

Stigmatizing language and visuals in reporting on children in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study analyzed the compliance of Indonesian online media with the Child-Friendly Reporting Guidelines (PPRA) and UNICEF Guidelines, focusing on stigmatizing language and visual representation of children. A total of 282 news articles published in January, June, and December 2024 by Sindonews.com (national) and Poskota.co.id (local) were examined through quantitative content analysis. The coding instrument consisted of 117 indicators, with this article emphasizing 41 indicators related to language and visuals. The findings revealed moderate compliance. While anonymity protocols were generally applied, stigmatizing terms and degrading narratives remained frequent, especially when reporting children as perpetrators. Visuals often blurred children's faces but still exposed contextual identifiers such as homes and schools. These practices undermine child protection. The study concluded that ethical reporting requires empathetic language, safe visuals, and stronger monitoring by the Press Council.

Introduction

The press plays a crucial role in shaping public knowledge, perceptions, and attitudes toward children. Media outlets do not merely transmit facts but also frame narratives that construct social realities about childhood, delinquency, and victimhood. This normative role of the press becomes particularly critical in national contexts where children constitute a large and vulnerable segment of the population and are frequently exposed to media coverage related to crime and social issues. In Indonesia, this role is particularly significant as children account for more than 32 percent of the national population (Badan Pusat Statistik [BPS] Indonesia, 2024). Inaccurate or insensitive reporting on children risks long-term consequences, including stigma, exclusion, and secondary victimization.

One of the most persistent challenges in Indonesian journalism lies in the use of language and visuals when reporting on children, whether as victims, perpetrators, or

witnesses of crime. Although the Indonesian Press Council issued the Child Friendly Reporting Guidelines (*Pedoman Pemberitaan Ramah Anak [PPRA]*) (Dewan Pers [DP], 2019) and The United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) introduced global standards violations remain frequent (UNICEF, Women, & UNFPA, 2020) ethical and safe representation and reporting of violence against women (VAW). Stigmatizing terms such as *anak nakal* (naughty child), *bandit cilik* (little bandit), and *pembuat onar* (troublemaker) have appeared in headlines and narratives, particularly in crime reporting on minors (Fahmi, 2024; Sandi, 2024). These labels reduce children's identities to single acts and reinforce negative stereotypes. Instead of emphasizing rehabilitation and protection, children are often framed through a lens of punishment and sensationalism.

The visual dimension adds another layer of concern. While many outlets blur children's faces, they frequently disclose contextual identifiers such as homes, schools, or family members. Such indirect disclosures compromise anonymity and expose children to recognition and stigmatization (Laurensius, 2017). For victims of sexual violence or children accused of crime, these practices can exacerbate trauma and shame. Sokowati and Hassan (2025), for example, demonstrated that even leading outlets such as *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* often employed visual representations that reinforced stereotypes and disempowered victims.

Similarly, studies of Indonesian outlets revealed persistent violations, Mustika and Pranawati (2020) showed that *Tribunnews.com* often used sensational headlines and shallow narratives that undermined the spirit of PPRA. The Indonesian Press Council's official warning in 2023 noted recurring violations, including the use of violent terms such as *pemeriksaan brutal* (brutal rape) and the reconstruction of traumatic events that risk retraumatizing children (DP, 2023).

Language and visuals are two of the most powerful journalistic instruments. Language frames public discourse, while visuals shape emotional responses. Careless use of either risks normalizing stigma, reinforcing harmful stereotypes, and perpetuating cycles of violence. This makes examining compliance in these two dimensions crucial for understanding whether Indonesian journalism has shifted toward a child friendly model or remains bound to sensationalist routines.

In child related news reporting, ethical concerns frequently arise from the use of stigmatizing language and visual representations that may expose or harm children. This issue is not unique to Indonesia. International scholarship has documented similar ethical challenges across diverse media systems, including the use of sensational language, victim blaming narratives, and visual cues that indirectly disclose children's identities or reinforce harmful stereotypes. Studies from various national contexts indicate that even when ethical guidelines exist, their implementation in routine journalistic practice remains inconsistent, particularly in reporting cases involving child victims or juvenile offenders. These global patterns suggest that ethical lapses in child reporting are not isolated incidents, but rather manifestations of broader structural challenges within contemporary journalism, thereby reinforcing the relevance of examining these issues within the Indonesian media context. For instance, Weathered (2017) found that media in the United States frequently reproduced victim blaming frames in child abuse coverage, while Hanáčková, (2021) showed that Eastern European outlets relied heavily on sensational imagery in reporting juvenile crime. Zelizer (2004) further emphasized that visual elements, more than textual narratives, often function as dominant modes of emotional persuasion in child related news coverage.

