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Naming, Blaming, Erasing: Van Leeuwen's Recontextualization–Legitimation Matrix in Bratang Surabaya Coverage, 20 August 2025

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Abstract

This study examines how nine Indonesian online outlets transformed the 20 August 2025 Taman Flora–Bratang traffic accident in Surabaya into stabilised news narratives. Using Theo van Leeuwen's socio-semiotic framework and a mixed-methods Critical Discourse Analysis, we ask: (1) how actors, actions, time–space, purposes, and legitimations are added or removed; (2) how victims, the car/driver, police, and "road/space" are portrayed (naming, genericisation, activation/passivation, inclusion/exclusion); and (3) which authorisation, moral evaluation, rationalisation, and mythopoesis assign responsibility under breaking-news uncertainty. A parallel, convergent analysis treated sentences (including headlines) as units across nine same-day reports. Quantitatively, we tracked inclusion/exclusion, activation/passivation, gender marking, and legitimation types per sentence; qualitatively, we traced outlet-level patterns via a CDA Matrix, joint displays (actor × legitimation), and a recontextualisation flow. Double-coding (Cohen's κ template) audited heuristic labels, with discrepancies resolved interpretively. Three recurring narrative packages emerged: (i) a police-led "two-motor" template that simplifies causality and backgrounds the car/driver; (ii) a BPBD-led procedural timeline that individualises the driver yet defers legal judgment; and (iii) a defensive naming-then-denial pattern specifying the car (even plate/model) while disassociating it via surface forensic cues. Early texts privilege authorisation (police/BPBD voice) and rationalisation (procedural/technical accounts); moral cues and mythopoetic framings surface subtly in headlines. Social-actor design personalises/feminises the deceased and functionalises authorities, pre-structuring responsibility maps.

Keywords: *Recontextualization, legitimation strategies, social actors, breaking-news journalism, Theo van Leeuwen CDA*

Abstrak

Studi ini menelaah bagaimana sembilan media daring Indonesia mentransformasikan kecelakaan lalu lintas Taman Flora–Bratang di Surabaya (20 Agustus 2025) menjadi narasi berita yang stabil. Berlandaskan kerangka sosiosemiotik Theo van Leeuwen dan Analisis Wacana Kritis (AWK) metode campuran, kami mengajukan tiga pertanyaan: (1) bagaimana aktor, tindakan, ruang-waktu, tujuan, dan legitimasi ditambah atau dihapus; (2) bagaimana korban, mobil/pengemudi, polisi, dan "jalan/ruang" dipotret (penamaan, generisasi, aktivasi vs. pasivasi, inklusi/eksklusi); dan (3) strategi otorisasi, evaluasi moral, rasionalisasi, dan mitopoesis apa yang dipakai untuk menetapkan tanggung jawab dalam ketidakpastian berita kilat. Analisis paralel-konvergen memperlakukan kalimat (termasuk judul) sebagai unit pada sembilan laporan di hari yang sama. Secara kuantitatif, kami melacak inklusi/eksklusi, aktivasi/pasivasi, penandaan gender, dan tipe legitimasi per kalimat; secara kualitatif, kami menelusuri pola tingkat media melalui Matriks AWK, tampilan gabung (aktor × legitimasi), dan diagram alir rekontekstualisasi. Pengodean ganda (template κ Cohen) mengaudit label heuristik, dengan selisih diselesaikan interpretatif. Tiga paket naratif berulang muncul: (i) templat "dua motor" berporos polisi yang menyederhanakan kausalitas dan meminggirkan mobil/pengemudi; (ii) linimasa prosedural berporos BPBD yang mengindividualkan pengemudi namun menunda penilaian hukum; dan (iii) pola "penamaan-lalu-penyangkalan" yang merinci mobil (bahkan pelat/model) sambil melepaskannya dari kausalitas lewat isyarat forensik permukaan. Teks awal mengutamakan otorisasi (suara polisi/BPBD) dan rasionalisasi (penjelasan prosedural/teknis); isyarat moral dan frasa mitopoetik lebih halus, terutama di judul. Desain aktor sosial mempersonalisasi dan memfeminisasi almarhum serta memfungsikan otoritas, sehingga memetakan tanggung jawab sejak dini.

Kata Kunci: *Rekontekstualisasi, strategi legitimasi, aktor sosial, jurnalisme berita, Theo van Leeuwen CDA*

INTRODUCTION

News is never a transparent window on reality; it is a selective, staged reconstruction that invites audiences to interpret events through frames and causal logics (Entman, 1993; Ekström, 2002; Caple & Bednarek, 2016). Opening with a case study, this article examines the coverage of the 20 August 2025 crash near Taman Flora, Bratang, Surabaya, by nine Indonesian outlets: Suara Surabaya, Radar Surabaya, VIVA Jatim, detikjatim, JPNN Jatim, Bangsaonline, Harianbangsa, Ketik.com, and Memorandum. The incident, involving a nineteen-year-old female rider who died at the scene and another female rider who was injured, as well as a male driver of a Honda HR-V (/CR-V?), was reported in various ways. Same-day reports revealed crucial asymmetries for understanding the event: some portals focused on a linear technical chain (overtaking, insufficient space, falling, and fatality) while downplaying or omitting the car and driver, while others included the driver but shifted blame through institutional voices (the police or BPBD, *Badan Penanggulangan Bencana Daerah*). In breaking news, causal constructions are tentative but stabilise quickly through authoritative sourcing and narrative templates, sometimes blaming the deceased before evidence is conclusive. These patterns are not merely stylistic; they influence how responsibility is allocated, how grief is shared, and how road risk is made intelligible or invisible. As video, witness testimony, and forensic analysis were pending on 20 August 2025, these competing accounts provide insight into how recontextualisation works in action and the politics of naming, blaming, and erasing in Indonesian news discourse.

Research on news discourse indicates that representation is influenced by the selection of social actors, the sequencing of processes, and appeals to authority, reason, and morality, core concerns of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Within this field, Theo van Leeuwen's framework provides a detailed toolkit for mapping inclusion/exclusion, activation/passivation, personalisation/genericisation, and various modes of legitimation (van Leeuwen, 2007; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). Studies across migration, conflict, and risk communication show how news normalises causal chains and stabilises responsibility (KhosraviNik, 2010; Vaara & Tienari, 2008; Caple & Bednarek, 2016). However, there

remains a gap in same-day, multi-outlet coverage of road incidents in the Global South, where institutional mediators manage information under tight time constraints. Systematic analyses of recontextualisation such as adding or removing actors, compressing time or space, and framing legitimisation are scarce for Indonesian breaking news, particularly when gender marking and professional titles may anticipate public criticism. This article addresses this gap by connecting CDA to news framing and crisis communication and applying van Leeuwen's categories to a synchronised corpus of nine reports published on the day of the incident. The approach highlights the temporal indexicality of early reporting and its ability to solidify interpretations before legal or forensic investigations.

This study explores three interconnected questions. First, recontextualisation: how do the nine outlets reinterpret the "same" event by introducing or removing actors, scripting actions and sequences, altering time and space, and infusing it with purposes and justifications? Second, social actors: how are victims, the driver, police/BPBD, and the road represented–through naming versus genericisation, activation versus passivation, and inclusion versus exclusion? Third, legitimation: which authorisation, rationalisation, moral evaluation, or myth-making are employed to assign responsibility and stabilise causality at the breaking-news stage? Based on CDA and drawing on news-framing research (Entman, 1993), this paper views news texts as social actions that can shape public understanding of an incident, such as the Bratang crash that resulted in one young woman's death and another's injury, before legal decisions are made. To address these questions, the analysis combines qualitative coding of van Leeuwen's categories with a comparative, outlet-by-outlet examination of inclusion and exclusion, process types, and legitimations across sentences, providing a synchronised, same-day look at representational dynamics and their initial effects on audiences perceptions.

