



Between Tradition, Cultural Expression, and Islamic Values: A Representational Analysis of the 2026 Simbang Kulon Night Carnival

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Abstract

Simbang Kulon Night Carnival (SKNC) 2026, held as part of the Prophet's Birthday (Maulid Nabi) commemoration and a mass circumcision event in Buaran, Pekalongan Regency, became a public controversy after clips of the performance went viral on social media. This study aims to analyze how the media framed the controversy and represented the relationship between tradition, cultural expression, and Islamic values. It employs a qualitative approach with Robert N. Entman's framing analysis, covering problem definition, causal diagnosis, moral judgment, and treatment recommendation, applied to 15 online news articles published around 14-16 September 2026. The findings show that the main problem was defined as performance content deemed to deviate from the meaning of the Prophet's birthday, with causes attributed to a mystical and horror-themed concept, participants' limited understanding, and the spread of the video on social media. The strongest moral judgment came from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), while participants responded by admitting an unintended mistake and apologizing. The recommendations highlighted were evaluative and preventive rather than punitive, through clarification by the organizing committee. In the media's representation, tradition and cultural expression are not rejected but conditionally accepted, provided they align with Islamic values referenced through religious authority. This study contributes to mass communication research, particularly on the role of online media framing in shaping public discourse on religious and cultural issues in Indonesia.

Keywords: Entman Framing, Media Representation, Simbang Kulon Night Carnival (SKNC) 2026

1. Introduction

Tradition and religion are closely related in Indonesian society. Religious activities are not only manifested through worship practices, but also through cultural traditions that have developed within the community. The commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, for example, can be held through religious studies, the recitation of salawat (prayer), social activities, and various local cultural expressions. This diversity of forms demonstrates that love for the Prophet Muhammad is expressed in different ways. (Hendra et al., 2026) Hendra et al. (2026) positioned the tradition of the Prophet's birthday as an arena for contestation in da'wah communication, namely a meeting place between da'wah approaches that integrate Islamic values with local culture and religious approaches that emphasize textual legitimacy. These differences in approach demonstrate that religious practices can be interpreted in various ways according to the religious understanding and orientation that develops in society.

In addition to celebrating the Prophet's Birthday, circumcision is a religious practice that also exists as a social tradition. In Javanese society, circumcision is carried out as part of a series of life cycle events that are usually accompanied by celebrations and community togetherness (Geertz, 1960). Mass circumcision is a collective form of this practice: many children are circumcised in a series of events involving families, community leaders, and local organizers. When mass circumcision is combined with the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday, two religious practices meet in a single communal event that opens up space for local cultural expression. This aligns with the diversity of forms of Maulid celebrations described by Hendra et al. (2026), ranging from normative religious practices to local cultural expressions.

In this context, the 2026 Simbang Kulon Night Carnival (SKNC) is a relevant phenomenon to examine. SKNC 2026 was initiated as part of the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday and the 61st mass circumcision. The number "61" indicates that mass circumcision in Simbang Kulon is a community tradition that has been repeated annually, with the carnival as an accompanying cultural expression. Therefore, the controversy surrounding SKNC 2026 does not stem from a single religious event, but rather from the intersection of three layers: the

commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday, the mass circumcision, and the carnival as an art and culture event. The district government itself calls the event a commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday, as well as art and culture. What is at issue is not the circumcision or the Birthday itself, but rather the content and form of the carnival performances.

The event took place in the Buaran area of Pekalongan Regency on Thursday, September 10, 2026, and became a hot topic after a video clip of the performance went viral on social media. The video showed performances featuring devil costumes, one-eyed symbols, and inverted pentagrams. This attention sparked debate about the appropriateness of the event's implementation with the meaning of the Prophet's Birthday commemoration. On the one hand, cultural activities can be interpreted as a form of community participation in celebrating religious traditions. On the other hand, the implementation format raises questions about its suitability with certain religious understandings. Therefore, the controversy surrounding the 2026 SKNC needs to be understood as a matter of differing interpretations of cultural practices within a religious context, not merely as a conflict between tradition and religion.

