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Audience Reception Analysis of Hasto Kristiyanto's News Coverage in Online Media

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Abstract - The designation of Hasto Kristiyanto as a suspect by the Corruption Eradication Comission (KPK) triggered political communication dynamics in the digital space that demonstrated how audiences interpret media coverage diversely based on their ideological positions. This research aims to identify media message construction through Pan and Kosicki's framing analysis, analyze factors influencing audience decoding processes, and identify dominant, negotiated, and oppositional patterns in audience reception of Hasto Kristiyanto news coverage in Tempo.co and Kompas.com distributed through X and Instagram platforms from February 1 to June 30, 2025. The study employs a qualitative approach using netnographic methods and content analysis based on Stuart Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding theory and Pan and Kosicki's framing analysis, with data collected through digital observation of 2,139 comments, content documentation, and in-depth interviews with seven key informants. Research findings reveal that Kompas.com employs procedural-neutral framing focusing on legal aspects while Tempo.co applies critical framing emphasizing power conflicts, audience reception is divided into three decoding positions namely dominant (597), negotiated (579), and oppositional (566), with platform X encouraging negotiated decoding through debate culture while Instagram reinforces oppositional decoding through emotional visual content, influenced by factors of political affiliation, media literacy, collective experiences regarding corruption issues, and digital platform characteristics within the context of power relations and society's ideological structures.

Keywords: Reception Analysis, Hasto Kristiyanto, Political Communication, Online Media, Corruption Eradication Comission

Introduction

The designation of Hasto Kristiyanto as a suspect by the Corruption Eradication Commission (*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi*/KPK) in February 2025 was not merely an ordinary legal incident. This case became a political communication occurrence that was widely discussed in mainstream media and digital platforms. Coverage by media such as Tempo.co and Kompas.com became the public's primary reference, yet interpretation of such coverage did not proceed linearly. This is where the process of audience reception becomes crucial to understand, specifically, how the public reads, interprets, and even rejects media narratives based on their respective ideological positions, political affiliations and cultural frameworks.

This phenomenon reflects the polarization of political communication in digital space, where social media no longer functions as a passive channel but rather as an arena of discursive struggle (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). Research by Ali and Eriyanto (2021) demonstrates that social media users tend to be trapped in echo chambers and selective exposure that reinforce confirmation bias. In the context of Hasto's case, involving a figure from a major political party with a strong mass base, public response cannot be understood homogeneously. There exists the possibility of dominant decoding where audiences accept media narratives, negotiated decoding in the form of critical interpretation, to oppositional decoding namely total rejection and production of counter-narratives as explained by Hall (1980).

Public opinion plays a crucial role in socio-political dynamics in the digital era. Amid high interactivity and wide accessibility, society is no longer merely passive recipients but active participants in the production and distribution of political information (Kalsnes, 2016). This phenomenon brings important consequences to public perception on political, legal, and state policy issues. Social media as an open digital discursive space has shifted the way society interacts with public issues and state institutions.

In this context, it becomes important to examine how messages about Hasto's case are constructed and consumed by society. Messages that emerge on social media are not always received according to the initial intent of the narrative creator, whether it be media, government, or legal institutions. Hall (1980) in his encoding-decoding model explains that media messages are not only encoded by producers with certain meanings but also decoded by audiences based on their social, cultural, and ideological backgrounds. Hall identifies three decoding positions: dominant reading where audiences accept meaning as intended by producers, negotiated reading where audiences partially accept and partially reject meaning, and oppositional reading where audiences completely reject the intended meaning.

This decoding process is highly contextual and influenced by the social, economic, cultural, and political background of audiences. Thus, public opinion on social media regarding Hasto cannot be viewed as a single unified entity. Rather, such opinion is the result of various decoding processes occurring simultaneously in digital space. On the other hand, public opinion formed on social media has significant implications for audience perception of the legal system. Research by Khurniawan and Ruldeviyani (2020) shows that public sentiment toward the revision of the KPK Law on Twitter was dominated by negative emotions such as anger and disappointment, indicating distrust toward the legislative process and legal institutions. Their analysis also found that viral narratives on Twitter often did not align with official government narratives but were instead reconstructed through public comments, memes, and digital activism threads.

If the public interprets law enforcement actions as a form of political criminalization, then trust in state institutions will weaken. Conversely, if the public views it as a form of legal firmness without discrimination, then the legitimacy of legal institutions will strengthen. Research by Muhammad and Tanggahma (2024) shows that social media such as X has significant influence on public perception of the judicial system, with the majority of expressed sentiment tending to be negative and reflecting widespread dissatisfaction with the judicial system. Therefore, understanding audience reception of this case becomes an initial step to comprehend broader socio-political dynamics.

