

Language Use and Media Framing in the Pertamina Corruption Case in National and International Media

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article history

Received October 28, 2025

Revised December 18, 2025

Accepted April 27, 2026

Keywords

Corruption;
Media Framing;
Mass Media;
Language use

The mass media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of corruption through language choices and framing strategies. This study examines how The Jakarta Post and Reuters reported the Pertamina corruption case using linguistic and framing analysis. A qualitative Thematic Analysis supported by ATLAS.ti was applied to identify dominant themes, guided by Media Framing theories. The dataset comprised online news articles published within six months of the report, February-July 2025, each exceeding 200 words and focusing explicitly on the case. The findings reveal that The Jakarta Post employed moral and social framing centered on public accountability, while Reuters adopted legal and institutional framing emphasizing procedural neutrality and institutional credibility. These contrasts highlight differing orientations and journalistic functions: The Jakarta Post aligns with advocacy-driven national media, whereas Reuters represents objectivity-centered international journalism.

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1. Introduction

The alleged corruption case at PT Pertamina has attracted widespread attention, both nationally and internationally. As a state-owned energy company, Pertamina's involvement in the corruption scandal has not only impacted national economic stability but also impacted Indonesia's image globally (Renggani et al., 2025). Coverage of this case has been discussed on various media platforms (Dheagatha et al., 2025), with the media playing a key role in shaping public opinion through their language and reporting strategies. Differences in perspectives in national and international media coverage of this case have the potential to create diverse perceptions among the public.

In the context of reporting, national and international media outlets have different approaches to reporting corruption cases. These differences can be influenced by political, economic, and journalistic interests (Hovden & Kristensen, 2021). The Jakarta Post, a national English-language media outlet, and Reuters, an international media outlet, have extensive coverage of the Pertamina corruption case in 2025.

Media narratives have an essential role in the social construction of corruption, where the language and tone used in reporting can shape how readers perceive morality (Sokowati & Hassan, 2025), accountability (Prayudi & Susilo, 2025), and trust in companies or institutions (Fawzi et al., 2021). Several studies on corruption discourse in many countries (Kamalu et al., 2023; Pertiwi & Wijaya Mulya, 2023; Yang & Van Gorp, 2023; Biyogo & Ong'ong'a, 2024) highlight that media framing can legitimize or challenge dominant power structures depending on how issues are contextualized. The language choices made by journalists—such as metaphors (Kamalu et al., 2023) and narrative positioning (Norton & Cooley, 2025)—often reveal underlying ideological stances. In cases involving state-owned enterprises like Pertamina, these linguistic elements can amplify nationalistic sentiments or expose systemic governance failures.

Moreover, the digital transformation of news production has intensified the dynamics of framing. Online media, with their emphasis on speed, visibility, and audience engagement, often rely on headlines, keywords, and thematic clustering to attract attention (Makhortykh et al., 2021; Jin & Zhu, 2024; Lamot & Paulussen, 2024). These mechanisms not only determine what aspects of corruption stories are amplified but also influence how audiences interpret credibility and urgency (Berta et al., 2024; Kamalu et al., 2023). Consequently, understanding how *The Jakarta Post* and *Reuters* frame the Pertamina case is crucial to exploring how digital journalism mediates the public's moral and political understanding of corruption.

Such differences in narrative and framing strategies can lead to varying public responses at national and international levels. The contrast between domestically oriented and globally oriented reporting reflects the complexity of modern media ecosystems (Kuryshева et al., 2021; Marschlich & Ingenhoff, 2022), where issues of corruption are not merely reported but also negotiated through language, ideology, and institutional context. Exploring these distinctions helps reveal how media discourse contributes to constructing national identity, reinforcing accountability, and shaping public discourse about integrity in governance.

Previous studies have explored media framing and discourse on corruption in various contexts (e.g., Kamalu et al., 2023; Pertiwi & Wijaya Mulya, 2023; Yang & Van Gorp, 2023; Biyogo & Ong'ong'a, 2024), yet most have focused on single national settings or analyzed domestic media without comparing how international coverage may differ in framing national corruption cases. Research comparing language and framing between national and international outlets remains limited, especially in cases involving state-owned enterprises in emerging economies like Indonesia.

From a theoretical perspective, this study is grounded in media framing and discourse-based approaches, which view news reporting not as a neutral reflection of reality but as a process of selection, emphasis, and interpretation. Media framing theory highlights how certain aspects of an issue are made more salient through language, narrative structure, and the prioritization of specific actors or interpretations. In corruption reporting, these framing and linguistic choices play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of accountability, institutional credibility, and moral responsibility.