Our working hypothesis, to be tested, is that the nine reports cluster into three patterns: a police-led template that emphasises a technical sequence and excludes the car/driver; a BPBD-led template that includes the driver and stages institutional response; and a defensive template that mentions the car only to deny involvement. These patterns exemplify distinct configurations of recontextualisation, social actor representation, and legitimation (auth/ratio/moral/ myth), thereby shaping how readers assign agency and fault. If supported, the findings would nuance CDA accounts of breaking news by clarifying how focaliser choice and legitimation packages solidify provisional causality, with

implications for road safety debates and media accountability in Indonesia (Ekström, 2002; KhosraviNik, 2010). More broadly, they argue that early narratives do not merely report accidents; they organise the moral economy of risk and grief, with differential visibility for the dead, the injured, and the driver. Narrative design matters for public reasoning and warrants scrutiny when responsibility remains open to evidential consideration revision.

Recontextualisation, as understood in van Leeuwen's critical discourse tradition, refers to the process of reshaping social practices through discourse: events are not merely reported, but rather reinterpreted through selective framing, sequencing, and evaluation (van Leeuwen, 2007). In the case study examined here (nine Indonesian news outlets' same-day coverage of the 20 August 2025 Bratang, Surabaya crash) the news text does not simply reflect reality; it constructs it. Reports vary in their emphasis on a linear technical chain (overtaking–insufficient space–fall–fatality), suppress or obscure the car and driver, and stabilise interpretations by echoing institutional voices (police/BPBD) under the pressure of breaking news (Entman, 1993; Ekström, 2002). As a result, recontextualisation becomes a tool for configuring agency, allocating blame, and normalising uncertainty as a given fact. Differences between outlets are not merely stylistic variations, but rather reconstructions with significant implications for how grief, risk, and responsibility are perceived. This study aims to clarify how recontextualising moves in Indonesian news mediate an evolving reality (pending video, witness, and forensic evidence) by naming, blaming, and erasing actors from the scene (Bednarek & Caple, 2014; van Leeuwen & Wodak 1999).

Recontextualisation involves transferring social practices into discourse based on field-specific principles that transform them (van Leeuwen, 2008). A practice includes participants, actions, time–space, resources, goals, and outcomes; when it enters journalism, certain elements are included or omitted, amplified or muted, sequenced or condensed, substituted or nominalised to align with news values and institutional authority (Bednarek & Caple, 2014). Operationally, we examine six semiotic packages: (1) inclusion or exclusion of actors (foregrounding or backgrounding); (2) allocation of roles or agency (activation–passivation, suppression, circumstantialisation); (3) representation of processes (material versus nominalised events); (4) timing and spatialisation (order, granularity); (5) insertion of purposes and evaluations ("*berusaha menyalip*" (attempting to overtake) "*kecepatan tinggi*" (high speed); and (6) legitimation (authorisation, moral evaluation, rationalisation, mythopoesis) which stabilises meaning and responsibility (van Leeuwen, 2007, 2008).

Concerning RQ1, we annotate reports for actor, action, time–space, and legitimation, then compile a CDA Matrix and diagram to compare transformations.

Social actors are participants in social practice represented through semiotic choices that encode visibility, identity, and accountability (van Leeuwen, 2007; van Leeuwen, 2008). In news discourse, actors may be named, categorised, individualised, or anonymised; activated as doers or passivated as patients or beneficiaries; aligned with roles via functionalisation ("*pengendara*" (driver), "*petugas*" (officer) or identified through status or relations ("*dokter*" (doctor) "*perempuan muda*" (young woman) (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). In the Surabaya case, outlets may index the deceased by name and age while genericising the other rider, or personalise the car driver through titulation and address, shaping how agency and fault are perceived. Studies show that such options influence evaluations of risk, responsibility, and empathy (KhosraviNik, 2010; Bednarek & Caple, 2014). Treating the road or space as a quasi-actor matters, since attributing causality to "conditions" can suppress human agency through circumstantialisation. RQ2 examines how victims, drivers, police or BPBD, and the roadway are represented—namely, through naming versus genericisation, activation versus passivation, inclusion versus exclusion—and how these choices mediate opinion formation.

Van Leeuwen standardises recurring options for representing social actors. Firstly, inclusion versus exclusion: texts select some actors while suppressing or backgrounding others—often achieved through passives, ellipsis of agents, or nominalisation that disconnects who-did-what. Secondly, activation versus passivation: actors are cast as doers/causers or as affected/beneficiaries; passivation subdivides into subjection and beneficialisation, traceable in transitivity patterns and prepositions (van Leeuwen, 2007). Thirdly, nomination versus categorisation: proper-name nomination (with formality, titulation, honorification) contrasts with grouping by role or identity; news often exhibits gendered nomination. Fourthly, functionalisation versus identification: labelling by role ("*pengendara*" (driver), "*dokter*" (doctor) versus by relations/status, which re-routes accountability. Fifthly, determination versus indetermination and differentiation: specifying identities versus leaving them vague, and marking in-group/out-group boundaries (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). To address RQ2, the study codes each sentence for actor type, representational option, and causal salience, feeding a cross-outlet matrix of patterned data choices.

Legitimation refers to the discursive process of answering the implicit question "why is this action/procedure/outcome right or necessary?" (van Leeuwen, 2007). In news, legitimation often stabilises uncertain facts by aligning them with authoritative voices, values, or logics, guiding audience attributions of responsibility. Authorization legitimates by invoking a source with power (institutional roles, experts, tradition); moral evaluation legitimates by appealing to value-laden adjectives and norms ("*ceroboh*" (reckless) "*alami*" (natural) "*tepat*" (proper); rationalisation legitimates by referencing goals, utilities, or neutral knowledge, whether instrumental (means–ends) or theoretical (systemic order); mythopoesis legitimates through stories that reward "proper" conduct and punish "improper" conduct—canonical in cautionary headlines (van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; Vaara & Tienari, 2008). In rapid reports, these resources combine: police or BPBD voices authorise, technical chains rationalise, gendered and professional labels shade moral evaluation, and narrative templates convert contingency into plot. The concept clarifies the capacity of breaking-news discourse to locate agency and circulate blame while presenting as factual. (Ekström, 2002; Bednarek & Caple, 2014).

We operationalise legitimation through four indicators. Authorization: sourcing to police/BPBD, legal codes, routines, or expert status; lead quotes anchor causality and closure. Moral evaluation: value predicates that position conduct as normal/abnormal, responsible/reckless, including gendered/professional labels that cue virtue or status. Rationalisation: means–ends reasoning and procedural sequencing that render outcomes "necessary" (timelines, response choreography, technical chains). Mythopoesis: narrative templates (especially cautionary headlines) that reward compliance and punish deviation. Addressing RQ3, we code sentences for the presence and dominance of these strategies and model cross-outlet distributions. We expect authorisation and rationalisation to co-occur as a breaking-news bundle, with lighter moral and mythopoetic overlays, stabilising provisional causality and directing blame before forensic determination (Entman, 1993; Vaara & Tienari, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007).