Through a qualitative approach and Hall's (1980) decoding framework, this research not only describes public opinion but also reveals how political and legal meanings are constructed and contested in digital public space. By understanding how society reads and interprets narratives of legal cases against Hasto Kristiyanto, this research attempts to explain the dynamics of power in the process of meaning production in media and how society negotiates their position toward dominant narratives that develop. This research is important to map how society interprets coverage of this case and why differences in reception occur toward the same information.

Therefore, this research is present to explore the complexity of public reception toward Hasto Kristiyanto coverage, not only examining what the public says but why and how they interpret it. The selection of Tempo.co and Kompas.com as objects of analysis is based on their position as mainstream media considered credible yet still inseparable from construction bias. Through reception analysis on social media platforms such as X and Instagram, this research aims to map audience decoding patterns and reveal social, political, and ideological factors that influence such interpretation processes.

Theoretical Framework

Political Communication

According to Van Aelst et al. (2017), political communication activities are not merely information transfer regarding political matters but rather constitute mechanisms for forming public perception that subsequently influence collective behavior in social environments often filled with opposition. The impact of political communication is highly significant for the sustainability of democracy because it plays a role in constructing public discourse, establishing agenda priorities, and directing citizenship activities in the public sphere. In situations of polarization and power contestation, this type of communication is even capable of amplifying conflict or conversely, strengthening the legitimacy of those in power.

In the development of contemporary political communication studies, communication channels are no longer perceived as narrowly as technological devices alone but more as complex interaction networks involving political actors, mass media institutions, and audiences. McNair (2017) identifies that political communication processes occur through various channels both conventional and digitally based, with humans as message architects and communication strategy operators. Political actors such as journalists, state officials, and media strategists utilize these channels in efforts to build image and disseminate messages that have undergone mediation processes. Thus, political communication channels encompass not only media as tools but also humans and communication mechanisms formed within certain socio-political contexts.

Mass Communication

Mass communication is the process of conveying and publishing information technically to broad audiences dispersed across space and time (Hagen & Schäfer-Hock, 2024). This communication involves various channels such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television, film, and the internet (Detrani, 2016). Meanwhile, Syafrina (2022) also explains from Gamble and Gamble who state that communication can be defined as mass communication if:

(1) Communicators use modern equipment to spread or broadcast messages quickly to audiences that are broad and dispersed. Technology becomes an important part of mass communication processes, for instance newspapers and magazines requiring printing technology as well as television requiring transmitters; (2) Communicators have the purpose of sharing understanding to millions of people who do not know each other, making audiences anonymous in nature; (3) Messages are public property so that everyone can receive and access such messages; (4) Communicators are usually formal institutions or organizations working with profit orientation; (5) The message delivery process is under the control of gatekeepers who filter information; (6) Feedback from audiences is not direct in nature but rather emerges indirectly or delayed.

Online Media as Mass Media

Media functions as a channel for message transmission in communication interaction among individuals. Zhu (2022), in his development of McLuhan's theory, conceptualizes media as biological representation systems that function to expand human sensorium capacity. Every time individuals identify objects or experiences through media intermediation, essentially they use media to extend their perceptual functions, enabling them to experience reality previously beyond their sensory capabilities. The general functions of mass media include: (1) Mass media plays a role as transmission channels for various forms of knowledge; (2) Mass media conducts activities within public environments; (3) Fundamentally, relations between message senders and receivers are balanced and equal; (4) Mass media has wider reach compared to other institutions and historically has "taken over" functions from institutions such as schools, families, religion, and other institutions.

In mass communication studies, the classical model developed by Lasswell remains a fundamental analytical reference framework in understanding message transmission processes. Sapienza, Iyer, and Veenstra (2018) elaborate that Lasswell's model separates five core communication elements: Who (who is the communicator) which triggers questions about message control, Says What (what message is conveyed) which becomes the object of content analysis, In Which Channel (through what channel) which is the communication medium examined in media analysis, To Whom (to whom) which is the receiver element connected to audience analysis, and With What Effect (with what effect)

which is the impact element related to consequences caused by mass communication messages toward reader, listener, or viewer audiences.

Social Reality Construction in Mass Media

Santoso (2016) states that within the realm of mass media, social construction processes proceed dynamically where individuals have symbolic authority to form, respond to, and define meaning. Reality presented by media is not static in nature but is constructed by individuals who carry their respective interests, perceptions, and interpretations, making them active creators of reality in their social world. Meanwhile, Hadiwijaya (2023) affirms that mass media is not merely a spreader of objective reality but rather part of an arena where individuals form social construction through social processes that are reflective in nature. In this perspective, each individual has a role as a creator of social reality, who freely and actively interprets media symbols according to their own thinking structure and experience.