Within Indonesia, similar tendencies persist. Tyas Utami and Putri (2023) found that *Poskota.co.id* often used sensational titles, emotional diction, and inadequate anonymization, while Nurbaya and Pratiwi (2023) reported that even mainstream outlets like iNews and

Medcom.id had not fully implemented PPRA standards. The selection of Sindonews.com and Poskota.co.id as research objects reflects the need to compare national and local media ecosystems. Sindonews.com represents a mainstream national outlet with wide reach and is among the media brands with a relatively high level of public trust in Indonesia (Newman et al., 2021). Poskota.co.id, conversely, is historically linked to yellow journalism and sensational crime coverage (Malik, 2017). This contrast provides a strategic basis for analyzing whether ethical lapses are systemic across Indonesian journalism or vary by media type.

Thus, the novelty of this study lies in its simultaneous focus on two underexplored dimensions of child reporting: stigmatizing language and visual representation. Previous research in Indonesia has tended to analyze identity protection or ethics broadly, without systematically combining narrative and visual dimensions. By applying a targeted coding instrument of 13 narrative indicators and 10 visual indicators derived from PPRA (2019) and guidelines UNICEF (2020), and by comparing a national outlet (*Sindonews.com*) with a local outlet (*Poskota.co.id*), this study contributes new empirical evidence on whether compliance with child friendly journalism is consistent across media types or shaped by institutional context. In doing so, it advances both scholarly understanding and policy debates on child sensitive reporting in Indonesia.

Based on this theoretical framework, the study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. To what extent do national and local Indonesian online media comply with the Child Friendly Journalism Guidelines (PPRA) and UNICEF guidelines in the use of language and visual representation in child-related news reporting?

RQ2. What patterns of compliance and violation emerge in child related news reporting across national and local online media, and how do these patterns reflect institutional ethical challenges across media types?

Accordingly, this study applies Social Responsibility Theory, Framing Theory, and Visual Representation Theory as its analytical lenses to examine media compliance with child-friendly journalism standards. Social Responsibility Theory provides the normative foundation for assessing whether media fulfill their ethical obligations to protect children as a vulnerable group and to prioritize public interest over commercial or sensationalist imperatives (Blackwell, 2014; Khan, Limpot, & Villanueva, 2020; McQuail, 2010). Framing Theory is employed to analyze how news narratives are constructed through word choice, labeling, and emphasis, particularly in the use of stigmatizing language that shapes public perceptions of child-related crime (Entman, 1993; Hapsari, 2013). Visual Representation Theory complements this analysis by examining how images and contextual visual cues may reinforce stereotypes or indirectly disclose children's identities (Allen, 2004). Together, these theoretical perspectives guide the interpretation of empirical findings and enable a comprehensive assessment of how ethical principles are translated into journalistic practice in child-related news reporting.

Method

This study applies a quantitative content analysis paradigm to assess compliance with child-friendly journalism guidelines, with a specific focus on the dimensions of language and visual representation. The research adopts a descriptive approach, where the unit of analysis is news articles involving children as victims, perpetrators, or witnesses of crime published in *Sindonews.com* (national media) and *Poskota.co.id* (local media).

The population consisted of 1,008 child related news articles published between January and December 2024 across the two outlets. A constructed week cluster sampling technique Riffe et al. (2024) was employed to ensure proportional representation, yielding a final sample of 282 articles (from January, June, and December 2024).