Such controversies reach the public primarily through the media. The development of mass and digital media influences how people understand religious and cultural events, as they not only convey information but also structure the news through the selection of facts, sources, terms, and specific perspectives. (Amiliya, 2022) , who analyzed the coverage of blasphemy cases on Kompas.com using the Gamson and Modigliani model, showed that ideology, vision, and media background influence how they construct religious realities. Fuadi and Novita (2024) used Robert N. Entman's framing analysis to examine the framing of religious issues and its relationship to public understanding and interfaith harmony. Triyono and Setyawan (2021) applied Entman's four framing elements to the coverage of church burnings in Aceh Singkil in the *Republika* daily and found that the conflict was framed as a result of violations of regulations on places of worship and a lack of responsiveness from the authorities. These three studies demonstrate the relevance of framing analysis in interpreting how the media present religious issues.

However, the controversy surrounding the Prophet's Birthday celebration and local cultural expressions still needs to be examined through specific reporting objects and contexts. Hendra et al. (2026) discuss the contestation of da'wah communication within the Prophet's Birthday tradition through a literature review, while the framing research mentioned above focuses on other religious conflicts and issues. The 2026 SKNC coverage provides a unique opportunity to understand how the media frames the intersection of local traditions, cultural expressions, and Islamic values within the series of Prophet's Birthday celebrations, and how all three are represented within that framework.

Based on the description, this study aims to analyze how the media frames and represents the SKNC 2026 controversy in the relationship between tradition, cultural expression, and Islamic values. The study uses a qualitative approach with Robert N. Entman's framing analysis model, which includes four elements: defining problems , identifying the causes of the problem (*diagnose causes*), *making moral judgments* , and recommending solutions (*treatment recommendations*). The research data consists of media coverage of SKNC 2026 that includes debates regarding the organization of the event. The formulation of the proposed problem is as follows.

1. How does the media frame the 2026 Simbang Kulon Night Carnival (SKNC) controversy in the series of celebrations for the Prophet's birthday?
2. How does the media represent the different views of the public regarding the implementation of SKNC 2026 in the context of cultural traditions and Islamic values?
3. How does the media framing of the SKNC 2026 controversy represent the Islamic perspective on the relationship between local cultural traditions and the celebration of the Prophet's Birthday?

The research findings are expected to contribute to mass communication studies, particularly regarding the role of media framing in shaping public discourse on religious and cultural issues. They are also expected to provide reflection for cultural event organizers and the media in presenting similar issues.

2. Research Methods

2.1. Analysis Approach and Model

This study uses a qualitative approach with a framing analysis method to examine news coverage of the 2026 SKNC controversy during the Prophet's Birthday celebrations. A qualitative approach was chosen because the research focuses on the meaning, discourse construction, and media representation of the controversy related to local cultural traditions and Islamic values. This study does not aim to measure the impact of news coverage on audiences, but rather to analyze how the media structure and highlight certain aspects of the event through news texts.

The analysis model used is Robert N. Entman's (1993) framing model with four elements: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and treatment recommendations. This model is used to identify how the media defines the SKNC 2026 controversy, explains the causes of differing views, presents assessments of the parties involved, and presents solutions or resolution steps.

2.2. Data Sources and Data Collection Techniques

The research data consists of news texts discussing the 2026 SKNC controversy in the context of the Prophet's Birthday celebrations. The primary data source comes from online media reports containing information about the event's organization, public responses, religious views, and debates regarding the relationship between cultural traditions and Islamic values. Supporting data sources include scientific articles, books, documents, and literature relevant to framing theory, mass communication, the Prophet's Birthday tradition, and the relationship between Islam and local culture.

Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques, namely tracing, collecting, and archiving news stories relevant to the research focus. Selected news stories had to meet three criteria: discuss the 2026 National Conference on National Awakening (SKNC), relate to the controversy surrounding the holding of events as part of the Prophet's Birthday celebrations, and contain information that could be analyzed using Entman's framing model. Each news story was recorded based on the media name, news title, publication date, author's name (if available), and source link for data retrieval. Based on these criteria, 15 news stories published around September 14-16, 2026, were selected.

2.3. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted descriptively and interpretively by applying Entman's (1993) four framing elements. The analysis stages are as follows.