This study aims to examine how national and international media construct and frame the Pertamina corruption case through language use and narrative strategies. Specifically, it seeks to (1) identify the dominant linguistic strategies employed by *The Jakarta Post* and *Reuters* in reporting the case, including agency, modality, evaluative stance, and lexical choice; (2) analyze how these linguistic strategies contribute to different media framing patterns adopted by the two outlets; and (3) explore how adopted narrative strategies reflect broader national and global concerns about corruption, accountability, and institutional credibility. By integrating thematic analysis with media framing and discourse-based approaches, this study contributes to understanding how mass media shape public interpretations of corruption in the context of state-owned enterprises in emerging economies.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach using thematic analysis to identify language patterns in reporting on the Pertamina corruption case. Thematic analysis is assisted by ATLAS.ti software to improve efficiency in data management and coding. Following the theme identification stage, this study employs three primary analyses focusing on: linguistic strategies, media framing and narrative strategies, to understand how national and international media framed the case and its impact on public.

The data for this study were obtained from news articles published by The Jakarta Post, representing national media, and Reuters, representing international media. These two media outlets were selected based on their credibility and broad readership. The Jakarta Post and Reuters were selected purposively to represent two distinct media orientations and audience perspectives in reporting corruption cases. The Jakarta Post, as Indonesia's leading English-language national newspaper, primarily addresses domestic and policy-oriented audiences and often adopts an interpretative and advocacy-driven role in discussing issues of public accountability and governance. In contrast, Reuters represents an international news agency with a global readership, emphasizing institutional credibility, procedural reporting, and economic implications for international stakeholders. This contrast allows for a comparative examination of how national and international media employ different language choices and framing strategies when reporting on the same corruption case. The data corpus consists of news articles published within a total of six months of the news coverage of the Pertamina corruption case, from February to July 2025.

Data collection was conducted using a documentation method. The news articles collected must originate from the official online portals of each media outlet and explicitly discuss the Pertamina corruption case from various perspectives, including legal, economic, and socio-political aspects. Articles were to be at least 200 words long to provide in-depth information and clearer framing. Articles containing only summaries or content duplicated from other sources were excluded from the analysis. The collected articles were classified based on the source media, publication date, and main theme. The data was then compiled into a research database for further analysis. From this, a total of 21 articles from The Jakarta Post and 5 articles from Reuters were collected, which each of them is coded using TJP-01, TJP-02, and so on; and REU-01, REU-02, and so on, indicating different articles from each media.

The disparity in the number of articles between The Jakarta Post (21 articles) and Reuters (5 articles) reflects differences in editorial orientation and reporting intensity rather than sampling bias. As a national English-language media outlet, The Jakarta Post provided more frequent and interpretative coverage of the Pertamina corruption case, including opinion-driven and accountability-focused reporting. In contrast, Reuters, as an international news agency, published fewer but more event-driven articles that emphasized major legal developments and institutional statements. In qualitative framing and discourse studies, such variation is methodologically acceptable, as the analytical focus lies on identifying patterns of language use and framing strategies rather than achieving numerical balance or representativeness.

The mass media plays a crucial role in shaping public perception of an issue through the language patterns and framing strategies they employ. In the context of reporting on the Pertamina corruption case, analyzing how national and international media framed the issue can provide in-depth insights into how public opinion is formed. To understand this phenomenon, this study draws on several theoretical approaches, including Thematic Analysis, Linguistic Strategies, Media Framing, and Narrative Strategies.

This study employs a combination of Thematic Analysis, Linguistic Strategies, Narrative Framing, and Media Framing to examine how corruption is represented in media discourse. Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) serves as the initial step to identify and interpret recurring patterns in the news texts, focusing on dominant themes and language use surrounding the Pertamina corruption case. Previous research (Jha & Kumar, 2023) has shown that thematic and linguistic structures in media reports significantly influence how audiences perceive institutional credibility and

corruption narratives. To complement this, the study applies Linguistic Strategies (Jha & Kumar, 2023) to analyze how lexical choices, tone, and modality reveal ideological positioning within journalistic discourse.

Following this, Media Framing (Dheagatha et al., 2025) provides a lens to assess how both outlets emphasize particular aspects of the Pertamina case through their framing strategies. The framing analysis includes four dimensions: framing type, tone and language style, dominant actor featured in the coverage, and language strategies that influence reader interpretation. To complement this, Narrative Strategies (Norton & Cooley, 2025) is also examined to explore how The Jakarta Post and Reuters construct coherent storylines that shape audience understanding. This stage examines key narrative elements, including the main focus of the story, tone, agent or key actor emphasized, implicit aim of the narrative, and geographical coverage that positions the event within national or international contexts. These dimensions reveal how each outlet constructs meaning, prioritizes moral evaluation, and frames corruption within broader socio-political narratives.