Researchers examined how nine online news outlets (Suara Surabaya, Radar Surabaya, VIVA Jatim, detikJatim, JPNN Jatim, BangsaOnline, HarianBangsa, Ketik.com, and Memorandum) reconstructed the 20 August 2025 traffic accident near Taman Flora, Bratang, Surabaya, and published reports on the same day. The study's unit of analysis is the news text (headline, lead, body, and direct quotations), treated as a semiotic artefact that

organises actors, processes, time–space, and causal chains. The focus is on institutional focalisers (police and BPBD) as they provide epistemic authority in breaking news. Drawing on framing theory and news-values research, the study assumes that selection and emphasis, rather than mere occurrence, guide meaning-making (Entman, 1993; Bednarek & Caple, 2014). It maps how the same incident is linguistically redesigned across outlets: which participants are named or backgrounded, which actions are materialised or nominalised, which temporal markers and locations are made salient, and how causal closure is signalled before forensic and legal resolution. The corpus provides a snapshot for interrogating how initial narratives crystallise understandings of responsibility and risk despite evidentiary uncertainty.

The project adopts a convergent parallel mixed-methods design that combines quantitative pattern analysis and qualitative close reading within the same phase to address three dimensions of CDA recontextualization, social actors, and legitimation. Quantitatively, each sentence (with the headline counted as one unit) is coded for actor inclusion/exclusion, activation/passivation, process type, time–space markers, and legitimation strategy (such as authorization, rationalisation, moral evaluation, mythopoesis). Qualitatively, we perform discourse-analytic tracing of how agency and causality are constructed within and across reports, focusing on sourcing, quotation patterns, and narrative sequencing in news epistemologies (Ekström, 2002). Integration occurs at the design, methods, and interpretation levels to improve the quality of inferences (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013). Operational categories are based on van Leeuwen's socio-semiotic model of legitimation and social actor representation (van Leeuwen, 2007), complemented by news-values insights on selection and salience (Bednarek & Caple, 2014). This design allows for comparison while maintaining the contingencies of same-day reporting.

Our sources include the nine same-day reports listed above and additional semi-structured interviews with relatives of the deceased rider, conducted to gain a better understanding of naming practices, memorialisation, and perceived blame. We treat media texts as primary data and use interviews to verify how textual cues align with interpretations of agency and responsibility. Given the sensitivity of fatal incidents, we follow strict anonymity protocols for family participants and avoid mentioning non-essential personal details. We also record the institutional positions of quoted sources (police officers, BPBD officials) to trace the authorisation chains that underpin early

knowledge claims in journalism (Ekström, 2002). Previous CDA research has shown that representational choices such as personalisation, categorisation, and activation/passivation impact evaluations of vulnerable individuals and the allocation of blame (KhosraviNik, 2010). Therefore, our dataset preserves source attributions, sentence boundaries, and precise timing for replicable coding and cross-outlet analysis comparison.

Data collection proceeds along two parallel strands. First, we gathered the nine articles as web copies on 20 August 2025 (WIB), recorded publication timestamps, outlet metadata, and URL identifiers, and segmented each text into sentence-level units, flagging headlines as separate units. Second, we developed a coding instrument aligned with van Leeuwen's categories of recontextualisation and social actor representation—actor inclusion/exclusion, activation/passivation, personalisation/genericisation, process realisation/nominalisation, time–space specification, and four types of legitimation (authorisation, rationalisation, moral evaluation, mythopoiesis) (van Leeuwen, 2007). In the qualitative strand, we conducted close-reading memos tracking how actor networks and causal sequences were constructed, disrupted, or closed in each outlet. Integration follows a convergent parallel logic: quantitative tallies and qualitative memos are produced simultaneously, then merged through joint displays that enable corroboration and divergence to be interpreted on the same evidential basis (Fetters et al., 2013). This architecture respects the temporality of breaking news and maintains comparability across outlets while preserving interpretive nuance.

Analysis is conducted in three stages. Stage 1 (unitisation and identification): the basic unit is a sentence or finite clause; headlines are treated as separate units. Each item is assigned a code of the form OUTLET-YYMMDD-SEQ (e.g. DETIK-250820-05) to maintain chronology and enable cross-referencing. Stage 2 (attributional context): we distinguish between direct quotations and journalist narration, as legitimation often depends on attributed authority or reporter omniscience (van Leeuwen, 2007; Ekström, 2002). Stage 3 (pattern detection): we examine distributions of inclusion/exclusion, activation/passivation, process realisation, time–space markers, and legitimation types per outlet and across the corpus, while tracing how clusters of strategies create causal frames (Entman, 1993) and legitimation packages (Vaara & Tienari, 2008). This mixed approach identifies recurring configurations and interprets their narrative impact. Together, these procedures allow for a rigorous comparison of how nine outlets reinterpret the same

incident and shape initial understandings of agency and responsibility.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The corpus consists of nine news reports from the same day on the 20 August 2025 crash near Taman Flora, Bratang, Surabaya, published by Suara Surabaya, Radar Surabaya, VIVA Jatim, detikJatim, JPNN Jatim, BangsaOnline, HarianBangsa, Ketik.com, and Memorandum. Each report was coded sentence by sentence to examine the recontextualization choices made. Building on van Leeuwen's work, we view each report as a socio-semiotic reconstruction, transforming a social practice into discourse under specific field constraints. This involves selectively including or excluding actors, materialising or nominalising processes, and scripting time and space to create a provisional sense of causality that appears coherent (van Leeuwen, 2007, 2008).

CDA Matrix (Recontextualization per Outlet)
("overtake to insufficient space then fall and finally fatality")

Outlet Code	Outlet	Cluster	Focalizer	Driver Representation	Main Chain
SS	Suara Surabaya	Police-led (two-motor)	Police	Excluded/ Backgrounded	*"menyalip* (overtake)" **to** *"tidak cukup ruang* (insufficient space)" **then** *"jatuh* (fall)" **and finally** *"kematian* (fatality)"
JV	VIVA Jatim	BPBD-led (procedural)	BPBD/ Emergency	Included & Individualized	*"panggilan 112* (112 call)" **to** *"respons* (response)" **then** *"evakuasi* (evacuation)" **and** *"dipindah* (transfer)" **finally** *"serah terima polisi* (police hand-off)"
MEM	Memorandum	Police-led (two-motor)	Police	Excluded/ Backgrounded	*"menyalip* (overtake)" **to** *"tidak cukup ruang* (insufficient space)" **then** *"jatuh* (fall)" **and finally** *"kematian* (fatality)"
RS	Radar Surabaya	Police-led (two-motor)	Police	Excluded/ Backgrounded	*"menyalip* (overtake)" **to** *"tidak cukup ruang* (insufficient space)" **then** *"jatuh* (fall)" **and finally** *"kematian* (fatality)"
DT	detikJatim	BPBD-led (procedural)	BPBD/ Emergency	Included & Individualized	*"panggilan 112* (112 call)" **to** *"respons* (response)" **then** *"evakuasi* (evacuation)" **and** *"dipindah* (transfer)" **finally** *"serah terima polisi* (police hand-off)"

Outlet Code	Outlet	Cluster	Focalizer	Driver Representation	Main Chain
KT	Ketik.com	Police-led (two-motor)	Police	Excluded/ Backgrounded	"*menyalip* (overtake)" **to** "*tidak cukup ruang* (insufficient space)" **then** "*jatuh* (fall)" **and finally** "*kematian* (fatality)"
BO	BangsaOnline	Defensive (deny car involvement)	Police (denial)	Included then Denied	"*nama/tipe mobil/plat nomor* (name/type car/ License plate)" **to** "*tidak ada goresan'* (check 'no scratches')" **then** "*kecualikan mobil* (exclude car)" **finally** "*kembali ke kesalahan pengendara* (return to rider error)"
HB	HarianBangsa	Defensive (deny car involvement)	Police (denial)	Included then Denied	"*nama/tipe mobil/plat nomor* (name/type car/ License plate)" **to** "*tidak ada goresan'* (check 'no scratches')" **then** "*kecualikan mobil* (exclude car)" **finally** "*kembali ke kesalahan pengendara* (return to rider error)"
JP	JPNN Jatim	BPBD-led (procedural)	BPBD/ Emergency	Included & Individualized	"*panggilan 112* (112 call)" **to** "*respons* (response)" **then** "*evakuasi* (evacuation)" **and** "*dipindah* (transfer)" **finally** "*serah terima polisi* (police hand-off)"

Table 1. CDA Matrix: Focalizer, Driver Policy, and Causal Chain per Outlet.

