



COUNTER-NARRATIVES WITHIN POWER DISCOURSE IN ELECTORAL PRACTICE: A FOUCAULDIAN ANALYSIS OF THE 2024 BANTEN GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of counter-narratives in the discourse of power during the 2024 Banten gubernatorial election using a Foucauldian critical perspective. For nearly two decades, political power in Banten was dominated by a dynastic network associated with Ratu Atut Chosiyah. However, the 2024 election marked a significant shift as the dynastic candidate was defeated by the Andra Soni–Ahmad Dimiyati Natakusumah pair. This research aims to analyze how power discourse was constructed, how epistemic shifts occurred among the electorate, and how regimes of truth were produced through political communication. Employing a qualitative constructivist-critical approach, the study utilizes discourse analysis of campaign narratives, media content, and socio-political contexts. The findings reveal that the anti-corruption counter-narrative functioned as a strategic discursive formation that reconfigured public knowledge and delegitimized the dominant dynastic narrative. Social media amplification and the absence of explicit anti-corruption positioning from the dynastic camp strengthened this transformation. In Foucauldian terms, power operated as a strategy embedded in knowledge production, enabling voters to exercise agency through new regimes of truth at the polling booth. This study contributes theoretically by demonstrating the effectiveness of counter-narrative communication in disrupting entrenched political dynasties within democratic contexts and offers a model of discursive political communication for electoral transformation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Power is not merely an institutional possession but a relational and discursive formation embedded in social practices. In democratic systems, electoral processes become key arenas where power circulates, is contested, and is reconfigured through knowledge production and communication strategies. From a Foucauldian perspective, power operates through discourse, shaping regimes of truth that influence how societies perceive legitimacy, authority, and political choice. Elections therefore function not only as procedural mechanisms but also as sites of discursive struggle in which dominant narratives and counter-narratives compete to construct political reality.

In the Indonesian local political context, the persistence of political dynasties illustrates how power can be stabilized through networks of kinship, institutional access, and symbolic legitimacy. Banten Province represents one of the most prominent cases, where the political network associated with Ratu Atut Chosiyah maintained electoral dominance for nearly two decades across executive and legislative positions. Despite corruption scandals involving

key figures within the dynasty, its political influence remained resilient, indicating that electoral legitimacy is not solely determined by legal or moral considerations but also by discursive formations that normalize and reproduce power.

However, the 2024 Banten gubernatorial election marked a significant rupture. The defeat of the dynastic candidate by the Andra Soni–Ahmad Dimiyati Natakusumah pair signaled a transformation in the electoral knowledge system and voter subjectivity. Their campaign foregrounded an anti-corruption counter-narrative that challenged the dominant developmental and continuity narrative associated with the dynasty. This shift raises critical questions: how did counter-narratives operate as discursive strategies to delegitimize entrenched power, what epistemic changes occurred among the electorate, and what regimes of truth enabled the reconfiguration of political authority?

Existing studies on political dynasties in Indonesia primarily emphasize institutional factors, patronage networks, and electoral behavior, while paying limited attention to discourse as a productive force of power. Similarly, research on political communication often focuses on campaign effectiveness without situating narrative competition within broader regimes of knowledge and power. This study addresses these gaps by applying a Foucauldian analytical framework to examine the discursive transformation of power in the 2024 Banten election.

Using a qualitative constructivist-critical approach, this article analyzes campaign narratives, media representations, and socio-political contexts to trace the shift from dynastic dominance to counter-narrative mobilization. It argues that power in this electoral context operated as a strategic effect of discourse, where anti-corruption narratives functioned as a new regime of truth that reshaped voter perception and enabled the redistribution of political legitimacy.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of post-structural political communication by demonstrating how counter-narratives can disrupt entrenched dynastic power within democratic systems. Empirically, it provides a model of discursive electoral transformation in local Indonesian politics. Practically, it offers insights into how narrative strategies can reconfigure political legitimacy beyond institutional and patronage-based approaches.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a constructivist–critical paradigm to examine the operation of power discourse in the 2024 Banten gubernatorial election. The research is grounded in a Foucauldian perspective, which conceptualizes power as productive and embedded in discourse, knowledge, and subject formation. Accordingly, the method focuses on identifying discursive formations, regimes of truth, and strategies of counter-narrative that shaped electoral legitimacy.