Data analysis was conducted through several stages. The first stage was Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which aimed to identify the main themes emerging in the news coverage by following the stages of data familiarization, coding, theme discovery, review, and interpretation. ATLAS.ti was used to assist in the coding and organizing process to make the analysis more systematic and structured. Data analysis followed a systematic thematic analysis procedure assisted by ATLAS.ti. First, all articles were imported and read repeatedly for familiarization. Initial open coding was conducted to identify recurring linguistic features and framing elements. These codes were then grouped into broader categories corresponding to linguistic strategies (agency, modality, evaluative stance, and lexical choice), media framing types, and narrative strategies. Then, thematic patterns were compared across the two media outlets to identify similarities and differences in how the corruption case was constructed. After the main themes were established, the analysis continued with Linguistic Strategies to examine the language use of each media. Media Framing analysis was then used to examine how The Jakarta Post and Reuters framed the issue. Finally, analysis on Narrative Strategies was used to understand how the media constructed narratives about the case, including story structure and characterization in the news.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research results, data triangulation (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021) was conducted by comparing analysis results across methods and reviewing news reports from various secondary sources. Furthermore, intercoder checks were conducted to improve consistency in the data coding process. With this approach, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of how national and international media framed the Pertamina corruption case and its implications for the public.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. News Themes

A thematic analysis of 21 articles from The Jakarta Post (TJP) and 5 articles from Reuters (REU) on the Pertamina corruption case shows that both media outlets highlight the same issues—corruption practices, legal processes, and the impact on state-owned enterprise governance—but from different perspectives. In general, The Jakarta Post emphasizes the social, moral, and institutional impacts at the domestic level, while Reuters focuses more on legal procedures and macroeconomic aspects related to international investor confidence. Six main themes emerged from both media outlets: Corruption and Accountability, Corporate Governance and Transparency, Law Enforcement and Legal Process, Political and Institutional Response, Public Impact and Consumer Sentiment, and Corporate Operations and International Trade, which are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Six main themes emerged on TJP and REU

Themes	TJP (21)	REU (5)
Corruption and Accountability	all articles	all articles
Corporate Governance and Transparency	14 articles	3 articles

Law Enforcement and Legal Process	11 articles	5 articles
Political and Institutional Response	10 articles	1 article
Public Impact and Consumer Sentiment	8 articles	1 article
Corporate Operations and International Trade	6 articles	4 articles

Corruption and Accountability

Corruption and accountability are key themes in both media outlets. Both agree that the Pertamina case represents a form of systemic corruption that is detrimental to the state. Nearly all articles in TJP and Reuters touch on this theme. Reuters tends to be more direct and factual. In REU-04, for example, Reuters focuses more on the legal facts and the number of losses.

“Indonesia's Attorney General's Office has arrested three executives at units of state-owned energy firm Pertamina on charges of alleged corruption related to oil imports that cost the state \$12 billion, a senior official said.” (REU-04)

Meanwhile, The Jakarta Post focuses more on moral accountability and public responsibility. In TJP-02, for example:

“The move to prepare the lawsuit was taken after the National Consumer Protection Agency (BPKN) stated on Wednesday that consumers could file a class action lawsuit against Pertamina with sufficient evidence of gasoline adulteration that led to lower-octane fuel being sold at a higher price” (TJP-02)

These two quotes demonstrate contrasting framing: Reuters focuses on legal accountability, while TJP focuses on moral accountability.

Corporate Governance and Transparency

The theme of Corporate Governance and Transparency emerged strongly in both media outlets, but with different functions. The Jakarta Post wrote that the transparency pledge was supposed to be part of Pertamina's post-scandal reforms:

“We will have to import fuel to meet national demand, but in light of recent events, we will further improve transparency and good corporate governance. We will keep processes that have been running well [while repairing] the gaps [that could allow corruption],” Simon added.” (TJP-07)

In contrast, Reuters wrote in a more descriptive tone, without any moral judgment:

“The company would work with the energy ministry to improve transparency and continue to import crude oil and refined products to ensure energy security.” (REU-01)

The sentence in TJP-07 uses the modal “will further improve ...,” which functions as a persuasive strategy, while REU-01 uses the passive voice “would work with...” to maintain objectivity.