In social perspective, reality is understood as something formed by humans through meaning creation processes toward their social environment. Because each person has their own perspective in assessing what reality is, construction results are never the same between one individual and another. Simmel in Bungin (2017) mentions that the social world is a form of reality existing outside human self and standing as something considered truly existing, complete with rules regulating it. Social reality cannot emerge without individual existence, both those involved within it and those outside that territory. This reality obtains meaning because it is interpreted and constructed subjectively by other individuals, then this shared meaning makes it appear objective. In other words, humans form reality in their environment, then that reality becomes more solid when supported by understanding of others in social institutions. Each person has their own way of forming social reality around them, including journalists (Bungin, 2017).

Media activities fundamentally not only function to convey information from sources but also reshape the source's perspective within chosen discourse frameworks. In this process, media participates in creating reality, not merely reflecting what occurs but rather producing narratives through selection processes, symbolic meaning-making, and providing certain meanings (Baden and Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2018). Burhan Bungin (2017) affirms, particularly in advertising contexts, social reality can be formed because television advertising is part of media itself and plays a role as one source of authority for individuals.

Framing Analysis

Framing analysis in news is a method to understand how media shapes and presents an issue or event. Framing is the process of selecting and emphasizing certain aspects of perceived reality to make them more prominent in communication texts. This involves using central ideas or certain perspectives to organize information and help audiences interpret conveyed messages.

According to Eriyanto (2002), in this approach, framing devices are divided into four main structures. First, syntactic structure, the way journalists arrange an event into general news writing patterns. Elements such as lead, background, headline, to selected quotations become parts observed in this structure. Second, script structure, how journalists narrate or recount that event into news narrative form. Third, thematic structure, how journalists pour their views into propositions, sentences, and relations among sentences that subsequently form the entire text. Fourth, rhetorical structure, the way journalists give emphasis to certain meanings through word choices, idioms, graphics, or images that not only function as writing complements but also help highlight meaning for readers.

Audience Reception Theory

In contemporary communication studies, meaning is no longer understood as a fixed and singular entity but rather as the result of social construction that continuously changes along with mediation processes. Couldry and Hepp (2017) explain that media plays a role as an arena of symbolic production that enables ideology, values, and social discourse to be negotiated through interaction among individuals and institutions. Meaning is born from networks of mediatic practices that shape how reality is perceived, not from messages that stand alone. Therefore, audience understanding of media messages heavily depends on socio-cultural context, personal experience, and power relations surrounding it. This

perspective rejects deterministic views about media influence and instead affirms that communication processes are the result of dynamic dialogue among production, representation, and interpretation.

The structuralist approach in communication science, such as semiotics and discourse analysis, shows that media messages are always encoded within certain sign systems and cultural values. However, this approach still tends to focus on how meaning is designed by message senders. Another approach is still needed that positions audiences not only as readers but also as active producers of meaning.

This is where the audience reception approach plays an important role. Rather than centering attention only on message content or media production techniques, this approach examines how such messages are received, interpreted, and made meaningful by various types of audiences. This approach acknowledges that meaning is not simply "injected" into audience minds but rather negotiated through complex social processes.

With the emergence of social media, audience reception logic becomes increasingly significant. Audiences now not only receive messages from mainstream media but also actively engage in reproducing and spreading narratives through posts, comments, memes, threads, and other forms of digital participation (Zubiaga, 2019). Digital public space becomes an arena of meaning contestation that cannot be fully controlled by one hegemonic actor such as the state or media corporations. Therefore, to understand communication dynamics in current social media contexts, it is important to use theory that emphasizes dialogue between production and reception of meaning.

Stuart Hall's Encoding-Decoding Theory

The encoding/decoding theory developed by Stuart Hall (1980) constitutes one of the most influential contributions in communication studies and cultural studies. Through his writing titled "Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse," Hall (1980) dismantles traditional views about communication that regard message delivery processes as linear flows moving from sender to receiver completely and without disturbance. In classical views, meaning is considered attached to messages themselves and audiences are assumed to receive and understand messages as intended by senders. Hall (1980) rejects this view by affirming that communication processes are arenas of complex and highly contextual meaning struggles.

Hall (1980), as a Marxist intellectual also influenced by semiotics and Gramsci's hegemony theory, introduces the idea that production and reception of media messages do not occur in empty space. Meaning production (encoding) and meaning consumption (decoding) are shaped by social and ideological structures surrounding both message senders and audiences. In this view, meaning is not objective or singular in nature but rather as a product of social processes full of tensions between domination and resistance.

Encoding Concept

Encoding refers to the process where message makers, whether media, state, legal institutions, or public figures, frame an issue or event in certain ways. In this process, meaning is encoded through language, symbols, narratives, and culturally available discourse. This encoding process is often ideological in nature because it contains values representing interests of dominant groups in society. For instance, media can package news about suspect designation toward a political figure by emphasizing elements of "law enforcement without discrimination" or "political cleansing by neutral institutions." Here, media is encoding messages that law works objectively and fairly. However, this encoding process does not guarantee that such messages will be received as initially intended by audiences.