The coding instrument was derived from the Child Friendly Reporting Guidelines; PPRA DP (2019) and the UNICEF Ethical Guidelines for Reporting on Children (UNICEF et al., 2020) ethical and safe representation and reporting of violence against women (VAW). For this article, two dimensions were selected: (1) Language (13 indicators): assessing stigmatizing words, sensational or judgmental phrases, empathy in wording, and narrative sensitivity. (2) Visual Representation (10 indicators): assessing whether images or videos anonymize children, avoid stigmatization, refrain from revealing contextual identifiers, and comply with ethical visualization standards. Each indicator was coded on a four-point scale: 3 = fully compliant, 2 = partially compliant, 1 = violation, 0 = not relevant. To facilitate the interpretation of compliance scores, mean values were categorized using an interval scale. With a scoring range of 1 - 3 and three levels of compliance, scores of 1.00 - 1.66 indicate low compliance, 1.67 - 2.33 indicate moderate compliance, and 2.34 - 3.00 indicate high compliance. Moderate compliance (scores approaching 2) reflects partial adherence to the Child-Friendly Journalism Guidelines, in which protective principles are present but applied implicitly, inconsistently, or without comprehensive coverage across narrative and visual elements. Therefore, moderate compliance should not be interpreted as full ethical compliance, but rather as partial and uneven implementation.

Reliability was tested using intercoder reliability. Three trained coders analyzed a subsample of 30 articles (15 from *Sindonews* and 15 from *Poskota*). The results yielded a Cronbach's Alpha above 0.90, indicating excellent internal consistency. Construct validity was ensured by aligning the indicators with PPRA and UNICEF guidelines, while content validity was strengthened through expert judgment by academic supervisors.

The coded data were processed using SPSS 26.0, employing descriptive statistics to calculate: total scores per dimension, mean compliance scores, comparisons between *Sindonews* and *Poskota*. This focus on language and visual dimensions provides sharper insights into how Indonesian online media comply with child friendly journalism practices and where ethical vulnerabilities remain.

Results and Discussion

This study aims to measure the compliance of two Indonesian online media outlets *Sindonews* (national) and *Poskota* (local) with the *Child Friendly Journalism Guidelines* (*Pedoman Pemberitaan Ramah Anak [PPRA]*) and UNICEF standards. The analysis focuses specifically on language and visual dimensions, which are central to how children are represented in news reporting. These dimensions not only influence the immediate framing of children in media but also have long-term effects on public perception and the safeguarding of children's rights.

The findings indicate that both *Sindonews* and *Poskota* achieved only a moderate level of compliance, with average scores ranging between 2.05 and 2.35 on a three point scale. To provide an overview, the mean compliance scores for both media across these two dimensions are illustrated in Figure 1.

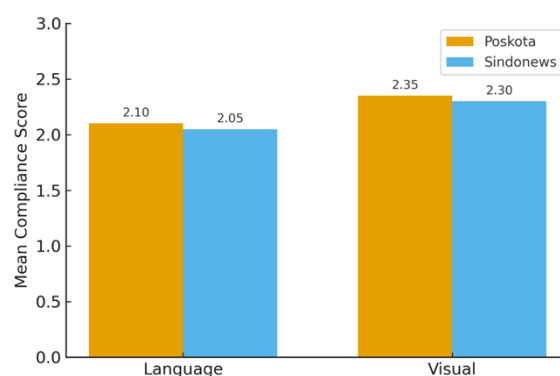


Figure 1. Comparison of average compliance scores in language and visual dimensions (*Sindonews* vs. *Poskota*, 2024). Source: Author's analysis (SPSS output, 2025).

Figure 1 shows the comparison of mean scores between *Poskota* and *Sindonews* across the two dimensions. Bar chart showing average compliance, *Sindonews*: Language 2.35, Visual 2.10; *Poskota*: Language 2.05, Visual 2.20. The results indicate that both *Sindonews* and *Poskota* achieved only a moderate level of compliance, with very small differences (0.05 points) in both dimensions. A closer examination of specific indicators further explains why overall compliance remains moderate. Indicators related to constructive language, hopeful narratives, and solution-oriented framing consistently scored low across both media, indicating that reporting practices remain largely descriptive and event-focused rather than recovery-oriented. While visual indicators showed relatively high compliance, particularly in avoiding explicit violence and exploitation, narrative elements related to empathy and psychological sensitivity remain the most vulnerable dimension of child reporting. This pattern suggests that compliance is largely defensive, prioritizing the avoidance of explicit violations rather than the active promotion of child-centered and restorative narratives.

