involvement in construction work at Islamic boarding schools, namely the dominant–hegemonic reading and the oppositional reading. Of the six informants interviewed, one adopted the dominant–hegemonic reading, whilst five adopted the oppositional reading. The majority of informants rejected the media framing that categorises the involvement of santri in construction activities as a form of child exploitation. This rejection was based on their experience that the activities were carried out voluntarily, under *pesantren* and professional staff supervision, and adapted to the santri's physical condition and capabilities. Informant FT, for example, emphasised that the work could not be described as exploitation because the students remained under supervision and safety measures were also taken. A similar view was expressed by informant FS, who explained that construction work was carried out in shifts involving many students, thereby lightening the workload. Furthermore, the work is carried out alongside professional tradespeople and is not performed continuously.

Indeed, even after no longer being a student, he remains willing to get involved if asked to help with the boarding school's construction activities. Informant JJ also views these activities as better described as cooperation rather than exploitation, as they are carried out collectively, supervised by experienced staff, and stem from the students' own desire to participate. Meanwhile, informant SS believes that the categorisation as exploitation arises because outsiders view these practices from a perspective that differs from the students' own experiences. Informant MF also firmly rejects the use of the terms 'exploitation' or 'slavery' because construction work is not carried out every day, but only at specific times when the *pesantren* requires assistance with the construction of facilities. For him, such involvement is instead understood as a moral obligation, a form of service, and an opportunity for the students to contribute to the *pesantren*. In contrast, informant ZR adopts a dominant – hegemonic reading, accepting the media – constructed narrative that the students' involvement in construction work is exploitative. According to ZR, students who are still in their teenage years should focus their activities on education and learning.

Therefore, if a *pesantren* is carrying out construction or concrete – pouring work, it is more appropriate to entrust such tasks to professional labour so students' learning activities are not disrupted. This difference in interpretative stance shows that interpretations of students' physical labour are not singular but are shaped by each informant's experiences, knowledge, and perspectives. Although the majority of informants rejected the framing of exploitation, they did not entirely dismiss the possibility of risks associated with physical labour. Most informants acknowledged that excessive work, or work done without considering students' capabilities, could pose safety risks and disrupt the educational process. Consequently, child protection, supervision, task allocation, and adapting work to physical capabilities remain important. However, they reject the generalisation that all concrete – pouring or construction activities involving students can automatically be categorised as exploitation. In their experience, such activities are incidental; they occur only when boarding school facilities are being built, are carried out on a rotational basis, and are framed by cooperation, character education, discipline, responsibility, and dedication to the boarding school. The interview findings also indicate that alums view students' involvement in *pesantren* development as part of the character education process. Such activities are seen as fostering the values of responsibility, discipline, leadership, cooperation and social awareness.

Furthermore, the informants regard these development activities as ongoing charitable deeds (*amal jariyah*) and service to the *pesantren* that will benefit future generations of students. This interpretation stems from internalising values instilled by ustaz and kiai while students were studying at the *pesantren*. Overall, the findings indicate that *pesantren* alums's empirical experiences are the primary factor in shaping their reception of Tempo.co's framing. These experiences shape a framework of interpretation that differs from

the media's construction, leading the majority of informants to reject the use of the term 'nguli' and to negotiate the meaning of news reports regarding alleged child exploitation based on the *pesantren* values in which they believe.

Experiences at the *pesantren* as a Source of Meaning

Across the interviews, experiences at the *pesantren* emerged as the primary source of interpretation. Most informants did not interpret news reports solely through the words in the text; instead, they compared them with their memories of the division of labour, supervision, mutual assistance, devotion, and charitable deeds. These experiences produced a counter-frame that shifted the meaning of the activities from 'labour' to 'community participation'. However, this counter-frame does not negate safety concerns; some informants still acknowledge that excessive or risky physical labour requires restrictions. Thus, the main difference between media framing and reception among most alums lies not in the existence of physical activity itself, but in the labelling, context, and social meaning attached to it. The media emphasises potential risks and children's rights, while most alums emphasise educational objectives, communal relationships, and voluntary experience. This difference is key to understanding that a single social practice can be articulated through different moral frameworks.

DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that the term "nguli" serves as a powerful framing element because it directs readers toward categories of physical labor and potential exploitation before they examine the *pesantren*'s internal context. This aligns with Entman (1993), who states that framing operates through the selection and emphasis of certain aspects of reality. In this case, the emphasis is not only on students' involvement in construction but also on lexical choices and the post-incident context that reinforce the relevance of child protection issues. Therefore, framing cannot be understood solely as positive or negative bias; it organizes the complexity of events so they can be interpreted through a specific problem framework. These findings align with previous framing studies on *pesantren*. Haryanti and Anwari (2023), Indainanto et al. (2022), and Hariyani et al. (2024) demonstrate that issues involving *pesantren* are often constructed through varying choices of aspects, actors, and emphases. This study builds on these findings by showing that terminology can serve as a point of convergence between media framing and audience resistance. For most alumni, the main issue is not merely that students once assisted in construction projects, but the use of the category "nguli," which they perceive as incompatible with internal meanings such as khidmah, gotong royong, and amal jariyah.