Decoding Concept

Decoding is the process where audiences interpret and form meaning from messages they receive. This process is greatly influenced by audiences' own social, cultural, economic, and political backgrounds. Hall (1980) affirms that not all audiences read media messages in the same way. In fact, one media message can produce various different interpretations, depending on audience decoding positions. Hall (1980) classifies three main decoding positions:

Table 1. Audience Reception Positions in Stuart Hall's Model

Decoding Position	Audience Reception
Dominant-Hegemonic Position	Audiences accept messages as intended by senders. They identify themselves with dominant codes and acknowledge message legitimacy. For instance, someone who believes Indonesia's legal system is neutral and fair will accept news of Hasto's suspect designation as evidence of law enforcement without seeing other motives.
Negotiated Position	Audiences accept part of messages but adjust them with personal context and experience. They agree with certain elements of messages but also criticize other parts. In Hasto's case, audiences in this position might accept that law must be enforced but question whether this process is clean from political interests.
Oppositional Position	Audiences reject messages entirely and interpret such messages with meanings opposite according to their opinions on media content. In this position, audiences view messages as forms of ideological domination and form counter-narratives. They, for instance, interpret suspect designation toward Hasto not as legal efforts but rather as political criminalization or power tools to bring down political opponents.

Contextual Factors Influencing Audience Reception

Audience reception constitutes one important field of study in communication science and cultural studies developing since the 1970s, particularly under the influence of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, England, where Stuart Hall (1980) himself became a central figure. The audience reception approach departs from the premise that meaning is not only produced by media as message producers but also reshaped by audiences as message interpreters. In other words, media meaning is never singular and final in nature but rather always open to diverse interpretation. There are several main factors influencing how audiences interpret media messages:

(1) Social and Cultural Background: Social class, education level, political affiliation, religion, and ethnicity constitute socio-cultural variables highly influential in forming individual reference frameworks. Individuals from higher education backgrounds, for instance, might be more critical toward media messages and tend to conduct negotiated or oppositional decoding compared to those accustomed to receiving information unidirectionally from media;

(2) Personal and Collective Life Experience: Life experience, including experience as victims of injustice or part of marginal groups, can make someone more sensitive toward certain narratives in media. They tend to reject dominant narratives representing status quo or state power because they contradict reality they experience daily;

(3) Political and Historical Context: Audience reception is also influenced by historical and political contexts. For instance, in political situations full of tension such as before general elections, audiences tend to interpret every piece of information within certain political interest frameworks. In contexts like this, decoding becomes highly political;

(4) Community and Digital Environment: In the social media era, audiences no longer stand alone in interpreting messages. They join online communities having certain ideological tendencies. This digital environment forms a kind of "echo chamber" that strengthens certain decoding positions. Thus, media message reading today becomes increasingly collective and simultaneously increasingly fragmented.

Material and Methodology

This research employs a constructivist paradigm with a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at understanding and interpreting phenomena experienced by research subjects including behavior, motivation, and perception through text and language description (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This paradigm was chosen because the research focuses on how audiences construct meaning from media coverage they consume. Within the constructivism framework, social reality is not considered as something objective or singular but rather as the result of intersubjective construction formed and continuously made meaningful through social interaction processes, discursive practices, and power relation frameworks contained in media (Roslyng & Dindler, 2023).

The method used is netnography plus content analysis through Pan-Kosicki framing analysis and Stuart Hall reception analysis as analytical techniques. Netnography was chosen because it enables researchers to record digital reality naturalistically, as it appears (Kozinets, 2015). This method is

suitable for observing social media user interactions directly without intervention or active participation to understand their digital cultural practices in responding to certain issues. Researchers noted popular hashtags, types of viral content, tone of comments, and how narratives developed among user communities.

The research object is news coverage of Hasto Kristiyanto's suspect designation published on Tempo.co and Kompas.com as well as public responses on X and Instagram platforms from February 1 to June 30, 2025. This six-month period was chosen to observe developments in audience decoding patterns comprehensively divided into three phases: the phase of case emergence and clarification war between Hasto's version and law enforcers' in February and March, the phase of legal case development at trial tables and evidence collection in April to May, and the phase of suspect designation and government and society responses to case decisions in June.

Research subjects were selected purposively from audiences actively providing responses to Hasto Kristiyanto coverage on X and Instagram platforms. Subject selection criteria include audiences who consume news from Tempo.co and Kompas.com, actively comment or create content related to Hasto's case, and represent diversity of political affiliation and social backgrounds. Researchers found seven key informants who can represent various decoding positions and different demographic characteristics.