The overall moderate compliance highlights the ethical dilemmas faced by Indonesian media when reporting on children. However, the differences are negligible, reflecting that ethical challenges in reporting children are systemic in Indonesian journalism, regardless of media type. This suggests that while there is some level of awareness of child protection norms, serious gaps remain in the use of stigmatizing language, sensational details, and the exposure of children's identities in visual reporting.

As Paik (2023) argues, digital journalism operates under algorithmic pressures that increase the risk of ethical breaches, particularly when newsworthiness competes with the duty of care. Similarly, Craft, Vos, and David Wolfgang (2016) emphasize that ethical dilemmas in child reporting often emerge from the tension between *speed* and *accuracy*, a challenge that intensifies in the digital first environment.

Moreover, the persistence of sensationalist practices can be traced to the historical function of the press. Fuller (2024) reminds us that debates about journalistic ethics have long centered on balancing press freedom with responsibility, a struggle that continues in today's Indonesian media landscape. Oso, Adeniran, and Arowolo (2024) further demonstrates that journalism ethics are not abstract ideals but are shaped by *social and political contexts*, which in Indonesia often incentivize sensationalism for clicks and visibility. In line with this, Habibie (2018) critiques the weakening of the media's dual function (*dwi fungsi media massa*) to inform and to provide social control when sensational language and visual exposure take precedence over child protection.

These findings provide the foundation for a more detailed exploration of stigmatizing language and visual exposure, which will be discussed in the following sections. Altogether,

these contextual pressures help explain why both Sindonews and Poskota achieve only moderate compliance: they operate in an ecosystem that offers little incentive for truly child sensitive journalism both in language and visuals despite existing guidelines.

Patterns of Stigmatizing Language in Child Related News

Language is one of the most critical dimensions in determining whether media coverage of children aligns with child friendly journalism standards. The *Child Friendly Reporting Guidelines* PPRA and *Child Friendly Reporting Guidelines* UNICEF, emphasize that media must avoid using derogatory or stigmatizing terms, must refrain from including vulgar details, and should frame children in ways that protect their dignity and rights.

The quantitative findings (see Table 1) show that while both Sindonews and Poskota achieved relatively high scores in protecting children's identity through anonymization ($M = 2.89$), they scored low in avoiding vulgar narratives ($M = 1.50$) and refraining from stigmatizing labels ($M = 1.62$). The highest indicator score is found in the consistent use of initials or anonymous identifiers ($M = 2.89$), followed by the avoidance of derogatory terms ($M = 2.83$) and the non disclosure of identity markers such as schools ($M = 2.88$). This indicates a tendency to follow basic anonymity protocols. This indicates that anonymity protocols are often followed technically, but the *narrative framing* of children remains problematic.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of compliance in the language and narrative dimension (13 indicators). *Source: Author's analysis based on coding results (SPSS output, 2025).*

No	Indikator	Mean	Std. Dev
1	News avoids mentioning child's full name	2.46	0.84
2	Language used is neutral	2.51	0.83
3	Story avoids unnecessary detail	1.60	0.81
4	Avoids sensationalizing child's experience	1.50	0.78
5	Use of initials/anonymous identifiers	2.89	0.42
6	Absence of derogatory terms	2.83	0.52
7	Neutral and balanced narrative	2.54	0.59
8	Use of empathetic wording	2.28	0.88
9	Avoids revealing identity markers (school, etc.)	2.88	0.41
10	Avoidance of stigmatizing words	2.47	0.67
11	Non-discriminatory phrasing	2.40	0.81
12	Avoidance of victim-blaming	2.32	0.69
13	Consistency with child protection principles	2.28	0.72

Table 1 shows that the overall mean score for the language and narrative dimension is 2.17 ($SD = 0.39$), which falls into the moderate category. The highest indicator score is found in the consistent use of initials or anonymous identifiers ($M = 2.89$), followed by the avoidance of derogatory terms ($M = 2.83$) and the non disclosure of identity markers such as schools ($M = 2.88$). This indicates a tendency to follow basic anonymity protocols.