Table 1 (CDA Matrix: Bratang/Taman Flora Accident, 20 Aug 2025) inventories, for each outlet and sentence, which participants are foregrounded (the nineteen-year-old rider who died; the second female rider; the male driver of a Honda HR-V/CR-V), which processes are realised (*menyalip* (overtaking); *tabrakan* (collision); *jatuh* (falling); *evakuasi* (evacuation), which temporal markers are inscribed ("around 08.00 WIB"; "at 08.11"), and which legitimations anchor claims (authorisation by police or BPBD; rationalisation through a linear mechanical chain; moral evaluation via speed/vulnerability; mythopoesis in cautionary headlines).
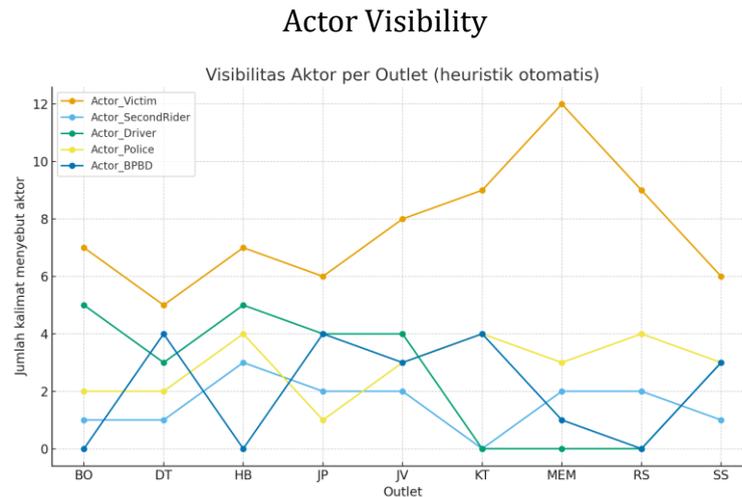
Actor Visibility

Figure 1. Actor Mentions per Outlet (sentence-level).

Figure 1 illustrates outlets' attitudes towards the car/driver: (i) explicit inclusion; (ii) backgrounding; and (iii) mention followed by denial of involvement. Across the corpus, police-led stories tend to follow a two-motor script that omits the car/driver, while BPBD-led stories include the driver and present a timeline; a third group mentions only the car to dismiss its relevance by citing a simple forensic heuristic ("*tidak ditemukan tanda goresan*" (no scratch marks). The table and figure reveal that, in breaking news, recontextualisation is the mechanism through which uncertainty is stabilised: institutional focalisers, genre routines, and news values work together to pre-close responsibility for the reader, often before video, witness, or forensic evidence is made public (Entman, 1993; Ekström, 2002; Bednarek & Caple, 2014). The matrix also records gendered nomination ("*pemotor perempuan*" (female rider) "*remaja putri*" (young woman) and professional titling for the driver ("*dokter*" (doctor), as well as address identification, because labels influence empathy, status, and accountability reconstruction.

Patterns in the matrix are systematic rather than idiosyncratic, and they align with focalizer choice and sourcing routines. Journalism' s field principles favour brevity, event-centred ledes, and authoritative sourcing; under time pressure, these produce recurring textual 'templates' that appear across stories (Ekström, 2002; Bednarek & Caple, 2014). Cluster A (police-led: Suara Surabaya, Radar Surabaya, Memorandum, Ketik) creates a two-motor scenario where the deceased is depicted as the initiator ("*berusaha menyalip*" (attempted to overtake) "*tidak cukup ruang*" (insufficient room), then passivised as the sufferer ("*jatuh ke kanan*" (fell to the right) "*dinyatakan meninggal di lokasi*" (declared dead

at the scene); the car/driver is minimised or backgrounded, while clause structures nominalise the event ("*kecelakaan terjadi*" (the accident occurred) or omit agency with agentless passives. Temporal detail is coarse ("around 08. 00"), and spatial references are general (the Bratang frontage), focusing attention on a narrow technical chain. Cluster B (BPBD- led: VIVA Jatim, detikJatim, JPNN Jatim) includes and personalises the driver (initials/name, age, profession 'doctor', address), inserts minute-stamped response sequences ("*pada pukul 08.11*" (at 08.11) "*dievakuasi ke (RS, auth) Dr Soetomo*" (evacuated to Dr Soetomo), and concludes with jurisdictional transfer ("*kasus telah ditangani polisi*" (case handled by police), thus enacting procedural order as a narrative backbone. Cluster C (defensive: BangsaOnline, HarianBangsa) names the car, sometimes the plate number only to immediately discredit its causal relevance via an expert proxy ("*tidak ada bekas goresan*" (no scratch marks), while re-centring the deceased' s manoeuvre as the sufficient cause. The stance distribution in Figure 1 correlates with these clusters: A = exclusion; B = inclusion; C = inclusion • denial. The patterned alignment between focalizer, actor visibility, process execution, and timing supports the argument that recontextualisation is governed by field-specific routines that, in breaking news, condense complexity into clear but fragile causalities (Entman, 1993; van Leeuwen, 2008). These routines also shape which uncertainties remain unspoken or often deferred to later updates.

The observed recontextualisations stem from epistemic access, liability management, and the cognitive economy of early reporting. Police-proximate narratives offer easily quotable technical causation; BPBD-proximate narratives provide operational timelines; outlets consider legal risk when naming potential perpetrators, especially before evidence is definitive (Ekström, 2002). In Cluster A, police voice constructs a brief, linear account: "*berusaha menyalip... tidak cukup ruang... jatuh ke kanan*" (attempted to overtake... not enough space... fell to the right) with an evaluative moral undertow that warns against risky manoeuvring; headlines and ledes foreground the deceased ("*pengendara perempuan*" (female rider) "*perempuan muda*" (young woman) and the two-motor chain while the car/driver is absent. In Cluster B, BPBD voice naturalises driver inclusion by embedding it within response choreography: "*dua pengendara dan sebuah Honda HR-V yang dikendarai oleh TDS (41)... pukul 08.11... dievakuasi oleh ambulans Dinsos... dipindahkan ke kamar mayat rumah sakit*" (two riders and a Honda HR-V driven by TDS (41)... at 08.11... evacuated by Dinsos ambulance... transferred to the hospital morgue) followed by a jurisdictional close

("the police handle legal matters"), which legitimises provisional knowledge through institutional coordination. In Cluster C, denial proceeds by invoking a visual-tech heuristic "no scratch marks" that audiences recognise as credible shorthand; the car is named (including the plate), but causal salience is then withdrawn, re-centering "human error" in the rider's act. These textual operations do not merely recount the event; they construct an intelligible causal narrative that assigns agency and blame differently across actors, an effect predicted by the socio-semiotic account of recontextualisation and by framing research on how news transforms uncertainty into common sense (Entman, 1993; van Leeuwen, 2008) under deadline conditions.
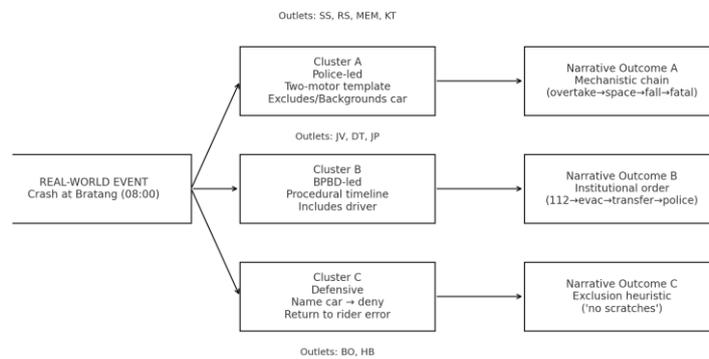
Recontextualization Flow Diagram

Figure 3. Three Narrative Packages across Outlets.