Data collection was conducted through three techniques: digital observation, digital documentation, and in-depth interviews. Observation was conducted on 1,247 comments on X and 892 comments on Instagram responding to Hasto Kristiyanto coverage from both media outlets. Documentation was conducted on all types of relevant content such as comment screenshots, tweets, short videos with text transcripts, images or memes containing political responses, and long threads or discussions. Content selection criteria include relevance to issues containing Hasto's name, KPK, and suspect designation, interaction intensity such as number of comments likes shares and retweets, clarity of decoding position, and media form variation both text image and video.

In-depth interviews were conducted with seven informants representing diversity of political affiliation, age, and media consumption patterns. Informants consisted of 4 audiences tending to accept media narratives or pro-KPK, two audiences without certain political affiliation, and one audience who is a PDIP and Hasto fan. Interviews were conducted to explore complex interpretations and meanings as well as reduce researcher subjectivity. Secondary data in the form of news articles from Tempo.co and Kompas.com as well as various data sources relevant to research topics such as literature studies on political communication theory, encoding-decoding theory, and framing analysis.

Data analysis uses Stuart Hall's reception theory emphasizing audience encoding-decoding processes and Pan-Kosicki framing analysis model to understand how media packages coverage. Hall (1980) identifies three decoding positions: dominant hegemonic position where audiences accept messages as intended by media, negotiated position where audiences accept part of messages but adjust them with personal context and experience, and oppositional position where audiences reject messages entirely and interpret such messages with opposite meanings.

Pan-Kosicki framing analysis is used to dissect how Tempo.co and Kompas.com reconstruct Hasto case coverage reality through four structures: syntax or the way journalists arrange events into general news writing patterns, script or how journalists narrate that event into news narrative form, thematic or how journalists pour their views into propositions and relations among sentences, and rhetorical or the way journalists give emphasis to certain meanings through word choices idioms graphics or images (Eriyanto, 2002).

Result and Discussion

The results of this research focus on five interrelated aspects forming comprehensive understanding about audience reception toward Hasto Kristiyanto coverage. *First*, how mainstream media constructs reality through different encoding processes between Tempo.co and Kompas.com. *Second*, how audiences conduct decoding toward such coverage fragmented into three positions: dominant, negotiated, and oppositional. *Third*, how social media platforms play roles as social determinants shaping reception patterns differently between X and Instagram. *Fourth*, what factors influence audience decoding processes. *Lastly*, how power relations in digital discourse production occur among audiences.

Media Reality Construction in Hasto Kristiyanto Coverage

As mainstream media, Tempo.co and Kompas.com have different journalistic characteristics in constructing coverage about Hasto Kristiyanto. These differences include choices of perspectives, coverage depth, and emphasis on certain aspects of the case that cumulatively form different narratives on each platform (Gunawan & Wahid, 2021). Tempo.co tends to apply investigative and critical framing with in-depth narratives, while Kompas.com more prioritizes factual, neutral, and concise styles.

Pan-Kosicki framing analysis of ten articles from each media shows significant differences in all four framing structures. From syntactic aspects, Tempo.co uses provocative titles such as "Hasto Detained by KPK: Traces of Corruption Behind PDIP Power" directly directing readers to narratives of systemic corruption and its connection to party power. Conversely, Kompas.com uses more procedural titles such as "KPK Designates Hasto Kristiyanto as Suspect in Corruption Case" focusing on legal aspects without providing initial judgment.

From script aspects, Tempo.co narrates the journey of Hasto's suspect designation process by emphasizing new legal facts continuously emerging and burdening Hasto's position. Tempo.co journalists tend to build coherent narratives by showing chronology from OTT to suspect designation, corruption networks involving various parties, to the role of Hasto's personal secretary in corruption fund flows. Meanwhile, Kompas.com narrates this case more balancedly by providing equal space between KPK's version and defense versions from Hasto's side, PDIP, and his lawyers.

From thematic aspects, Tempo.co journalists' perspectives clearly side with law enforcers namely KPK by continuously presenting new legal facts burdening Hasto. There exists continuity among sentences and paragraphs showing cause-effect coherence why Hasto deserves designation as suspect. Conversely, Kompas.com takes perspectives not siding with law enforcers or Hasto by tending neutral and balanced, providing coverage from two sides thus providing more objective understanding.

From rhetorical aspects, Tempo.co emphasizes facts by mentioning Hasto Kristiyanto's name repeatedly in every paragraph although written with different words such as PDIP Secretary, he, and he said. Journalists intend to explain that Hasto truly knows corruption case problems without political criminalization elements because legal facts become clearer day by day. Tempo.co also uses sharper word choices such as "bribery allegations," "power networks," and "witness intimidation." Conversely, Kompas.com uses more neutral word choices such as "allegations," "legal processes," and "investigation proceeds" while always quoting statements from both parties to show balance.