However, the lowest scores are found in avoiding sensational details ($M = 1.50$) and unnecessary details of children's experiences ($M = 1.60$), reflecting frequent violations of empathy and protection principles. These results demonstrate that while anonymity

is relatively well protected, stigmatizing and sensational language continues to appear, undermining ethical child friendly journalism. These results reveal a consistent pattern: Sindonews tends to engage in descriptive sensationalism by including graphic or vulgar details, while Poskota practices labeling sensationalism by framing children through stigmatizing terms. Figure 2 presents a stigmatizing headline “*Bandit Cilik*” in Poskota.



Figure 2. Example of stigmatizing headline “*Bandit Cilik*” in Poskota, June 2024. *Source: Author’s Documentation, 2025*

As illustrated in Figure 2, the headline “*Bandit Cilik*” (literally “Little Bandit”) is a clear example of stigmatizing language. By framing a group of minors involved in a school brawl as “bandits,” the news report positions them as criminals rather than vulnerable children in need of protection or rehabilitation. This violates the PPRA provision that explicitly prohibits labels that may stigmatize or criminalize minors.

From a theoretical perspective, Entman (1993) framing theory explains how language choices shape public perception by defining problems, attributing causality, and suggesting moral evaluations. In this case, *Poskota*’s use of stigmatizing terms constructs a frame where children are primarily seen as sources of social disorder. Similarly, Fowler (1991) the actual number of HF hospitalizations remains >1 million annually. More than 80% of patients who are hospitalized are initially seen in the emergency department (ED) argues that media language embeds ideology; here, the ideology of crime and deviance eclipses the recognition of children’s rights.

At a broader level, Social Responsibility Theory of the Press, Khan et al. (2020) posits that media institutions are obligated to minimize harm to vulnerable populations. By using terms like “*Bandit Cilik*,” *Poskota* undermines this responsibility. Himma-kadakas and Tenor (2023) also show that children often become either voiceless or overexposed in media coverage, a dilemma visible in both Sindonews and Poskota.

Indonesian scholarship supports these concerns. Megawati and Mony (2020) found that online news about children often violates ethical standards by disclosing stigmatizing details about victims or perpetrators. Likewise, the study *Korban Kejahatan Susila Anak dalam Teks Media* documents how Indonesian outlets perpetuate victim blaming and stigmatization in child related cases.

Taken together, the quantitative scores, case examples, and theoretical perspectives show that both national and local media fall short of child sensitive reporting in their use of language. While Sindonews and Poskota differ in form *descriptive vulgarity* versus *stigmatizing labels* the outcome is the same: children are represented in ways that compromise their dignity and rights.

Sensational and Vulgar Narratives in News Language

Another recurring issue in Indonesian news reporting on children is the tendency to use sensational and vulgar narratives. Instead of contextualizing child related cases within broader social or institutional problems, the reports often provide vivid and graphic details that risk retraumatizing victims and stigmatizing their families.

The quantitative results for the language dimension support this finding. Indicators related to avoiding vulgar or graphic descriptions scored the lowest across both outlets, with Sindonews averaging 1.65 and Poskota 1.35 (see Figure 3).

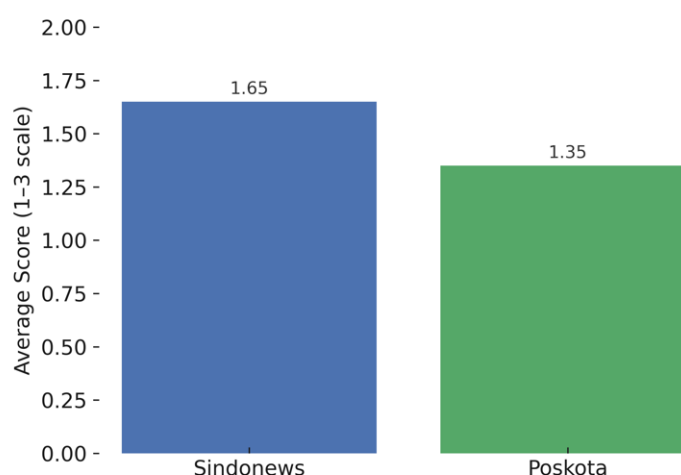


Figure 3. Average Scores on the Indicator “Avoiding Vulgar/Graphic Narratives” in Child Related News Reports (Sindonews vs Poskota). Source: Author’s analysis based on coding results (SPSS output, 2025).