From a reception perspective, the prevalence of oppositional readings reinforces Hall's (1980) argument that audiences do not necessarily have to accept the dominant meanings imposed by the media. This finding also aligns with research on the reception of Islamic communication, which shows that

religiosity, social experience, and moral orientation shape the decoding process (Gunantara et al., 2024; Inun et al., 2025; Oktiana et al., 2024). In this study, direct experience serves as a crucial mechanism: alums compare media representations with their own experiences of supervision, division of labor, and the meaning of service. Thus, the closeness of these experiences can function as an interpretive resource for accepting or rejecting media frames. However, oppositional reading should not be treated as evidence that media framing is incorrect or that *pesantren* practices are automatically safe. This study analyzes interpretations, rather than conducting a safety audit, verifying constructions, or making legal assessments regarding child exploitation. The positions held by most alumni provide data on how the community of experience interprets a particular practice. Conversely, ZR's position shows that being an alum can still lead to acceptance of child protection perspectives. This variation is important because it avoids the assumption that the *pesantren* community speaks with a single, uniform voice.

Integrating framing and reception analysis yields a stronger analytical contribution than using either approach in isolation. Framing analysis explains how the media frames issues, while reception analysis shows what happens when these constructions meet an audience with direct experience. The relationship between the two reveals a process of contested meaning: the media emphasizes child safety and rights, while most alumni emphasize the community context and the value of devotion. This contestation should not be understood as a binary choice between "the media being right" and "*pesantren* being right," but rather as a difference in normative frameworks that requires contextual explanation. Practically, these findings highlight the importance of coverage that makes space for emic contexts without diminishing the media's critical role in issues of child safety and protection. For *pesantren* institutions, these findings indicate the need for open communication regarding the boundaries of communal work, safety standards, division of labor, and forms of supervision so that the intended educational goals do not conflict with the principles of student protection. Thus, cultural context and child protection can coexist rather than negate one another. This study has several limitations. First, the framing analysis relied on only one Tempo.co article; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to the overall character of Tempo.co's reporting or that of the Indonesian media.co's reporting or that of the Indonesian media. Second, the informants consisted solely of six alums from a single *pesantren* and a single residential area; consequently, the reception analysis reflects a specific experiential context. Third, the study did not involve current students, *pesantren* administrators, journalists, parents of students, or child protection agencies; consequently, the map of contested meanings does not yet encompass all stakeholders.

Future research could compare framing across multiple media outlets, expand the news coverage period, and involve audience groups with varying degrees of experiential proximity. Comparing alumni, current students, parents,

pesantren administrators, and the general public could further examine how experiential proximity shapes decoding positions. Future studies could also combine framing analysis with critical discourse analysis or media ethnography to understand the relationship between news production, institutional contexts, and community interpretations.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that Tempo.co frames the tradition of "nguli" in *pesantren* settings through the lens of child protection by highlighting the involvement of santri in physical labor as an issue that could potentially lead to child exploitation. Using Robert M. Entman's framing model, the news coverage is constructed by defining the 'nguli' tradition as a public issue, linking its causes to students' involvement in construction work, presenting a moral dilemma between Islamic boarding school traditions and child protection, and recommending restrictions on students' involvement in risky physical labor. A reception analysis based on Stuart Hall's encoding–decoding theory shows that most alums from the Al–Amanah Modern *Pesantren* adopt an oppositional reading. The alumni reject the term "nguli" and the framing of child exploitation because they interpret the students' involvement as mutual aid, character education, service, and amal jariyah—performed voluntarily and tailored to the students' physical capabilities. Meanwhile, one informant adopted a dominant–hegemonic reading by accepting the media's framing that the students' involvement in physical labor has the potential to lead to child exploitation, thereby necessitating the involvement of professional staff. The findings confirm that the audience's experiences and social background shape interpretations of media coverage. Integrating Robert M. Entman's framing analysis and Stuart Hall's reception theory shows that audiences do not always accept media constructions as dominant; instead, they can reject them and interpret them differently based on lived experiences, cultural values, and *pesantren* traditions. Thus, this study contributes to research on mass communication, communication, and Islamic broadcasting, particularly by clarifying the relationship between media constructions, the representation of *pesantren*, and the audience's interpretive processes.

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