Social-actor coding across the 90+ sentences reveals asymmetrical visibility and role assignment for victims, drivers, authorities, and the roadway/space. Van Leeuwen's actor framework predicts that nomination, categorisation, functionalisation, activation/passivation, and (in)determination combine to allocate accountability and empathy (van Leeuwen, 2007; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). "Coded Sentences— Taman Flora, Bratang, 20 Aug 2025" registers, per sentence, which actors appear, how they are named, and what roles they occupy. The deceased (19) is nominated by name, age, and address; she is activated in clauses of alleged causation ("*berusaha menyalip*" (attempted to overtake), "*kecepatan tinggi*" (at high speed") and passivated in outcome clauses ("*dinyatakan meninggal di TKP*" (declared dead at the scene). The second rider (female) is individualised and predominantly passivated ("*lecet*" (sustained abrasions); "*sadar*"

(conscious), with occasional functionalisation ("*seorang dosen*" (a lecturer). The driver (male) varies: in Cluster A he is suppressed; in Cluster B he is individualised with titulation ("*seorang dokter*" (a doctor), age, and address, but often cast as a medical/psychological patient rather than agent ("*sadar*" (conscious), "*terlihat syok*" (in shock); in Cluster C he is individualised, even by plate number, only to be de-implicated by authorised denial. Police and BPBD are functionalised and activated as sayers and doers—"stated," "confirmed," "evacuated"—with police occupying the final arbiter role ("*ditangani polisi*" (handled by police). The road/space is circumstantialised ("*tidak cukup ruang*" (insufficient space), "*koridor jalan*" (frontage road), "*persimpangan*" (intersection), a discursive move that can dilute human agency by coding causality as an environmental condition. Gender marking is asymmetrical: headlines and ledes mark the victims as women ("*pengendara perempuan*" (female rider) "*perempuan muda*" (young woman) while the driver's masculinity is latent, yet his status is activated via professional titulation; such pairings cue vulnerability for the deceased and authority/respectability for the driver. The table shows that actor options are not neutral labels but mechanisms that calibrate who is seen, who acts, and who is acted upon; in this corpus, they tilt causal perception toward rider error while partitioning institutional authority to police/BPBD as definers of what counts as knowledge in the news cycle (KhosraviNik, 2010; Bednarek & Caple, 2014).
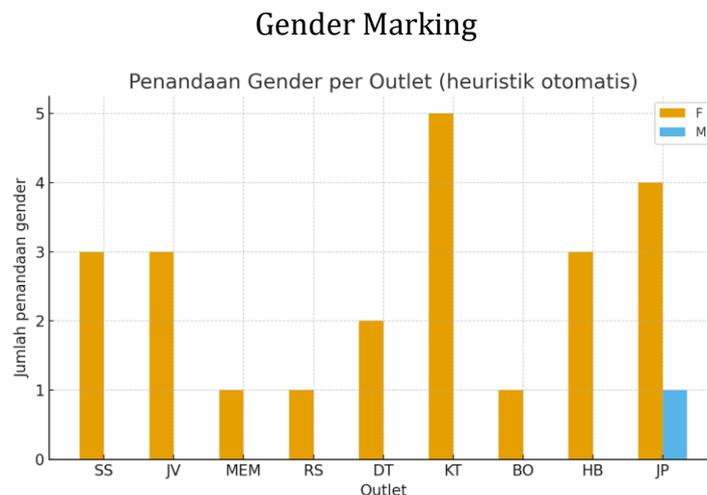
Gender Marking

Figure 4. Gender Marking per Outlet.

Three recurring configurations of social actors correspond to the recontextualization clusters and explain where audiences are encouraged to locate agency. By design,

nomination, functionalization, and activation/passivation work together to direct accountability, while gendered labelling and titulation refine stance. Configuration 1 (police-led) activates the deceased as a technical cause in pre-accident clauses ("*berusaha menyalip*" (attempted to overtake), "*tidak cukup ruang*" (insufficient space) and passivates her in outcome clauses; it suppresses the driver and activates police as epistemic arbiters through lead quotations. Configuration 2 (BPBD-led) maintains the deceased as an individual, includes the driver with identification details (initials/name, age, profession, address), and activates BPBD as procedural agent in a timestamped timeline, with police closing the file; this broadens the actor network but shifts focus from causation to response choreography. Configuration 3 (defensive) individualises the driver, occasionally even by plate number, only to deactivate causal salience through authorised denial; it reactivates the deceased's manoeuvre as sufficient cause. Across all configurations, the roadway is consistently portrayed as a circumstantial condition ("*tidak cukup ruang*" (insufficient space), which can act as a non-human proxy for agency. Headlines and subheadings specify victim gender ("*pengendara perempuan*" (female rider) "*perempuan muda*" (young woman). At the same time, driver masculinity remains covert, but professional status is overt ("*dokter*" (doctor), creating a pairing of vulnerability and status that influences moral interpretation. These configurations reveal a socio-semiotic economy where human-interest personalisation, institutional authority, and legal prudence collectively produce a causal map that privileges rider error, marginalises driver agency, and reserves epistemic closure to official institutions (van Leeuwen, 2007; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999).

In reporting, the social-actor patterns reflect routine news values (personalisation, proximity, authority) and risk-averse legal cultures. Personalising the deceased satisfies news values and empathy; framing authorities supports epistemic order; driver visibility is mediated by focaliser access and liability concerns, especially when causation is contested. Police-voiced clauses activate the deceased as the mechanism's primary mover: "attempted to overtake… not enough space… fell," a chain that rationalises and moralises. BPBD-voiced sequences personalise the driver but passivate him medically/psychologically: "conscious," "in shock," shifting attention from agency to condition. Defensive texts use authorised denial ("no scratch marks—hence not involved") to deactivate driver causality while maintaining a human-error framework. Gendered nomination—("*pemotor perempuan*" (female rider), "*remaja putri*" (young woman)—and professional titulation—"*dokter*" ("doctor")—are not

mere descriptors; they function as stance resources that calibrate vulnerability and status. Actor representation is the hinge through which news allocates accountability: by coupling victim personalisation with institutional authority and selective driver visibility, the corpus guides readers towards a distribution of agency that favours a rider-error script while delaying uncertainty for later cycles (Entman, 1993; Ekström, 2002; KhosraviNik, 2010).
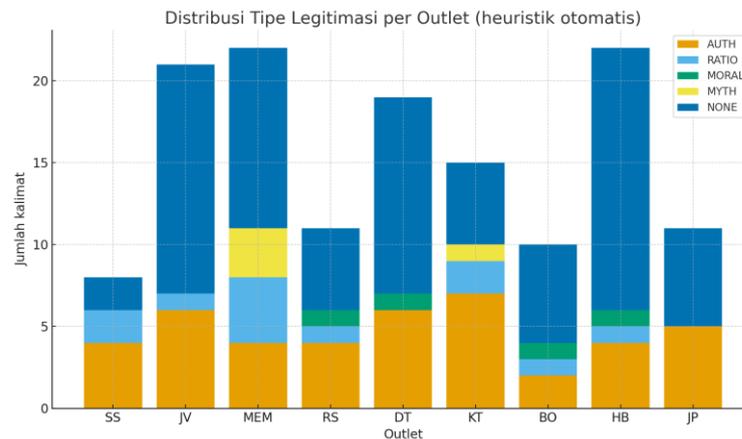

Figure 5. Distribution of Legitimation Types per Outlet (heuristic).