As illustrated in Figure 3, Sindonews achieved a slightly higher mean score (1.65) compared to Poskota (1.35). To provide a clearer picture of how each outlet performs on the indicator “avoiding vulgar or graphic narratives”. This pattern confirms that although children’s names are frequently anonymized, the narrative framing still undermines ethical standards. However, both outlets fall significantly below the ideal threshold of compliance (3.0), indicating that neither has consistently refrained from using sensational or graphic details in child related news.

A particularly striking example is a Sindonews report describing how “a grandmother wiped blood from her granddaughter’s pants after being raped by her grandfather and uncle.” While intended to dramatize the story, this narrative constitutes a graphic depiction of sexual violence that directly violates the principles of child-sensitive reporting. Instead of fostering empathy or focusing on systemic protection failures, the report indulges in sensational detail that risks public voyeurism.

The persistence of such narratives is not unique to Sindonews or Poskota. Studies on other Indonesian outlets demonstrate similar trends. Nurbaya and Pratiwi (2023), in their study of iNews and Medcom, found that both media often failed to fully implement the PPRA guidelines, particularly by revealing sensitive details and sensationalizing child related cases. Similarly, Mustika and Pranawati (2021) observed that Tribunnews.com frequently uses clickbait headlines and inconsistent narrative structures, prioritizing attention-grabbing detail over ethical considerations.

From a legal perspective, Hapid, Jamaludin, and Mubiina (2023) emphasize that such practices disregard existing protections under the *Law on the Juvenile Justice System*

(UU SPPA) and the *Child Protection Law*. Graphic or sensational details expose children to secondary victimization and compromise their rights to dignity and privacy. Although the *Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Regulation No. 7/2019* primarily addresses the protection of children from radicalization and terrorism, it underscores the importance of preventive communication and public information. Within this broader framework, the press can be positioned as a strategic actor in preventing harmful narratives, including sensational or vulgar portrayals of children in the news.

The problem of sensational narratives is not limited to Indonesia. Tenor and Himma-Kadakas (2024a), in *Voiceless Youth* highlights that media exposure often renders children voiceless, reinforcing power asymmetries and silencing their perspectives. In contexts where trauma is involved, sensational detail exacerbates this voicelessness by turning children into objects of spectacle rather than subjects of rights. Similarly, McCallum, Waller, and Myers (2023) in their study on Australian local journalism argue that ethical *bearing witness* to child abuse cases requires survivor centered narratives rather than graphic sensationalism. Their findings illustrate that local media can serve the public interest without resorting to voyeuristic descriptions. Furthermore, Hanáčková (2021) in *The Mathematics of Crime* demonstrates how institutional and structural pressures such as soft censorship and editorial competition can incentivize sensational framing, highlighting that this is not merely an issue of journalistic negligence but also of systemic media governance.

In summary, the results demonstrate that Sindonews tends to practice descriptive sensationalism, indulging in explicit detail, while Poskota leans toward sensational headlines. Both practices, however, violate PPRA and UNICEF guidelines, undermine child rights, and weaken journalism's social responsibility function. More broadly, as international scholarship shows, the use of sensational narratives constitutes a form of *symbolic violence* that strips children of dignity and voice, positioning them as either victims of spectacle or threats to social order.

Visual Representation and the Use of Stigmatizing Imagery

The visual dimension is another critical indicator of whether media outlets respect child friendly reporting standards. According to the *Child Friendly Reporting Guidelines* PPRA and *Child Friendly Reporting Guidelines* UNICEF, visual materials must prioritize anonymity, dignity, and safety. Images of children whether as victims, perpetrators, or witnesses should not expose their identities directly or indirectly, including through contextual identifiers such as schools, neighborhoods, or homes.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for compliance in the visual dimension (10 indicators). The overall mean score is 2.05 (SD = 0.42), which indicates moderate compliance. While indicators related to partial anonymization (pixelation or initials in captions) score relatively high (M = 2.68), other aspects such as avoiding exposure of contextual details (M = 1.52) and preventing circulation of viral visuals (M = 1.65) remain low. This reveals that although some efforts are made to blur or crop images, these measures are often inadequate.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of compliance in the visual and audio dimension (10 indicators). *Source: Author's analysis based on coding results (SPSS output, 2025).*