These framing differences reflect editorial ideology and respective media journalistic traditions (Anshori et al., 2022; Zarwan et al., 2022). Tempo.co uses conflict and power framing that can trigger oppositional decoding from PDIP supporters, while Kompas.com uses procedural and neutral framing more easily accepted dominantly by general audiences. This shows that encoding processes by media are greatly influenced by editorial ideology, journalistic tradition, and media positions in political ecosystems.

Audience Reception Fragmentation in Three Decoding Positions

Analysis of 2,139 data consisting of 1,247 comments on X and 892 comments on Instagram shows that audience reception toward Hasto case coverage is not homogeneous in nature but rather fragmented into three decoding positions according to Stuart Hall's (1980) model. Decoding position distribution shows that 597 audiences are in dominant positions, 579 audiences in negotiated positions, and 566 audiences in oppositional positions. T

his diversity shows that meaning is not determined by message producers alone but rather reconstructed by audiences based on social backgrounds, political ideology, and their collective experience.

Table 2. Audience Decoding Position Distribution

Decoding Position	Number	Main Characteristics
Dominant	597	Accepts media narratives entirely, believes KPK enforces law without discrimination
Negotiated	579	Accepts part of media narratives, supports KPK but rejects if Hasto is criminalized

Oppositional	566	Rejects media narratives totally, believes Hasto is victim of political criminalization
Others	397	Irrelevant comments, humor, or criticism toward media

Source: Data Processed by Author, 2025

Audiences in dominant hegemonic positions accept media narratives that Hasto's suspect designation constitutes evidence of law enforcement in Indonesia. They believe KPK has performed its duties well and there are no political criminalization elements in this case. Comment examples from this position are "KPK must be enforced, whoever it is!" and "Finally KPK dares to take action against PDIP elites, this is a big step for justice." Audiences in this position generally have no affiliation with PDIP, tend to support opposition, have bachelor's degree and above education with high media literacy, and consume critical media such as Tempo and Tirto.

Audiences in negotiated positions accept part of media narratives yet maintain personal interpretations. They appreciate law enforcement without discrimination but remain vigilant so this case does not fall into political criminalization traps and must comply with evidence and fair legal processes. Comment examples from this position are "I trust KPK, but Hasto's case needs proving, don't let it become politicization" and "I support KPK, but don't let Hasto become scapegoat." Audiences in this position are generally independent and politically neutral, have middle education with critical yet skeptical attitudes, and consume news from various sources and conduct information cross-checking.

Audiences in oppositional positions reject media narratives entirely and build counter-narratives that Hasto is a victim of political criminalization for daring to oppose power. They view suspect designation not as legal efforts but rather as power tools to bring down political opponents. Comment examples from this position are "This is liberal media framing! Hasto is victim of internal PDIP coup!" and "Hasto is ulama, firm, loyal, they are afraid!" Audiences in this position are generally PDIP loyalists and Hasto supporters, have middle to lower education with more emotional responses, and tend to consume pro-PDIP media and content from fanbase accounts such as @HastoBersih.

These decoding position differences are influenced by four main factors. First, political affiliation becomes the most dominant factor where PDIP loyalists tend to conduct oppositional decoding while opposition supporters tend to conduct dominant decoding. Second, education level and media literacy play roles in forming critical attitudes where audiences with higher education are more capable of conducting negotiated decoding. Third, media consumption patterns determine whether audiences are trapped in echo chambers or open to alternative interpretations. Fourth, collective experience toward corruption issues and distrust toward state institutions forms audience reference frameworks in interpreting coverage.

Social Media Platforms as Social Determinants of Reception

Research results show that social media platforms are not merely neutral channels but rather structural actors shaping how audiences receive messages. X and Instagram platforms have different characteristics thus producing different reception patterns as well. On X, from 1,247 analyzed comments, 398 comments show dominant decoding, 474 comments show negotiated decoding, and 375 comments show oppositional decoding. In other words, negotiated decoding becomes the dominant position on X platform.

X characteristics that are textual, lengthy, and debatable in nature with cross-check culture, fact-checking, and retweet encourage audiences to conduct negotiated decoding. Audiences on X are accustomed to arguments and data so they tend to accept that KPK has enforced legal justice but reject if Hasto is designated based on criminalization rather than legal facts. Examples of long threads on X such as "Facts vs Hoaxes in Hasto's Case, This is What Has Been Proven" show that audiences on this platform actively conduct information verification and discuss argumentatively.