Law Enforcement and Legal Process

Reuters' Law Enforcement and Legal Process themes also appear frequently in both media outlets. Regarding this theme, Reuters' coverage is more investigative, tending to give greater space to legal institutions, making the Attorney General's Office the dominant actor.

"The Indonesian Attorney General's Office said it has questioned hundreds of witnesses in the probe." (REU-02)

On the other hand, TJP links this theme to social/political impacts, for example by linking legal proceedings to public trust.

"In the next few days or weeks, heads must roll in Pertamina or even the cabinet, but those will not be enough to restore public trust." (TJP-06)

This difference demonstrates two framing approaches: Reuters presents an authority-centered narrative, while TJP constructs a trust-centered narrative.

Political and Institutional Response

The theme of Political and Institutional Response is much more prominent in The Jakarta Post, which frequently features figures like Erick Thohir, Ahok, and other state-owned enterprise officials, framing the case as a reflection of state-owned enterprise governance.

“State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) Minister Erick Thohir vowed on Saturday to institute reforms as a preventive measure for similar fraudulent practices, including possibly merging PT Pertamina Patra Niaga and PT Kilang Pertamina Internasional (KPI), two subsidiaries allegedly implicated in the ongoing graft case.” (TJP-05)

Here, responsibility is articulated as a politically charged institutional reform effort. In contrast, Reuters rarely includes political officials in its narrative, focusing instead on legal institutions.

Public Impact and Consumer Sentiment

This frequently discussed theme in TJP highlights consumer perspectives, lawsuits, and public perceptions arising from related issues. The Jakarta Post consistently highlights this theme. The following quotes emphasize the direct impact on society:

“The scandal has caused public trust in Pertamina to plummet, as consumers fear they have been tricked into paying a higher price for premium high-octane fuel while actually receiving fuel of a lower cost and quality.” (TJP-07)

In these two quotes from TJP-07, the public is not only a victim but also an agent of accountability pressing for change.

Corporate Operations and International Trade

Reuters often frames the Pertamina case in the context of the global supply chain. This media outlet discusses international networks and transactions in more detail.

“Indonesia said in May investigators have approached a number of trading firms in Singapore for investigation purposes.” (REU-03)

Meanwhile, The Jakarta Post describes it in the national economic context:

“The government and the House can no longer afford to delay. The deliberation and enactment of this bill are an extremely urgent national priority.” (TJP-18)

From the way each media outlet reports on the theme of Corporate Operations and International Trade, Reuters presents the issue more as part of a global economic narrative, while TJP presents it as a domestic economic reform issue.

The thematic analysis implemented in this study reveals differences between two media outlets. Reuters’ emphasis on legal processes and institutional actors can be understood in relation to its role as a global news agency serving international political and economic audiences. International journalism norms prioritize factual accuracy, procedural neutrality, and source attribution, particularly in reporting corruption cases that may influence investor confidence and diplomatic perceptions. By foregrounding legal institutions, official statements, and quantified state losses, Reuters aligns with conventions of institutional journalism that seek to minimize evaluative judgment and maintain credibility across diverse geopolitical contexts. This framing reflects a professional norm in international news reporting, where neutrality and verifiability are essential to sustaining trust among global readers.

In contrast, The Jakarta Post’s emphasis on social and moral accountability reflects the normative role of national media in democratic contexts, particularly in reporting cases involving state-owned enterprises. As a nationally oriented outlet addressing Indonesian policymakers and citizens, The Jakarta Post positions itself as a watchdog that evaluates governance performance and articulates

public concern. The use of moral language, active human agency, and evaluative modality signals an advocacy-oriented journalistic practice that seeks to stimulate public debate, reinforce accountability, and pressure institutions toward reform. This approach aligns with national media traditions that frame corruption not only as a legal violation but as a moral failure with direct consequences for public trust and social justice.

3.2. Linguistic Strategies

The Jakarta Post and Reuters exhibited different linguistic strategies in reporting on the Pertamina corruption case. The Jakarta Post positioned itself as a public advocacy media outlet, while Reuters maintained an institutional journalism style that emphasized the credibility of official sources. Table 2 shows at least four linguistic strategies can be observed in both media: Agency, Modality, Evaluative stance, and Lexical choice.