No	Indicator	Mean	Std. Dev
1	Visuals avoid exposing child's full identity	2.45	0.812
2	Faces of children are blurred or pixelated	2.62	0.691

No	Indicator	Mean	Std. Dev
3	No identifiable school uniforms or attributes shown	2.51	0.743
4	Visuals avoid stigmatizing portrayals	2.38	0.704
5	Photos respect dignity of the child	2.70	0.568
6	Avoidance of shocking or sensational visuals	2.19	0.812
7	No repeated use of child victim images	2.34	0.615
8	Avoidance of violent/traumatic depictions	2.41	0.667
9	Visuals consistent with child protection rules	2.36	0.786
10	Overall compliance in safe visual representation	2.22	0.795

Table 2 demonstrates that the overall compliance of Sindonews and Poskota in the visual dimension is moderate. The highest levels of compliance are found in indicators related to basic anonymization, such as non-disclosure of children's names in captions (M = 2.68) and partial anonymization of faces (M = 2.41). However, compliance drops significantly when more contextual protections are required. Indicators such as avoiding exposure of contextual identifiers (M = 1.52), preventing circulation of viral visuals (M = 1.65), and not publishing photos of children's homes or crime scenes (M = 1.71) scored the lowest. This indicates that anonymity is often superficial: while names and faces are blurred, children can still be identified through their surroundings or viral circulation.

To complement the quantitative findings in Table 2, Figure 4 provides selected examples of how Sindonews and Poskota visually represented children in their coverage during 2024. These images illustrate the gap between formal anonymization and actual protection of children's rights.



(a)



(b)



Figure 4. Examples of visual exposure of children in Sindonews (b & c) and Poskota (a & d) (2024) *Source: Author's Documentation, 2025*

Notes :

- Poskota - "Bucin" headline: Child of a celebrity shown with partial pixelation, but identity still easily recognizable.
- Sindonews – sexual abuse case: Use of silhouette, but combined with narrative detail that risks re-identification.
- Sindonews - crime reporting: Publication of a child's house and TKP (crime scene) photograph, exposing contextual identifiers.
- Poskota - viral Instagram fight: Screenshot of a livestream showing minors' faces with inadequate blurring, circulated for clickbait.

As shown in Figure 4, the majority of visual practices applied by both outlets remain superficial in their compliance. While Poskota employs pixelation in celebrity news, the blurred areas are insufficient to obscure recognition. Sindonews frequently relies on silhouettes or shadow illustrations in cases of sexual violence, but these are often paired with detailed narratives that compromise anonymity. Both outlets have also published photos of children's houses or viral screenshots of fights, which effectively reveal identities through contextual markers.

This pattern resonates with (Khan et al., 2020), who argue under the Social Responsibility Theory of the Press that media must minimize harm to vulnerable groups, including children. The use of sensational visuals undermines this responsibility. Tshuma and Ndlovu (2022) also highlight how photographs can "immortalize trauma," suggesting that exposing children visually even with partial anonymization reinforces vulnerability and strips them of dignity. Similarly, Horton (2021) emphasizes that legal instruments such as injunctions are increasingly important to protect privacy, a principle that should extend to child reporting.

The findings of this study contribute to the refinement of Social Responsibility Theory in the context of Indonesian online journalism, particularly in relation to child related reporting. The moderate level of compliance identified across both national and local media suggests that ethical norms embodied in the Child Friendly Journalism Guidelines (PPRA) and UNICEF standards are institutionally recognized, yet not fully internalized in

journalistic practice. This pattern indicates that social responsibility functions primarily at a normative and procedural level, aimed at avoiding explicit violations rather than as a deeply embedded ethical commitment guiding narrative and visual choices. As such, the findings strengthen Social Responsibility Theory by confirming its relevance, while simultaneously revealing its limitations in explaining why formal ethical frameworks do not automatically translate into comprehensive ethical practice.