1. Defining problems : identifying how the media defines the SKNC 2026 controversy and the aspects that are positioned as the main problems.
2. Identify the causes of the problem (*diagnose causes*): analyze the parties, factors, or circumstances that the media presents as the cause of the controversy.
3. Moral judgments (*making moral judgments*): identifying the assessments, arguments, and value considerations presented by the media regarding the organization of the event, especially in relation to cultural traditions and Islamic perspectives.
4. Treatment recommendations : analyzing solutions, responses, or resolution steps offered by sources or highlighted in the news.

The results of the analysis of these four elements were compared across news stories, taking into account sources, titles, and diction. In the interpretation stage, the results were re-read based on three themes aligned with the problem formulation: how traditions, cultural expressions, and Islamic values were represented. Interpretation was based on the content of the news stories, not on the assumption that a particular media outlet supports or rejects the 2026 SKNC.

2.4. Data Validity

Data validity is maintained through cross-checking of news content and relevant supporting sources. This cross-checking involves comparing reports on the same event, examining the context of sources' statements, and ensuring that the quotes and information analyzed align with the original sources. Any discrepancies in information or interpretation between media outlets are noted as part of the findings, rather than immediately being considered errors or bias. This step aims to maintain the accuracy of the analysis and ensure that the conclusions have a traceable basis.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Event Overview and News Mapping

There were 15 news items that met the research criteria and were published around September 14-16, 2026, or four to six days after the event took place on September 10, 2026. Table 1 contains the news items that were directly referred to in this analysis as an initial mapping of the news, namely the media that reported it, the time of publication, and the main focus of each news item before being analyzed using the Entman model.

Table 1: Initial Mapping of News Referenced in the Analysis

No	Media	Date of issue	Main focus (initial identification)
1	CNBC Indonesia	September 15, 2026	MUI statement regarding the carnival concept
2	iNews	September 15, 2026	MUI statement regarding the carnival concept
3	VIVA	September 15, 2026	MUI statement regarding the carnival concept
4	SindoNews	September 15, 2026	MUI statement regarding the carnival concept
5	iNews	September 14, 2026	Viral video and district government's plan to summon the committee
6	SindoNews	September 16, 2026	Simone Team Clarification

Source: Author's search results, September 2026. The main focus column is the initial identification, not the final result of the framing analysis.

In addition to the news in the table, the analysis also refers to news coverage of the participant's apology on September 14, 2026, and Indoraya news coverage featuring the views of a prominent figure. In general, the focus of the news coverage can be grouped into three trends. First, news coverage highlights religious views and responses, particularly statements, criticisms, or appeals from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) regarding the concepts, symbols, and attractions of the carnival. Second, news coverage focuses on developing controversies, such as the circulation of videos, local government responses, and planned action against the organizers. Third, news coverage features clarifications and responses from related parties, including participant apologies and committee clarifications.

This difference in focus is relevant to framing analysis because each news item can highlight different aspects of an event. News items emphasizing the MUI statement are analyzed to see how the issue is defined and moral judgments are constructed. News items focusing on clarifications from the committee or participants are used to see how the parties involved explain the event and respond to the controversy. News items about local government actions are analyzed to see how institutional responses and potential solutions are presented.

3.2. Results of Entman's Framing Analysis

The information presented by the media certainly has a purpose, whether it is commercial, ideological, or political. To achieve this goal, the media frames the news by influencing the reader's mind so that the reader forms an opinion according to what the media expects, or what can be called framing. According to Robert N. Entman, framing theory is the emphasis of certain aspects in a news story.

This emphasis means eliminating part of the story by emphasizing a particular story. Therefore, a media in providing information To the public, the media can develop events or cases that are considered likely to influence the public with the issues being conveyed. Framing, therefore, plays a role in framing information so that the information conveyed aligns with the media's interests (Wijanarko, 2014).

3.2.1. Defining Problems

The most frequently highlighted issue is the content of the performances, which are considered to deviate from the meaning of the Prophet's Birthday. In reports sourced from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), horror visualizations and symbols deemed to resemble satanic rituals are said to diminish the spiritual meaning of the celebration. The MUI permits educational carnivals, but considers carnivals with animistic or frightening overtones to be contrary to the Maulid celebration. The public slaughter of goats is also questioned as uncivilized and deviates from Islamic values. The district government formulated the issue more neutrally: the event is both a commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday and an art and cultural event, so clarification is needed regarding the intent of the scenes displayed.