On Instagram, from 892 analyzed comments, 250 comments show dominant decoding, 303 comments show negotiated decoding, and 339 comments show oppositional decoding. In other words, oppositional decoding becomes the dominant position on Instagram platform. Instagram characteristics that are visual, brief, and emotional in nature with like culture, share, and short captions strengthen oppositional decoding through use of memes, figure quotes, prayers, religious symbols, and political identity narratives.

Visual content on Instagram such as collage posts of Hasto with ulamas and NU figures made by @santri_pdip account or prayer videos together for Hasto at mosques made by @ummat_berdoa account creates strong emotional resonance among PDIP supporters. Memes with captions "Hasto Victim of Internal PDIP Coup" or "KPK vs Hasto: Battle Between Justice and Power" made by @hasto_bersih account successfully consolidates counter-narratives that Hasto is a victim of political criminalization.

Table 3. Platform Characteristics and Reception Pattern Comparison

Aspect	X Platform	Instagram Platform
Content Characteristics	Textual, lengthy, debatable	Visual, brief, emotional
Platform Culture	Cross-check, fact-checking, retweet	Like, share, short caption, meme
Dominant Decoding Position	Negotiated (474 from 1247)	Oppositional (339 from 892)
Content Examples	Analysis threads, polling, long debates	Memes, photo collages, prayer videos, figure quotes

Source: Data Processed by Author, 2025

These findings support media affordance theory (Hopster, 2020) stating that each platform offers different action possibilities that subsequently shape political communication practices. X with its textual affordance encourages rational discussion and information verification, while Instagram with its visual affordance strengthens political identity and emotional solidarity. This is also in line with mediatization theory (Bossetta, 2018) stating that media not only reports politics but changes political logic itself.

Additionally, this research also finds shifts in digital discourse dynamics from emotional to rational phases during research periods. Public responses initially dominated by emotions and political identity solidarity on Instagram shifted toward more rational and procedural discussions on X platform along with official KPK document releases and legal process developments. This shift shows that institutional transparency can change public discourse dynamics from emotional-identitarian nature to become more deliberative and argument-based.

Factors Influencing Audience Decoding Processes

In-depth interview results with 7 informants reveal that decoding processes do not occur spontaneously but rather are influenced by complexity of social, political, and ideological factors mutually interacting. From 7 informants, 4 informants come from groups tending to accept media narratives or pro-KPK, 2 informants have no certain political affiliation, and 1 informant is a PDIP and Hasto fan. This distribution helps researchers understand variation of perspectives emerging in decoding processes.

The first and most dominant factor is political affiliation. Informants having interest toward PDIP tend to conduct oppositional decoding by rejecting media narratives that Hasto is a corruption suspect. They believe this case is a form of political criminalization because Hasto dares to oppose power. Conversely, informants having no affiliation with PDIP tend to conduct dominant decoding by accepting that KPK has performed its duties well and Hasto is guilty legally. One neutral informant conducts negotiated decoding by stating that if Hasto truly has corruption cases then he must be firmly dealt with, but if this case is only criminalization then law enforcers must stop the case and free Hasto.

The second factor is media literacy level and education. Informants with higher education backgrounds and habits of consuming news from various sources tend to be more critical in interpreting coverage. They do not directly accept media narratives raw but conduct cross-verification by comparing coverage from Tempo.co and Kompas.com, seeking additional information on social media, and discussing with peers having different views. Conversely, informants with lower media literacy tend to accept narratives matching their initial beliefs without conducting further verification.

The third factor is media consumption patterns. Informants with diverse and critical media habits, such as regularly consuming investigative outlets like Tempo or practicing multi-source cross-checking, tend to occupy a negotiated position. They balance narratives by comparing perspectives and questioning partisan claims. Conversely, informants who predominantly consume partisan media or

fan-based accounts (such as PuanNews or HastoUpdate) tend to remain within an "echo chamber," reinforcing their existing ideological biases and leading them toward either dominant or oppositional positions.

The fourth factor is collective experience toward corruption issues and trust in state institutions. Informants having negative experiences with legal systems or having witnessed corruption cases not handled well tend to be skeptical toward Hasto's suspect designation. They consider that law in Indonesia can still be influenced by political power so suspect designation does not always reflect legal truth. Conversely, informants believing in legal reform and KPK independence tend to accept narratives that Hasto's designation is a form of fair law enforcement.

The fifth factor is digital platform characteristics used to access information. Informants more active on X tend to conduct negotiated decoding because they are accustomed to debate culture and fact verification on that platform. One informant stated, "On X I read the analysis, but on Instagram I join campaigns. There it's easier to touch people's feelings." This statement shows that informants realize characteristic differences between both platforms and adjust their communication behavior according to affordances offered by each platform.