Table 2. Linguistic strategies used by TJP and REU

Aspect	The Jakarta Post	Reuters
Agency	Human agents (e.g., ministers, consumers, Pertamina management) often appear as active subjects.	Passive constructions dominate (e.g., <i>was arrested, was named</i>), emphasizing institutions.
Modality	Frequent use of <i>should, must, need to</i> — indicating moral evaluation and policy recommendation.	More frequent use of <i>would, said, has been</i> — suggesting distance and objectivity.
Evaluative stance	Explicit, moral, and critical.	Neutral, focused on facts and legal processes.
Lexical choices	Uses value-laden terms such as <i>public trust, responsibility, damage, reform</i> .	Uses legal lexicons such as <i>charges, suspects, investigation, losses</i> .

Agency

In The Jakarta Post's reporting, human agents such as Pertamina officials, consumers, and management are often presented as active subjects. TJP-01 states:

"The National Consumer Protection Agency (BPKN) said in a statement on Wednesday that consumers who suffered losses from the alleged corrupt practices by the state-owned oil and gas company PT Pertamina, especially in the blending of low-quality fuels, could seek damages in court." (TJP-01)

This sentence from TJP-01 positions consumers as agents empowered to take legal action. In contrast, Reuters tends to use a passive structure that emphasizes institutions and legal processes. REU-04 states:

"Indonesia's Attorney General's Office has arrested three executives at units of state-owned energy firm Pertamina on charges of alleged corruption related to oil imports that cost the state \$12 billion, a senior official said." (REU-04)

The subject of the sentence from REU-04 is not the perpetrator, but the entity subject to the action, demonstrating a more impersonal writing style and emphasizing legal authority.

Modality

The Jakarta Post frequently uses modals such as *should, must, and need to* to express moral evaluations and policy recommendations.

"Finally, the law should mandate greater transparency in SOE decision-making." (TJP-11).

The word 'should' here implies a moral obligation and public advocacy for fairness for consumers. In contrast, Reuters frequently uses forms such as *would, said, and has been*, which convey distance and objectivity.

“These companies will be questioned to strengthen the evidence-gathering for the ongoing investigation,” Siregar said, declining to give further details.” (REU-02).

The use of ‘will be questioned’ in REU-02 emphasizes institutional processes, not normative attitudes.

Evaluative Stance

Evaluative stance refers to the way journalists linguistically express judgment or value toward events or actors. In this study, it shapes how readers perceive the corruption case either as a moral and social problem (The Jakarta Post) or as a procedural legal matter (Reuters). This study reveals that The Jakarta Post's evaluative stance appears more moral and critical:

“Indeed, Pertamina has a public service obligation to provide energy to the people, but the latest scandal shows that it lacks transparency and accountability and the complex regulations have only created opportunities for corruption and abuse of power.” (TJP-08)

This phrase indicates an explicit assessment of Pertamina's governance. In contrast, Reuters maintains a neutral tone by focusing on the facts and developments in the investigation. In REU-03, for example:

“The suspects were allegedly involved in improper imports of crude oil and fuel, improper shipping leases and fuel terminal lease procurements, Abdul told reporters.” (REU-03)

Sentence from REU-03 shows no explicit moral judgment, simply a presentation of the ongoing legal facts.

Lexical Choices

The Jakarta Post's lexical choices reflect public and moral values such as public trust, responsibility, reform, and accountability.

"Pertamina president director Simon Aloysius Mantiri has made a first public apology for the state-owned oil and gas giant's graft-ridden import scandal, as he promised to clean up the company and allow third-party product quality testing in a bid to restore public trust." (TJP-07)

Meanwhile, Reuters uses legal and technical vocabulary such as charges, suspects, investigation, and losses to emphasize the legal aspects and journalistic professionalism.

"The Attorney General's Office last week on charges of alleged corruption related to oil imports between 2018 and 2023 that caused \$12 billion in state losses." (REU-01)

This difference in linguistic strategy indicates that The Jakarta Post positions itself as a media outlet with a public advocacy orientation and criticism of state-owned enterprise governance, highlighting the moral and social dimensions of the Pertamina case. In contrast, Reuters displays a style of institutional journalism that emphasizes the credibility of official sources and legal objectivity. This difference reflects selection and salience in message framing (Dheagatha et al., 2025).

3.3. Media Framing

The Jakarta Post and Reuters exhibited different media framing strategies for reporting on the Pertamina corruption case. The Jakarta Post employed a moral and social framing, emphasizing public responsibility and the need for institutional change, while Reuters tended toward a legal and factual framing, emphasizing the credibility of official sources and the procedural aspects of the case. Table 3 showcases how the two media outlets framed news stories related to the Pertamina corruption case, based on framing type, tone and style, dominant actors, and language strategy.