Thus, two competing problem formulations exist. The MUI defines the issue as the content and nuance of the performance, namely whether it aligns with the meaning of Maulid. While the district government defines it as the need for clarification regarding activities that have the dual status of both a religious commemoration and a cultural and artistic work.

3.2.2. Identify The Cause Of The Problem (Diagnose Causes)

The reasons cited were threefold. First, the show's mystical and horror-tinged concept. Second, a lack of understanding among participants: Team Simone representatives admitted to a lack of literacy and explained that their concept was inspired by other carnival performances they had seen. The committee and participants also stated they were unaware of the special meaning of the costumes and concepts, which were then associated with the ritual. Third, the video's distribution played a role: controversy arose after a video clip circulated widely on social media.

Two points need to be made. First, the lack of understanding emerged primarily as a confession from participants. There is no textual evidence that the media themselves explicitly linked the incident to a lack of religious literacy, so the framing as a literacy issue cannot yet be established as a media finding. Second, none of the news items examined highlighted the committee's curation or oversight mechanisms as a cause; these aspects were only implied in the evaluation plan. Therefore, whether the reporting of the committee's summons and clarification positioned the issue as a governance issue, or simply reported on developments, cannot be ascertained from the texts analyzed.

3.2.3. Moral Judgment (Make Moral Judgments)

The most emphatic moral judgment came from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI). M. Cholil Nafis, the Deputy Chairman of the MUI, stated that the performance contradicted the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. He emphasized that the Maulid celebration should be filled with educational and calming activities, such as the recitation of salawat (prayer) and the recitation of the Quran. A figure in the Indoraya news outlet also expressed concern that the performance would create a negative perception of Maulid activities in general. Instead, the participants admitted their mistake without any intention: Tim Simone asserted that they never intended to perform or represent satanic rituals and apologized for any unrest caused.

The moral judgment in this report rests on two different value propositions. The MUI assessed it based on its conformity to the teachings and objectives of the Maulid, while the participants explained it based on their intentions. Neither side directly contradicted the other: the participants did not defend the content of the performance, but rejected the interpretation that the performance was intended as a ritual.

3.2.4. Treatment Recommendations

The recommendations are evaluative and preventative, not punitive. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) urged the committee and the community to restore the Maulid tradition in accordance with the guidance of previous

scholars, as formulated by Imam As-Suyuthi, and asked the committee to be more selective and careful in designing expressions of Islamic arts and culture. The district government plans to summon the committee for clarification with the MUI, and the results will be used as evaluation material to ensure that similar events continue to respect cultural values, societal norms, and religious nuances. Participants responded with an apology. A summary of the results of the analysis of the four elements is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Entman's Framing Analysis of SKNC 2026 News

Entman Elements	Main findings	Prominent voice
Problem definition	The performance's content (horror, symbols deemed to resemble satanic rituals, and the public slaughter of goats) was deemed to diminish the spiritual meaning of Maulid. The district government defined it as a Maulid commemoration activity and cultural arts event, which required clarification.	MUI; district government
Identify the cause	The show's mystical and horror-themed concept; a lack of understanding from participants and a concept inspired by other carnivals; and the dissemination of videos on social media. The committee's curation or oversight was only implied in the evaluation plan.	MUI; Simone Team; committee
Moral judgment	The attraction was deemed contrary to the Prophet's teachings; the Maulid celebration should be educational and uplifting; and there were concerns about negative perceptions of the Maulid. Participants admitted their mistakes without intent and apologized.	KH M Cholil Nafis (MUI); figure in Indoraya news; Simone Team
Recommendations for completion	Evaluative and preventive: returning to the direction of the ulama, the committee is more selective, the committee is summoned for clarification with the MUI, the results become evaluation material.	MUI; district government; participants

Source: Author's analysis results, 2026.

3.3. Sources and Diction in Reporting

This research method considers sources, titles, and diction as frame markers. From the source perspective, the referenced news shows four groups of voices: the MUI, represented by Deputy Chairman KH M Cholil Nafis; the district government; the committee and participants, namely Tim Simone; and a figure quoted by Indoraya. This division is in line with the focus of the news in Table 1. The September 15 news placed the MUI as the main source, the September 14 news reported the district government's plan to summon the committee, and the September 16 news gave space for clarification from participants. In the referenced news, the voice that spoke about values (MUI) appeared with a firm assessment, while the voice that explained the event (the committee and participants) appeared in the form of clarification and apology.