Legitimation strategies (authorisation, rationalisation, moral evaluation, and mythopoesis) are distributed non-randomly across the corpus and cluster with focaliser choice. Van Leeuwen defines legitimation as discourse s answer to the implicit "why" of actions and outcomes; in breaking news, such answers stabilise provisional facts by aligning them with authority, values, and means–end logics (van Leeuwen, 2007). Codes each sentence for the dominant legitimation type. A stacked bar by outlet shows authorisation + rationalisation as the backbone bundle, with thinner moral evaluation and mythopoesis overlays. In Cluster A (police-led), authorization is concentrated in named police roles ("traffic unit head stated…") and is immediately coupled with a linear technical rationalisation ("overtake, insufficient space, contact to fall"). Moral evaluation remains understated yet legible via lexis that frames conduct: "*ceroboh*" ("reckless"), "*berkecepatan tinggi*" ("at high speed") and via gendered nomination, ("*pemotor perempuan*" (female rider) "*remaja putri*" (young woman) that cues vulnerability. Mythopoesis appears in cautionary headline grammar that converts the event into a moral tale: "Attempting to overtake, rider falls to death." In Cluster B (BPBD-led), authorisation is anchored in emergency-management expertise ("BPBD confirmed timeline…") and rationalisation is procedural:

minute-stamped response choreography culminating in transfer to hospital. Driver inclusion is textually legitimised by institutional process rather than causal accusation; the narrative logic is, 'because the authorities ordinated, this is how the scene unfolded.' In Cluster C (defensive), authorisation is mobilised to de-legitimise driver involvement: the police's evidential proxy ("no scratch marks") serves as a rationalisation for exclusion, while the chain returns to human error in the rider's manoeuvre. Reliability. An inter-rater template with dropdown labels and Cohen formulas produced agreement on authorisation and rationalisation (salient and recognised) and moderate agreement on moral/mythopoetic cues (diffuse and contextual). The distribution supports the thesis that legitimation packages act as textual glue: authorisation grounds knowledge claims, rationalisation supplies coherence, and moral/mythopoetic cues fine-tune stance— together shaping responsibility maps before formal investigations conclude (Vaara & Tienari, 2008; Bednarek & Caple, 2014).
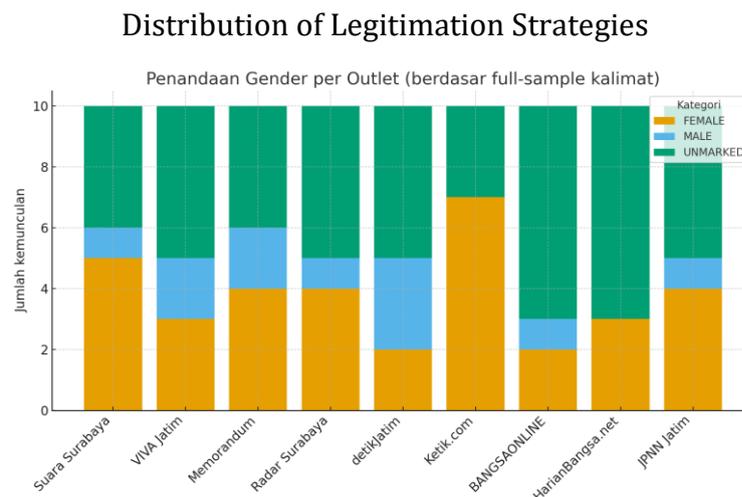
Distribution of Legitimation Strategies

Figure 6. Distribution of Gender Types per Outlet.

Authorisation anchors epistemic authority, rationalisation furnishes causal mechanics, and moral/mythopoetic cues tune evaluative stance; together they convert flux into narrative certainty in the first cycle. Audiences, editors, and institutions favour explanations that are authoritative, linear, and normatively intelligible; breaking-news routines therefore privilege quotes from officials, technical chains, and recognisable story shapes (Entman, 1993; Ekström, 2002). In police-led stories, authorisation is front-loaded through rank-and-role nomination ("*Kanit Laka Polrestabes Surabaya menyatakan…*" (the

traffic unit head stated), *"penyidik menjelaskan…"* (the investigating officer explained…). Rationalisation then compresses complexity into a short mechanism "attempted to overtake," "not enough space," "fell to the right" which sounds like engineering common sense and requires no visible counterfactuals. Moral evaluation is typically implicit and rides on adjectives or adverbs applied to conduct: "*ceroboh*" ("reckless"), "*berkecepatan tinggi*" ("at speed") and on gendered nomination that invokes vulnerability; a nineteen-year-old "young woman" reads differently from a gender-neutral "rider." Mythopoesis appears where titles and headlines set up cautionary tales; even without overt moralising, the syntactic pairing of risky act and fatal consequence is a mini-morality play. In BPBD-led stories, authorisation is re-keyed to emergency expertise and inter-agency co-ordination. Rationalisation becomes procedural: timestamps, dispatch codes, vehicle identifiers, and hand-offs ("at 08.11… evacuation… transfer to hospital morgue") provide a logic of order that reassures rather than accuses. Driver visibility is legitimised not by causal claim but by operational presence he is part of what responders confronted while legal determination is deferred with a closing formula ("the police handle legal matters"). In defensive texts, authorisation is mobilised to demarcate non-involvement, producing a counter-legitimacy: a quick forensic proxy ("no scratch marks") is treated as sufficient rationalisation for exclusion, returning the story to a human-error script. These patterns mirror crisis and organisational discourse studies, where authorisation and rationalisation dominate early accounts and moral or mythic overlays consolidate public compliance (Vaara & Tienari, 2008). The corpus shows legitimation as a package deal: AUTH grounds, RATIO orders, MORAL/MYTH shade; the package stabilises a responsibility map that appears neutral yet is crafted through textual design (van Leeuwen, 2007; Bednarek & Caple, 2014). Its elements also travel across outlets quite recurrently.

Strategy choice reflects epistemic competition, cognitive economy, and normative governance. Whoever speaks first defines the credible 'why'; linear chains minimise processing load; official scripts align with public-safety norms and organisational risk management. Jurisdictional closures ("the case will be handled by police") foreclose alternatives; procedural rationalisation ("at 08.11… evacuation… morgue transfer") supplies coherence without assigning blame; authorised denial ("no scratch marks") offers exclusion that sounds empirical yet masks uncertainty; and moral/mythic pairings ("attempting to overtake *fatal*") establish a cautionary human-error frame. Similar

dynamics recur in crisis discourse, where authorisation and rationalisation dominate early legitimation and stabilise responsibility assignments before inquiry can operate (Vaara & Tienari, 2008). In this corpus, legitimation is constitutive: it shapes who can be held accountable while appearing as neutral reporting, hence the need for CDA and cross-outlet comparison to reveal how naming, blaming, and erasing are constructed in real time (van Leeuwen, 2007; Entman, 1993) in the first news cycle's interpretive rush pressure.