In relation to Framing Theory, the study extends existing applications by demonstrating that framing choices in child related news reporting are not merely individual or stylistic decisions, but are shaped by institutional and organizational contexts. The analysis of compliance and violation patterns shows that stigmatizing language and visual representation persist in distinct forms across media types, reflecting different editorial logics and newsroom cultures. While Framing Theory effectively explains how language and visuals construct meaning and influence public perception, the findings suggest that framing practices are constrained by routinized production processes, audience orientation, and market driven imperatives. This underscores the need to situate framing analysis within broader institutional structures rather than treating it solely as a micro-level cognitive or discursive process.

Taken together, the findings suggest that Social Responsibility Theory and Framing Theory are necessary but insufficient when applied independently to explain ethical shortcomings in child-related journalism. The persistence of partial compliance across media types indicates that ethical guidelines, as instruments of social responsibility, require stronger institutional enforcement, editorial accountability, and cultural internalization within news organizations. Theoretically, this study supports a more integrative approach that links normative responsibility, framing practices, and institutional conditions in understanding media compliance with child-friendly journalism standards. Such an approach offers a more context sensitive framework for analyzing ethical journalism in Indonesia and other media systems facing similar structural and commercial pressures.

A rights based perspective strengthens this critique. Studies by Kaziaj (2016) and Ku, Karatekin, Öztürk, and Elvan (2016) reveal that both Albanian television and Turkish print media often represent children through an adult gaze and predominantly negative frames, reducing them to victims or delinquents rather than rights holders with dignity and agency. These comparative insights highlight that the Indonesian case is not isolated but part of a broader international struggle to ensure child friendly reporting.

Normative scholarship further supports these concerns. The Spotlight report on virtuous journalism Feng (2022) stresses that visual representation must be grounded in ethical judgment and the pursuit of public good, rather than driven by sensationalism. Historical analysis in editor and publisher also reminds us that journalism has long grappled with balancing commercial interests with social responsibility. When applied to child reporting, these lessons suggest that journalism must move beyond superficial anonymization toward practices that genuinely protect children's dignity.

Taken together, the quantitative results, illustrative cases, and theoretical perspectives reveal that both Sindonews and Poskota remain only moderately compliant in the visual dimension. Although partial anonymization is applied, it often fails to prevent recognition, and sensational visual framing continues to undermine children's dignity. This not only violates PPRA and UNICEF standards but also exemplifies a broader crisis of ethical journalism in Indonesia, where market pressures and adult centered narratives override child protection principles.

The findings of this study suggest that challenges in achieving full compliance with

child-friendly journalism standards stem not only from regulatory limitations but also from the incomplete internalization of ethical values within everyday journalistic practice. This indicates that strengthening journalists' capacity through training that emphasizes trauma sensitivity and ethical principles in language use and visual representation is a critical need. When such training is continuous and embedded in newsroom routines, it may facilitate a shift from nominal or procedural compliance toward more substantive ethical commitment. In addition, these findings underscore the importance of more institutionalized monitoring mechanisms to ensure consistent implementation of the Child Friendly Journalism Guidelines, both through strengthened external oversight and through internal editorial systems that support ethical accountability in child-related news reporting.

Conclusion

This study found that both Sindonews.com and Poskota.co.id demonstrated only moderate compliance with the *Pedoman Pemberitaan Ramah Anak (PPRA)* and UNICEF's child-friendly reporting guidelines. Although both outlets generally maintained children's anonymity, ethical lapses persisted in the use of stigmatizing language and visual representation. The narratives often framed children as deviant or problematic subjects rather than as individuals entitled to protection and empathy. These findings confirm that anonymity alone does not ensure ethical child reporting; genuine child-sensitive journalism requires consistent use of empathetic language, responsible framing, and visual discretion aligned with the principles of child protection.

The results highlight the urgency of establishing an integrated editorial standard that embeds social responsibility and trauma informed ethics within newsroom culture. Media institutions should strengthen monitoring mechanisms and collaborate with the Press Council and child protection agencies to ensure compliance. Theoretically, this study extends the Social Responsibility Theory by illustrating how structural pressures such as digital competition and audience demand can weaken ethical awareness in child reporting. Ultimately, fostering child friendly journalism requires not only technical compliance but a moral commitment to dignity, empathy, and the best interest of the child.

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