The diction inherent in the informants' statements shows differences in reference. The MUI statement uses judgmental and religious vocabulary, such as horror, satanic ritual, animism, frightening, uncivilized, deviant, and sharia. The district government's formulation uses procedural and neutral vocabulary, such as warning, arts and culture, clarification, and evaluation. Participants' statements use vocabulary of intention and regret, such as inspired, not intended, lack of literacy, anxiety, and apology. These differences in vocabulary indicate that a single event is discussed in three registers: the register of religious values, the register of governance, and the register of personal intention.

Because the vocabulary comes from sources' statements, this study refrains from concluding that the diction reflects the media's own attitudes. What can be stated is that the media chose to quote and highlight these statements, and these choices shaped the news story's framing.

3.4. Discussion: Representation of Tradition, Cultural Expression, and Islamic Values

This section reads the results of Entman's analysis according to three themes that are in line with the second and third problem formulations, namely how traditions, cultural expressions, and Islamic values are represented in the 2026 SKNC news. Table 3 summarizes the readings, and the following description explains them one by one.

Table 3: Representation of Traditions, Cultural Expressions, and Islamic Values in SKNC 2026 Reporting

Theme	Representation in news reporting	Conditions or markers	Carrier voice
Tradition	An authoritative religious tradition is anchored in the direction of previous scholars	The content of the activities corresponds to the meaning of Mawlid, for example reading salawat and the Al-Qur'an	MUI
Cultural expression	A valid but conditional space	Educational; not animistic or scary; needs clarification of the meaning of the scene	MUI; district government; participants
Islamic values	The assessment benchmark voiced by the authorities	Educating and calming; civilized according to Islamic values; paying attention to cultural values and community norms	MUI; referred to participants and district government

Source: Author's analysis results, 2026.

3.4.1. Tradition: Maulid is Anchored In The Authority Of The Ulama

In the news articles referenced in this analysis, none of the sources questioned the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday itself. The same is true for mass circumcisions: in the news articles cited, they were presented as part of a series of commonly accepted and uncontested traditions. Thus, the controversy shifted from the legitimacy of the tradition to the boundaries of the accompanying cultural expression. What was at issue was the content and form of the performance. This differs from the contestation described by Hendra et al. (2026), namely the debate over the legitimacy of the Prophet's Birthday as a religious practice. In the 2026 SKNC news, the Prophet's Birthday was presented as a commonly accepted tradition and a point of reference for assessing deviations.

This tradition is also presented as a practice with normative references, rather than as a fluid local custom. The Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) calls for a return to the Maulid tradition, guided by the guidance of previous scholars, as formulated by Imam As-Suyuthi, and cites the recitation of salawat (prayer) and the Quran as examples of appropriate content. In other words, within this news framework, tradition is interpreted primarily as an authoritative religious tradition. This interpretation explains why attractions perceived as resembling mystical rituals are read as deviations from tradition, rather than variations thereof.

3.4.2. Cultural Expression: a Legitimate But Conditional Space

Cultural expression is not rejected in this report. The Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) permits educational carnivals, and the district government positions the event as a commemoration of Maulid (the birth of Prophet Muhammad), as well as an art and cultural event. Cultural expression is therefore presented as a legitimate space, but with a condition: it must be educational and not have animistic or frightening overtones. This condition shifts the question from whether culture is permissible at Maulid to what kind of culture is appropriate to be present there.

The category of culture itself is interpreted differently by each party. For the district government, culture is a label that covers the event and serves as the basis for requests for clarification. For the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), the animist or horror nuances of the carnival are a matter of values. For participants, the scenes in question were inspired by other carnival performances and were not intended to convey any specific meaning. In the news articles cited, views defending the carnival solely as freedom of expression do not emerge as a distinct voice; the cultural side is present primarily through formulations from the district government and clarifications from participants.

These findings are indicative. The conclusion about the dominance of religious perspectives and the lack of perspectives on freedom of cultural expression can only be confirmed after rereading all 15 news articles with that perspective.