2.1 Research Design

The study uses Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) to explore how political narratives were constructed, circulated, and contested. Rather than measuring causal relationships, the analysis seeks to trace how language, symbols, and communication practices produced knowledge and reconfigured power relations. This approach enables the identification of discontinuities in dominant political discourse, particularly the shift from dynastic legitimacy to anti-corruption counter-narratives.

2.2 Data Collection

Data were collected from three primary sources:

1. **Campaign materials:** official speeches, slogans, vision–mission documents, and public statements from both the dynastic candidate and the Andra Soni–Ahmad Dimiyati Natakusumah campaign.
2. **Media content:** online news articles, televised debates, and digital campaign coverage that represented and amplified competing narratives.
3. **Social media discourse:** posts, hashtags, and visual political content circulated during the electoral period, which functioned as sites of discursive reproduction and contestation.

These sources were selected because they constitute key arenas where political knowledge is produced and disseminated to the electorate.

2.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the **political narrative** related to three main themes:

- anti-corruption discourse,
- dynastic legitimacy and continuity narratives,
- representations of change and reform.

These narratives were examined as discursive practices that construct subject positions for voters and candidates.

2.4. Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis followed Foucauldian analytical steps:

1. **Discursive mapping:** identifying dominant and counter-discourses in campaign communication.



2. **Statement analysis:** examining recurring linguistic patterns, key concepts, and symbolic references that form regimes of truth.

3. **Power–knowledge relations:** analyzing how narratives produced legitimacy, normalized certain political actors, and delegitimized others.

4. **Discontinuity analysis:** tracing epistemic shifts that enabled the transformation of voter perception and electoral outcomes.

Triangulation was conducted across campaign texts, media representations, and social media discourse to ensure interpretive consistency.

2.5 Validity and Reflexivity

To enhance analytical rigor, the study applied data triangulation, contextual interpretation, and theoretical coherence with Foucauldian concepts. Reflexivity was maintained by acknowledging the researcher’s position in interpreting discourse and focusing on the productive function of language rather than normative judgment.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Result

Counter-Narratives in the Power Discourse of the 2024 Banten Gubernatorial Election

The findings indicate that power relations in the 2024 Banten gubernatorial election were not only produced through formal political structures—such as political parties, electoral management bodies, and regulatory frameworks—but also through discursive practices operating within public spaces, mass media, and digital networks. Dominant discourse was constructed by political actors with access to symbolic, economic, and institutional resources.

This dominant narrative emphasized leadership legitimacy, development continuity, and political stability. It was reproduced through mainstream media framing, outdoor campaign materials, digital campaigns, and volunteer mobilization. These practices demonstrate how power operates through the production of knowledge that shapes public perceptions of candidates and political reality.

At the same time, the study identifies the emergence of counter-narratives that challenged dominant discourse. These counter-narratives were articulated by civil society groups, activists, digital communities, and segments of the electorate who utilized social media as a space of discursive resistance. Their content focused on issues such as political oligarchy, dynastic politics, transparency, and critiques of patronage practices.

Although not always formally organized, counter-narratives displayed consistent patterns:

1. The deconstruction of candidate images constructed by dominant narratives.
2. The production of alternative discourses on participatory democracy.
3. The strategic use of symbolic language, political memes, and hashtags.

These findings suggest that digital space has become a key arena for discursive contestation over power.

Mechanisms of Power/Knowledge in Electoral Practices

The analysis reveals that power relations operated through power/knowledge mechanisms. Political actors produced “truth” through electability surveys, media framing, and claims of policy success. Statistical data and expert opinions functioned as instruments of legitimacy that reinforced particular candidates’ positions.