Table 3. Media framing done by TJP and REU

Aspect	The Jakarta Post	Reuters
Type of Framing	Social and moral: emphasizes narratives of public responsibility, consumer loss, and institutional accountability.	Legal-business and factual: focuses on legal processes, investigation, and state financial losses.

Tone and Language Style	Evaluative and reflective; frequent use of expressions such as <i>must ensure, should be responsible, public trust</i> .	Neutral and institutional; dominated by passive constructions such as <i>was arrested, has been named as suspect</i> .
Dominant Actors	State-Owned Enterprises Minister (Erick Thohir), Pertamina officials (Nicke Widyawati, Ahok), consumer organizations (YLKI, LBH).	Legal and corporate entities: Attorney General's Office, Pertamina spokesperson, and trading firms (Trafigura, Mahameru, Orbit).
Language Strategies	Use of modal verbs (<i>should, must, need to</i>) to express moral obligation; frequent evaluative stance toward policy.	Frequent official quotations and passive constructions; avoids moral judgment, emphasizing institutional credibility.

These framing differences found in this study reflect broader patterns discussed in media studies regarding the role of national and international media in shaping public understanding of corruption. The Jakarta Post's moral and social framing aligns with the normative function of national media in democratic contexts, where journalism often serves as a platform for public accountability, ethical evaluation, and policy advocacy. By foregrounding public responsibility, consumer loss, and institutional reform, such framing encourages readers to interpret corruption as a systemic social problem requiring political and moral response. In contrast, Reuters' legal and factual framing corresponds to international journalistic norms that prioritize neutrality, institutional credibility, and procedural accuracy for a global audience. This framing positions corruption primarily as a legal and economic issue, emphasizing governance stability and investor-relevant information rather than moral judgment. Consequently, while The Jakarta Post's framing may contribute to domestic political discourse and public pressure for reform, Reuters' framing reflects global concerns over legal certainty and economic impact, illustrating how media framing operates differently across national and international contexts.

Framing Types

The Jakarta Post frames the Pertamina corruption case from a social and moral perspective, emphasizing public responsibility, consumer losses, and the need for accountability of state institutions.

“Concerns arose over the consumer losses after the Attorney General's Office (AGO) announced on Monday the arrest of seven suspects in a graft case involving fuel imports at Pertamina subsidiaries that allegedly cost the country nearly US\$12 billion.” (TJP-02)

The quote from TJP-02 demonstrates a moral framing, where corruption is perceived not only as a violation of the law but also as a public affliction. Furthermore, The Jakarta Post frequently presents a “responsibility to the people” narrative, as seen in the following:

“Indeed, Pertamina has a public service obligation to provide energy to the people, but the latest scandal shows that it lacks transparency and accountability and the complex regulations have only created opportunities for corruption and abuse of power.” (TJP-08)

Both examples demonstrate a strong advocacy and moralistic orientation. In contrast, Reuters uses a legal-business and factual framing, highlighting the legal process, authorized institutions, and the amount of state losses.

“Three executives at units of state-owned energy firm Pertamina were arrested on charges of alleged corruption related to oil imports that cost the state \$12 billion.” (REU-04)

The REU-04 excerpt focuses on legal facts and economic data, without incorporating moral judgments. Thus, Reuters frames the case within the framework of journalistic professionalism and the credibility of legal institutions.

Tone and Style

The Jakarta Post's reporting tends to be evaluative and reflective, using modals such as "must," "should," and moral terms like "public trust".

"Sudirman must be aware of why corruption persists in Pertamina despite numerous reforms, he was dismissed by then-president Joko "Jokowi" Widodo in 2016, coincidentally perhaps after discovering mafia practices in the operations of Pertamina Energy Trading Ltd (Petral), which was eventually liquidated." (TJP-08)

The use of "must" in TJP-08 signifies a moral obligation, not simply a factual report. Reuters, meanwhile, maintains a neutral and institutional tone:

"Three other people from private companies were also arrested in the case, the office said." (REU-04)

The quote from REU-04 is informative, without evaluation or moral imperative, demonstrating the character of institutional journalism, which prioritizes accuracy and professional distance.

Dominant Actors

In The Jakarta Post, the dominant actors are public officials and parties directly involved in state-owned enterprise (SOE) policies, such as State-Owned Enterprises Minister Erick Thohir, Pertamina officials (Nicke Widyawati, Ahok), and consumer organizations such as the Indonesian Consumer Protection Agency (YLKI) and the Legal Aid Institute (LBH).