Across nine same-day reports on the 20 August 2025 Bratang, Surabaya crash, recontextualisation functions as the engine of news meaning: each outlet transforms a single incident by selecting actors, compressing or expanding processes, and staging time–space so that a provisional, seemingly 'common-sense' causality emerges (van Leeuwen, 2008; Entman, 1993; Bednarek & Caple, 2014). In Suara Surabaya and Radar Surabaya, the script is technical and two-vehicle: *"berusaha menyalip… tidak cukup ruang… jatuh ke kanan,"* ("attempted to overtake," "not enough space," "fell to the right") with the car/driver absent, and the accident nominalised as an event that simply "terjadi." VIVA Jatim, detikJatim, and JPNN Jatim adopt an emergency-procedural script that explicitly includes the car and its driver, sequencing minute-stamped actions "pukul 08.11… dievakuasi… dibawa ke kamar jenazah" ("at 08.11… evacuation… transfer to hospital morgue" and closing with jurisdictional hand-off *"perkara ditangani polisi"* ("the case will be handled by police"). BansaOnline and HarianBangsa acknowledge the car, sometimes even the plate, then immediately de-authorise its causal salience via a concise forensic heuristic—*"tidak ada goresan"* ("no scratch marks"). Memorandum and Ketik.com return to the linear chain where "human error" is textualised through the deceased's manoeuvre. Across outlets, titles and ledes often mark gender *"pemotor perempuan"*, *"remaja putri"* ("female rider," "young woman"), while detikJatim also activates professional titulation for the driver *"dokter… sadar, tidak ada luka, tampak syok"* ("a doctor… conscious, no injuries, in shock). This pairing calibrates vulnerability and status. What follows from these patterned choices is a public-facing, prematurely stabilised map of responsibility: readers are guided to see a narrow technical sequence ("overtake" to "insufficient space" to "fall" to "fatality") or a well-ordered institutional response whose narrative spine is an inter-agency timeline (Ekström, 2002). In both cases, recontextualisation converts evidentiary flux into legibility by foregrounding some social practices (manoeuvre, triage, transfer) and occluding others (driver agency, contested witness accounts), thereby shaping how the accident is thinkable before video,

witnesses, or forensic analysis are consolidated. In other words, the discursive "how" is also the "to what": a transformation of the accident into a moral-technical lesson or a procedural chronicle that travels quickly and sticks. Such stabilisation powerfully prefigures blame and policy talk.

These divergent reconstructions have structural causes. Firstly, breaking-news epistemologies favour readily available, institutionally licensed voices; police focalisation produces technical causality, BPBD focalisation yields operational chronologies (Ekström, 2002). Secondly, genre constraints (brevity, event-centred ledes, the norm of 'objectivity' as a balance of authorised voices) encourage compression into linear narratives (Bednarek & Caple, 2014). Thirdly, legal-risk management makes outlets cautious about attributing agency to a named driver before evidence is settled, which helps explain patterns of suppression or backgrounding. Hence Suara Surabaya and Radar Surabaya rely on police explanation lines like "*(korban) berusaha menyalip… ruang tidak cukup*" ("attempted to overtake", "fell to the right"), while detikJatim and VIVA Jatim naturalise driver inclusion within a response script ("TDS (41)… dokter… sadar" ("TDS (41)… doctor… conscious"), "panggilan 112 pukul 08.11" ("calling 112 at 08:11 a.m. …"). The defensive move "*tidak ada goresan*" ("no scratch marks") is equally structural: it invokes an expert proxy audiences recognise as objective shorthand, offloading evidential responsibility onto the police while re-centring the deceased's manoeuvre. Finally, recontextualisation is path-dependent: once a first version travels, later reports echo its lexis, syntax, and causal links, a form of intertextual lock-in that narrows interpretive space (van Leeuwen, 2008). The consequence is a fragile stabilisation that privileges certain agencies and silences others, pending later corrections or counter-evidence and contestation.

The social-actor layer identifies who is perceived, how, and with what role guiding readers to locate agency accordingly. Using van Leeuwen's actor system, our analysis reveals a recurring triad: victims are individualised and gender-marked, authorities are functionalised and positioned as epistemic arbiters, and the visibility of the driver varies depending on the focaliser. The nineteen-year-old is typically named and aged, often with an address, and is activated within putative cause clauses "*berusaha menyalip*", "*berkecepatan tinggi*" ("attempted to overtake", "high speed," but passivated in outcome clauses "*dinyatakan meninggal di lokasi*" (declared dead at the scene). The second rider is individualised and passivated "*luka abrasi*", "*sadar*" (no injuries, conscious) sometimes

functionalised "*seorang dosen*" (a doctor). Police and BPBD are both sayers and doers; they "*menyataka*n" ("stated"), "*menegaskan*" ("explained"), "mengevakuasi" (evacuation) providing authorisation and procedural order. The driver appears in three guises: suppressed or backgrounded within the police-led cluster; individualised and titled by status in the BPBD-led cluster "*TDS (41)… seorang dokter… alamat Wisma Permai Barat*" ("TDS (41)… doctor …domiciled at Wisma Permai Barat"), yet frequently medically passivated "*sadar, tidak ada luka, tampak syok*" ("conscious, no injuries, in shock); and individualised to be de-implicated in the defensive cluster through authorised denial "*tidak ada goresan*" ("no scratch marks"). Headlines and ledes repeatedly emphasise the victims' gender: "*pemotor perempuan*", "*remaja putri*" ("female rider," "young woman"), while the driver's masculinity remains implicit and his professional status is foregrounded, creating a vulnerability–status pairing that influences moral perception (KhosraviNik, 2010). These patterned representations have significant consequences. First, personalisation of the deceased heightens human-interest value but, when paired with activation in pre-accident clauses, also constructs a script of technical self-causation. Second, functionalisation of institutions consolidates a monopoly over causal narration "*perkara ditangani polisi*" ("case handled by police") which restricts epistemic credibility even as evidence remains partial (Ekström, 2002). Third, contingent driver visibility enables outlets to manage legal risk while involving a named individual in the procedural narrative. Fourth, circumstantialisation of the road/space "ruang tidak cukup," "koridor Bratang" ("not enough space", "the Bratang frontage") provides a nonhuman proxy that can diminish human agency. Collectively, these choices do not merely 'reflect' reality; they distribute accountability through naming, activation/passivation, and inclusion/exclusion, exactly as van Leeuwen's socio-semiotic model predicts (van Leeuwen, 2007; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; Bednarek & Caple, 2014).

Why these actor configurations? They follow routineised news values and field norms. Personalisation satisfies the value of proximity and human interest; naming a "*remaja putri*" ("young woman") makes the story relatable and emotive, while framing police/BPBD as expert institutions stabilises knowledge claims under deadline (Bednarek & Caple, 2014; Ekström, 2002). Legal prudence further explains driver (in)visibility: before forensic closure, outlets hesitate to activate a named driver as causal agent, especially when competing official accounts are not yet public. BPBD-led pieces can include the driver

without causal accusation by embedding him within the operational scene "TDS (41)… dokter… sadar" ("TDS (41)… doctor… conscious") which frames him as a condition to be managed rather than an agent to be blamed. Gendered nomination persists because it is an economical cue for vulnerability in headlines; professional titulation ("dokter") is an economical cue for respectability and authority. Finally, circumstantialisation of space offers a neutralising resource that turns agency into condition "*ruang tidak cukup*" ("not enough space") a move consistent with van Leeuwen's account of how discourse replaces actors with settings to distribute accountability differently (van Leeuwen, 2007).