Conversely, counter-narratives sought to deconstruct these claims by presenting alternative data, grassroots testimonies, and local experiences excluded from official discourse. This demonstrates that knowledge is not neutral but is produced and contested within power relations.

Discursive Resistance and Subject Formation

The study also finds that counter-narrative practices contributed to the formation of new political subjects—critical voters who did not fully accept dominant narratives. Through interaction in digital spaces, voters were not merely objects of political campaigns but also producers of discourse.

This transformation indicates a shift from a top-down model of political communication toward a more dialogical model. However, discursive resistance still faced limitations in terms of reach, message fragmentation, and the dominance of resources held by major political actors.

Analysis

A Foucauldian Interpretation of Power and Discourse

From the perspective of Michel Foucault, power is not merely repressive but productive and dispersed across social networks. The findings show that the 2024 Banten gubernatorial election constituted an arena in which power was produced through discursive practices shaping knowledge, truth, and political subjectivity.

Dominant narratives functioned as a regime of truth that determined what could be said, who could speak, and which discourses were considered legitimate. Through this mechanism, candidates with access to institutional and media resources gained an advantage in constructing political reality.

Counter-narratives operated as forms of resistance within this regime of truth. In Foucauldian terms, resistance is not external to power but inherent within power relations. The presence of counter-narratives therefore demonstrates that power always generates possibilities for resistance.

Digital Space as a Site of Discursive Struggle

Digital platforms functioned as relatively open arenas for discursive contestation compared to conventional media. Social media enabled the production and distribution of alternative discourses without traditional gatekeeping mechanisms.

Nevertheless, the analysis shows that algorithmic structures and resource inequalities continued to shape discourse visibility. Dominant narratives tended to achieve broader reach due to stronger campaign infrastructures and greater access to digital amplification strategies.

Implications for Democratic Practice

The findings indicate that counter-narratives play an important role in expanding public deliberative space and fostering critical political awareness among voters. However, their effectiveness in transforming structural power relations remains limited.

This suggests that electoral democracy is shaped not only by formal procedures but also by the distribution of power in the production of discourse and knowledge.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the 2024 Banten gubernatorial election constituted a complex arena of discursive power in which dominant narratives and counter-narratives interacted dynamically. Power was not only exercised through formal political institutions and electoral procedures but also through the production and circulation of knowledge in media, campaign practices, and digital communication networks. Dominant actors, supported by greater symbolic, economic, and institutional resources, were able to construct a regime of truth that shaped public perceptions of leadership, development, and political legitimacy.

At the same time, the emergence of counter-narratives indicates that electoral discourse is never fully hegemonic. Civil society groups, digital communities, and critical voters utilized social media as a space of resistance to challenge oligarchic tendencies, dynastic politics, and patronage-based legitimacy. These counter-narratives contributed to the formation of more reflexive political subjects who actively participated in the production of discourse rather than remaining passive recipients of campaign messages.

From a Michel Foucaultian perspective, these findings confirm that power is productive, relational, and inseparable from knowledge. The election functioned as a site where regimes of truth were constructed, contested, and partially destabilized. Resistance did not exist outside power but operated within its networks, particularly through digital platforms that enabled alternative discursive practices.

However, the study also finds that structural inequalities in resources, media access, and algorithmic visibility limited the transformative capacity of counter-narratives. While they expanded deliberative space and encouraged critical political engagement, they did not fundamentally alter the distribution of power in electoral politics. This suggests that the quality of local democracy is shaped not only by procedural fairness but also by the balance of discursive power in the public sphere.

Theoretically, this research contributes to Foucauldian studies of elections by demonstrating how power/knowledge operates in subnational democratic contexts and how digital media reconfigures the field of discursive struggle. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening independent media, digital literacy, and participatory political spaces to reduce asymmetries in discourse production.

Future research should incorporate comparative studies across regions, quantitative analysis of digital discourse circulation, and longitudinal approaches to examine how counter-narratives evolve beyond a single electoral cycle.

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