"State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) Minister Erick Thohir vowed on Saturday to institute reforms as a preventive measure for similar fraudulent practices, including possibly merging PT Pertamina Patra Niaga and PT Kilang Pertamina Internasional (KPI), two subsidiaries allegedly implicated in the ongoing graft case." (TJP-05)

The sentence in TJP-05 emphasizes human agency active in moral and institutional actions. In contrast, Reuters presents the main actors as legal institutions and international corporations, such as the Attorney General's Office, Pertamina spokespersons, and trading firms.

"Investigators now want to question some Singapore trading companies about the case." (REU-02)

REU-02 requires the presence of official institutions to reinforce the impression of objectivity and distance from personal narratives.

Language Strategy

The Jakarta Post's language strategy emphasizes the use of modals such as should and must, as well as explicit assessments of institutional policies and morality.

"The resolution of corruption cases must be swift and just to send a message that the era of impunity is over." (TJP-04)

The word "must" in the sentence from TJP-04 functions as a moral imperative, not a neutral description. In contrast, Reuters uses passive voice and official quotations to demonstrate the credibility of its sources, such as "was arrested," "has been named as a suspect," and "was charged."

"The suspects were allegedly involved in improper imports of crude oil and fuel, improper shipping leases and fuel terminal lease procurements, Abdul told reporters." (REU-03)

This passive voice structure emphasizes Reuters' position as an institutional observer focused on legal facts rather than public advocacy.

Framing serves to highlight certain aspects of reality so that the audience understands the issue from the media's perspective (Dheagatha et al., 2025). A comparison of the framing patterns between The Jakarta Post and Reuters reveals fundamental differences in how the two media outlets framed the Pertamina corruption case. The Jakarta Post adopted a social and moral framing, emphasizing public responsibility, consumer losses, and the importance of institutional reform and accountability. The narrative constructed positions the government and society as active agents demanding transparency and improved governance. In contrast, Reuters prioritized a legal and factual framing, focusing on the legal process, the amount of state losses, and official statements from law enforcement

agencies. Its reporting style was neutral, formal, and oriented toward the credibility of institutional sources. Thus, The Jakarta Post tended to represent an advocacy journalism model that seeks to raise public moral awareness, while Reuters maintained an institutional journalism style that prioritizes objectivity and information stability in the context of global news reporting.

3.4. Narrative Strategies

The Jakarta Post and Reuters demonstrated different narrative strategies for reporting on the Pertamina corruption case. The Jakarta Post constructed a moral-reflective narrative focused on society and social accountability, while Reuters constructed a legal-institutional narrative focusing on the legal process and institutional credibility. Table 4 shows how the two media outlets framed news stories related to the Pertamina corruption case, based on the main focus, tone, use of agency, implicit goals, and geographic coverage.

Table 4. Narrative strategies done bu TJP and REU

Aspect	The Jakarta Post	Reuters
Main Focus	Socio-political impact and public trust.	Legal facts and macroeconomic implications.
Tone	More normative and reflective.	Neutral and factual.
Use of Agency	Frequent human actors (ministers, consumers).	Predominantly passive constructions (institutions as agents).
Implicit Goals	Highlights the need for SOE reform and public accountability.	Reports legal and economic developments in a global context.
Geographic Coverage	National (Indonesia-centric).	Regional/international (connections to trading firms in Singapore).

Main Focus

The Jakarta Post highlights the socio-political impact and public trust, while Reuters focuses on the legal facts and macroeconomic dimensions.

“He also promised to clean up the company and allow third-party product testing in a bid to restore public trust.” (TJP-06)

The quote from TJP-06 emphasizes public trust as a key aspect in restoring the institution’s reputation. In contrast, Reuters writes:

“Prosecutors said the activities resulted in 285 trillion rupiah (\$17.58 billion) in losses to the state and the economy.” (REU-03)

This sentence focuses on the factual and legal aspects without mentioning the broader social dimension.

Reporting Tone

The Jakarta Post's reporting tone is normative and reflective, indicating a moral evaluation of the actors involved.

“He added that Pertamina has formed a crisis center to thoroughly re-evaluate its business and operational procedures, including how the company imports fuel, in hopes of stamping out any potential for corruption from within the company.” (TJP-07)

The verb "thoroughly evaluate" suggests reflective action and institutional moral improvement. In contrast, Reuters maintains a neutral and factual tone:

“Three executives at units of state-owned energy firm Pertamina were arrested on charges of alleged corruption.” (REU-04)

This structure emphasizes legal reporting without any element of judgment or moral appeal.

Use of Agency

In The Jakarta Post, human agents such as government officials, consumers, and community groups are at the center of the action.

“Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Bahlil Lahadalia subsequently announced plans to ban crude and gas exports, requiring Pertamina to refine all domestically produced crude oil.” (TJP-21)

The active verb “announced” indicates the authorities’s role as an active and empowered subject. Meanwhile, Reuters frequently uses passive voice structures, placing the institution or event as the focus, not the perpetrator.

“Three other people from private companies were also arrested in the case, the office said.” (REU-04)

The passive voice structure of this excerpt from REU-04 minimizes the presence of human agents and emphasizes the formal legal process.

Implicit Goals

The Jakarta Post implicitly aims to promote state-owned enterprise reform and emphasize the importance of public accountability.

“Various reform measures have been initiated, albeit slowly, within Pertamina since the fall of the New Order.” (TJP-08)

This quote from TJP-11 contains the constant effort by the company. Meanwhile, Reuters aims to provide factual reporting on global legal and economic developments.

“The company would work with the energy ministry to improve transparency and continue to import crude oil and refined products to ensure energy security, he said.” (REU-01)

The context is procedural and oriented toward economic stability, not a moral appeal.

Geographic Coverage

The coverage of these two media outlets also demonstrates differences in audience orientation. The Jakarta Post is national (Indonesia-centric), highlighting issues relevant to the domestic public.

“Public criticism is intensifying over President Prabowo Subianto administration appointing numerous deputy ministers as commissioners in state-owned enterprises (SOEs), a practice critics warn threatens good governance and undermines anti-corruption efforts.” (TJP-13)

In contrast, Reuters has an international orientation:

“The Indonesian Attorney General's Office has approached a number of trading firms in Singapore regarding a corruption investigation involving state energy firm Pertamina, it said on Monday.” (REU-02)

The quoted sentence from REU-02 shows how Reuters places the Pertamina case within a regional and cross-border economic context.

In line with the concept of narrative (Norton & Cooley, 2025) which views narrative as a means of constructing collective meaning, TJP constructs a ‘moral narrative’ that emphasizes social responsibility and the restoration of public trust. In contrast, REU constructs a ‘legal narrative’ that emphasizes the credibility of legal institutions and economic stability. These differences in narrative patterns indicate that both reflect different media roles: national as guardians of public morality, international as institutional and economic observers. The implication of these findings is that national and international media play different roles in framing the issue of corruption: one strengthens moral consciousness, the other strengthens legal legitimacy.

4. Conclusion

Thematic analysis and linguistic strategies show that The Jakarta Post and Reuters both highlight the Pertamina corruption case as an important public issue, but with different focuses and styles. Thematically, The Jakarta Post places the case within a moral and social framework—emphasizing public responsibility, the impact on consumers, and the need for reform of state-owned enterprise governance. Meanwhile, Reuters frames the case in a similar global legal and economic context, highlighting the procedural, institutional, and credibility dimensions of law enforcement agencies. In terms of linguistic strategies, The Jakarta Post uses active voice with human agents such as officials, consumers, or community organizations, as well as models such as should, must, and need to, which indicate moral evaluation and policy recommendations. In contrast, Reuters frequently uses passive voice (was arrested, was named as suspect) and legal vocabulary such as charges, suspects, and investigation, to maintain objectivity and emotional distance from the reported issue. This thematic and linguistic combination demonstrates that The Jakarta Post acts as an advocacy media outlet emphasizing morality and public accountability, while Reuters maintains an institutional journalism style oriented toward credibility and accuracy of legal facts.

Both media, The Jakarta Post and Reuters, construct the Pertamina corruption case as a form of systemic corruption reflecting weak state-owned enterprise governance. However, they propose different emphases. The Jakarta Post promotes a moral and social framing with a citizen-centered narrative, highlighting public responsibility, moral evaluation, and the case's impact on public trust. The language used tends to be reflective and judgmental, often calling for institutional reform and transparency. In contrast, Reuters presents a legal and institutional framing with a law-centered narrative, emphasizing procedures, investigative processes, and the credibility of legal institutions. Its reporting style is more informative and formal, with a clear distance from moral opinion. This difference demonstrates the varying perspectives between national and international media: The Jakarta Post functions as a public advocacy outlet speaking to the directly affected Indonesian public, while Reuters writes for a global audience concerned with the country's economic stability and corporate governance. Thus, The Jakarta Post represents a moral framing, while Reuters presents a procedural and institutional legal framing.

Author Contribution: All authors contributed equally to the main contributor to this paper. All authors read and approved the final paper.

Acknowledgment: The authors would like to thank Sekolah Vokasi UGM, especially Applied English study program for the support of this research.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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