Table 4. Factors Influencing Informant Decoding Positions

Informant	Political Affiliation	Media Literacy	Media Consumption Pattern	Decoding Position
1	Neutral	High	Multisource, X	Negotiated
2	Pro-KPK	High	Tempo, Kompas, X	Dominant
3	Pro-PDIP	Medium	Pro-PDIP media, Instagram	Oppositional
4	Pro-KPK	High	Multisource, X	Dominant
5	Neutral	Medium	Kompas, Instagram	Negotiated
6	Pro-KPK	High	Tempo, X	Dominant
7	Pro-KPK	High	Multisource, X	Dominant

Source: Data Processed by Author, 2025

Interview results also reveal that majority of informants first learned about Hasto's designation news through online media notifications subsequently viralized on social media platforms. As many as four out of seven informants stated they received news from main headlines in Kompas.com application, while three other informants learned about it through viral threads on X or memes on Instagram. This shows that mainstream media still plays important roles as initial information sources although social media subsequently becomes space where such narratives are debated and contested.

Regarding trust in media, four informants trust Kompas.com as neutral media not overly political with factual and procedural journalistic styles. Meanwhile, three informants trust Tempo.co because of investigation depth and openness toward power conflict narratives. However, two informants who are PDIP loyalists stated not trusting Tempo.co because considering it as liberal media anti-PDIP. This finding strengthens arguments that trust in media is not only determined by journalistic quality but also by ideological alignment between media and audiences.

Power Relations in Digital Discourse Production

Analysis reveals that media and audiences exist in dynamic power relations. Although Tempo.co and Kompas.com have authority as mainstream media, audiences on social media are capable of challenging dominant narratives through prosumption processes or production plus consumption. This supports Jenkins' (2013) argument about spreadable media where audiences are not only receivers but also meaning producers. This phenomenon underlines how social media becomes political mobilization arenas where ordinary citizens can participate in political discourse although colored by polarization and disinformation (Yılmaz et al., 2024).

Audiences on social media not only accept or reject media narratives but also actively produce counter-content such as memes, analysis threads, short videos, and infographics spreading alternative interpretations. Fanbase accounts such as @HastoBersih, @kader_pdip, and @hastopeduli become counter-narrative producers consolidating support toward Hasto and framing suspect designation as political criminalization. Conversely, accounts such as @cekfakta_politik, @transparansi_hukum, and @media_analyst produce content supporting KPK narratives by presenting data-based analysis and legal facts.

Content produced by audiences is subsequently spread through their social networks thus creating viral effects that can surpass mainstream media reach. Memes about "Hasto Victim of Coup" initially made by small accounts can obtain thousands of likes and shares thus becoming alternative narratives accepted by PDIP supporter communities. Conversely, analysis threads about "Facts vs Hoaxes in Hasto's Case" made by fact verification accounts can change initially skeptical audience perceptions to become more trusting in KPK.

However, this digital resistance also contains risks of polarization, disinformation, and public space fragmentation. Audiences trapped in echo chambers tend to only consume content matching their beliefs thus strengthening confirmation bias and rejecting contradictory information. This is visible from how PDIP loyalists on Instagram tend to only follow pro-Hasto fanbase accounts and reject narratives from mainstream media or fact verification accounts. Conversely, pro-KPK audiences on X tend to consume content from critical media and anti-corruption activism accounts while rejecting narratives from pro-PDIP accounts.

These findings confirm that mainstream media hegemonic domination can be balanced by digital resistance although with consequences of echo chamber formation rejecting different narratives. Digital public space ideally becoming democratic deliberation arenas is instead fragmented into various isolated spaces where audiences only interact with people having similar views. This raises challenges for democracy because dialogue among different groups becomes increasingly difficult and polarization increasingly strengthens.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that the construction of reality in the coverage of Hasto Kristiyanto's case by Tempo.co and Kompas.com produced distinct framing patterns that directly shaped audience decoding. Kompas.com adopted a procedural and neutral framing that emphasized factual balance, while Tempo.co employed a critical framing highlighting power conflicts and corruption networks. These editorial differences influenced audience reception, which fragmented into dominant, negotiated, and oppositional positions. Political affiliation, education level, media literacy, and platform characteristics all played significant roles in shaping interpretations, showing that meaning is not solely determined by media producers but is reconstructed by audiences through social background, political ideology, and collective experience.

The findings highlight the need for future research to expand into other digital platforms with diverse political communication dynamics and to integrate mixed methods for a more comprehensive understanding. Online media should also enhance transparency in news production by presenting multiple perspectives, strengthening accessible fact-checking mechanisms, and providing sufficient historical and legal context to avoid oversimplified or partisan framing. In this way, the study contributes not only to academic discourse on media reception but also offers practical recommendations for both researchers and media practitioners in navigating the complex interplay between message production, digital algorithms, and audience meaning-making.

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