Legitimation occurs when these textual choices form responsibility maps. Van Leeuwen's four strategies (authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation, mythopoesis do not operate separately) they appear as bundles that stabilise provisional facts and align them with an understandable 'why' (van Leeuwen, 2007). In the police-led cluster, authorization is prioritised through rank-and-role nomination: "*Kanit Laka menyatakan…*" ("the traffic unit head stated…"), "*penyidik menerangkan…*" ("the investigating officer explained…"), immediately paired with a brief mechanical rationalisation: "…berusaha menyalip…" ("…attempted to overtake…") to the phrase "*…ruang tidak cukup…*" ("…not enough space…") then "*…bersenggolan…*" ("…sideswiped…") and, finally "*…jatuh…*" ("…fall…"). Moral evaluation is mostly indirect—lexis such as "*ceroboh*" ("reckless"), "*berkecepatan tinggi*" ("at speed") and is reinforced by gendered nomination, "*remaja putri*" ("young woman"), which suggests vulnerability and transforms the chain into a cautionary moral. Mythopoesis is clearest in headlines that turn the sequence into a morality play: "Hendak mendahului, jatuh dan tewas" ("Attempted to overtake, fell, and fatally"). In the BPBD-led cluster, authorization is reframed as emergency expertise, "*BPBD menegaskan linimasa…*" (BPBD outlined the timeline …") and rationalisation becomes procedural: "*panggilan 112 pukul 08.11…*" ("calling 112 at 08:11 a.m. …") to "*…tim tiba…*" ("… the team arrived …") then "*…evakuasi…*" ("…evacuation…") finally "*…kamar jenazah…*" ("hospital morgue"), describing sequence rather than blame. Driver inclusion is legitimised by operational presence "TDS (41)… dokter… sadar, tampak syok" ("TDS (41)… doctor… conscious, in shock") and legal determination is postponed with a jurisdictional close, "*perkara ditangani polisi*" ("the case handled by the police"). In the defensive cluster, authorization functions as counter-legitimation: a forensic proxy "*tidak ada goresan*" ("no scratch marks") is advanced as enough rationalisation for excluding the car/driver from

causal salience, returning the story to human error in the deceased's manoeuvre. These bundles matter because they act as the textual 'glue' through which audiences decide what to believe, who to trust, and how to allocate blame under uncertainty (Vaara & Tienari, 2008; Entman, 1993). They also travel: once AUTH+RATIO has been published in one outlet, it is echoed intertextually across others, while MORAL/MYTH overlays intensify or soften stance depending on headline economy and house style (Bednarek & Caple, 2014). The net effect is a stabilised causal commonsense that privileges police-technical explanations, normalises emergency choreography as institutional competence, and leaves little room for alternative accounts until new, higher-status authorisations intervene. By the time additional sources emerge CCTV, eyewitnesses public opinion may already have sedimented around the early packages. In short, legitimation bundles function as narrative infrastructures for assigning responsibility in the first news cycle.

Why do these legitimation bundles recur? Three structural pressures interact. First, epistemic competition: whoever speaks first sets the initial 'why,' anchoring subsequent narration; hence police authorization can determine causality early, while BPBD authorization shapes order (Ekström, 2002). Second, cognitive economy: short chains and familiar story structures reduce processing effort. A four-step mechanism: "*menyalip*" ("attempted to overtake") to the phrase "*ruang tak cukup*" ("not enough space") then "*kontak*" (sideswiped"), and finally "jatuh" ("fell") or a timestamped procedure: "112", "*tim*" to "*evakuasi*" ("evacuation") finally kamar jenazah" ("hospital morgue") are easier to circulate, remember, than multi-actor, contingent scenarios (Entman, 1993; Bednarek & Caple, 2014). Third, liability management: attributing fault to a specific driver before evidentiary closure increases legal risk; procedural or environmental rationalisations ("ruang tidak cukup") appear safer. Moral and mythic cues add momentum without creating litigable claims: "*remaja putri*" (young woman) + risky act imply a cautionary lesson, while titulation, "*dokter*" ("doctor") carries an aura of authority without asserting causality (van Leeuwen, 2007). These pressures together explain why AUTH+RATIO dominates, MORAL is often implicit, and MYTH appears in headline grammar. They also explain the stability of early frames: once bundles fit the established style and legal advice, deviations require counter-authorisations or higher-status evidence (e.g., CCTV) to dislodge them. Legitimation in breaking news is not just decorative rhetoric but a core mechanism that organises attention, allocates blame, and pre-shapes the range of plausible futures.

CONCLUSION

Across nine reports published on the same day about the 20 August 2025 Bratang, Surabaya crash, three key lessons emerge. First, recontextualisation shapes early understanding: outlets stabilise uncertainty by selecting actors, simplifying processes, and structuring time–space into plausible causal chains (van Leeuwen, 2008; Entman, 1993). Second, social-actor design allocates accountability: the deceased is personalised and invoked in pre-accident clauses, the driver's prominence shifts with focalisation, and authorities are operationalised as arbiters (van Leeuwen, 2007; van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999). Third, legitimation bundles (authorisation combined with rationalisation and moral overlays) help stabilise responsibility before conclusion by linking claims to official voices and straightforward mechanisms (Vaara & Tienari, 2008). Police-led items emphasise a two-motor script; emergency-led items highlight the driver and stage timelines; defensive items name the car to deny causal importance.

Methodologically, the study advances mixed-method CDA for breaking news by combining a sentence-level coding scheme with a convergent-parallel design: quantitative tallies of inclusion/exclusion, activation/passivation, and legitimation types are integrated with qualitative pattern tracing and close reading (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; van Leeuwen, 2008). It operationalises van Leeuwen's socio-semiotic toolkit for Indonesian online journalism, adds robust inter-rater reliability via Cohen's kappa, and visualises results through joint displays that align actor options with legitimation bundles. Substantively, it refines framing theory by demonstrating how early recontextualisation and authorisation–rationalisation packages pre-structure responsibility maps under uncertainty (Entman, 1993; Vaara & Tienari, 2008). The contribution is threefold: a replicable coding protocol for fast-moving events; a bridge between discourse theory and newsroom constraints; and an evidence-based account of how naming, blaming, and erasing co-produce common sense.

Several limitations call for caution and further research. The sample is limited to nine texts about a single event sent on the same day. This prevents us from analysing how subsequent updates, CCTV footage, or court rulings might revise responsibility over time. As we relied on publicly available articles, we cannot observe the editorial negotiations, legal vetting, or sourcing considerations that may influence recontextualisation decisions. Although inter-rater reliability was calculated, coder expectations and culture-specific

inference may still skew judgments about activation, gender marking, or moral cues. Future studies should expand the design across different cities, languages, and beats, compare breaking news coverage with follow-up reporting, and combine text analysis with interviews of journalists, editors, police, and emergency officials. Audience research is also needed to test how legitimation bundles are shared – do authorisation plus rationalisation chains more effectively establish causal beliefs than alternative combinations? Computational discourse analysis could scale up coding to larger corpora while preserving theory-led categories, such as rule-based extraction of activation and legitimation signals. Multimodal analysis should also incorporate images, headlines, and captions as co-constructors of stance (Bednarek & Caple, 2014). Lastly, ethical reflection is necessary: early textual stabilisation may misallocate blame in rapidly evolving cases, with consequences for grieving families and reputations. Developing newsroom-facing guidelines grounded in socio-semiotic CDA could mitigate harms while preserving speed and accuracy.

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