3.4.3. Islamic Values: Benchmarks Voiced By Authorities

The Islamic values in this report serve as a benchmark. The criteria are articulated by religious authorities: Maulid activities should be educational and uplifting, and public goat slaughter is questioned as uncivilized and deviates from Islamic values. The most emphatic moral judgment comes from the Deputy Chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), so the authority setting the benchmark and the authority evaluating it are shared by the same source.

The participants' responses demonstrated acceptance of this benchmark. Admitting mistakes without intent and apologizing did not challenge the proposed criteria, but rather sought to separate intent from effect. The district government, in turn, formulated a broader benchmark, requiring that similar events still adhere to cultural values, societal norms, and religious nuances. Thus, Islamic values were presented not as one side of the debate, but as a benchmark referenced by nearly all parties represented.

3.4.4. Position Of Findings In Relation To Previous Research

This finding adds another perspective to the picture presented by Hendra et al. (2026). While the contestation they mapped concerned the legitimacy of the Maulid, the 2026 SKNC coverage showed the controversy shifting to the boundaries of form: not whether the Maulid could be celebrated culturally, but rather what kind of culture was appropriate for the Maulid. Compared with Triyono and Setyawan (2021), who found that the Aceh Singkil conflict was framed through regulatory violations and the response of authorities, in the 2026 SKNC, the issue was framed through the content of the performance and the assessment of religious authorities, while the institutional response only emerged at the recommendation stage, namely the summoning of the committee and clarification with the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI).

Fuadi and Novita (2024) linked the framing of religious issues to public understanding and interfaith harmony. In the 2026 SKNC reporting, the emphasis on evaluation and apology, rather than punishment, can be interpreted as a tendency to channel controversy into clarification. However, the impact of the reporting on the audience was not measured in this study, so the reading remains at the textual level. Meanwhile, Amiliya's (2022) finding that media background and ideology influence the construction of religious reality serves as a reminder that differences in emphasis between the news stories in this study do not necessarily reflect partisanship, and that reading this requires further analysis of the characteristics of each media outlet.

3.4.5. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, these findings suggest that Entman's four elements can be used not only to map frames but also to interpret representations, namely who is given the space to define problems, assess them, and recommend solutions. A reading of the 2026 SKNC shows that in the issue of the intersection of religion and culture, the frame can shift from the legitimacy of practice to the boundaries of the form of practice. This shift is difficult to see if the issue is read solely as a conflict between supporters and opponents of culture, even though Geertz (1960) and Woodward (1989) have warned that the relationship between religion and culture cannot be simplified in this way.

Practically, there are two implications. For organizers of cultural activities within a religious context, this report demonstrates that concepts, costumes, and symbols will be interpreted through religious standards, making pre-performance conceptual review and explanation of the intended meaning of the scenes crucial. This aligns with the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI)'s request for more selective organizing. For the media, the choice of sources determines who will judge and who will explain. Allowing space for diverse perspectives, including those that view carnival as a cultural expression, will help readers assess the controversy more holistically.

4. Conclusion

This research shows that the media framed the 2026 SKNC controversy primarily as a matter of performance content deemed to deviate from the meaning of the Prophet's Birthday. The causes were attributed to the mystical

and horror-tinged performance concept, the lack of understanding among participants, and the dissemination of the video on social media. The recommendations highlighted were evaluative and preventative, including summoning the committee for clarification with the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) and requesting that the committee be more selective. The differing public views are represented through three main positions. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) provided the most assertive moral assessment, referring to the teachings and objectives of the Maulid. The district government formulated the issue more neutrally, stating that the Maulid commemoration, along with arts and culture, required clarification. Participants acknowledged their mistakes without intent and apologized. The view defending the carnival solely as freedom of expression did not emerge as a standalone opinion in the cited news reports, and this needs to be confirmed across the entire corpus. From an Islamic perspective, traditions and cultural expressions are presented as conditionally acceptable. The Mawlid tradition is interpreted as a religious tradition anchored in the authority of religious scholars, cultural expression as a legitimate space as long as it is educational and not mystical, and Islamic values as a benchmark articulated by religious authorities and referenced by almost all parties. The controversy thus shifts from the legitimacy of the Mawlid to the limits of cultural expression within it. The theoretical and practical implications of this research are outlined in the discussion section. Further research could expand the analysis through interviews with organizers and participants, comparisons of characteristics between media, and exploration of discourse on social media.

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