



(MUDIMA)



An Analysis of Muslim Gatekeepers in the Production of the Program "Bocor Alus Politik" on *Tempodotco*

Ellys Lestari Pambayun^{1*}, Ghaly Ihsan Fauzi²

PTIQ University

Corresponding Author: Ellys Lestari Pambayun ellyslestari@ptiq.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: *Gatekeeper*, Muslim, Program Production, "Bocor Alus Politik"

Received : 3 May

Revised : 23 June

Accepted : 24 July

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the role of Muslim gatekeepers in the production of the political satire program Bocor Alus Politik on Tempo.co. Using Pamela Shoemaker and Timothy Reese's gatekeeping theory, which emphasizes the influence of individual, organizational, and ideological levels in content selection, the research explores how Muslim identity and values intersect with editorial decisions. Employing a qualitative case study method, in-depth interviews were conducted with the Editor-in-Chief, journalists, and selected audience members of Bocor Alus Politik. The findings reveal that while editorial policies maintain secular professionalism, individual Muslim journalists and editors subtly influence topic framing to align with cultural and religious sensitivities without compromising journalistic integrity. Audiences, particularly young Muslim viewers, appreciate the program's critical yet respectful tone toward political issues. This balance suggests that religious identity can coexist with media neutrality when gatekeeping is exercised thoughtfully. The study concludes that Muslim gatekeepers in Bocor Alus Politik operate at the intersection of faith, media ethics, and political critique, contributing to a more culturally responsive journalism. Implications highlight the importance of acknowledging religious identity in newsroom dynamics and its potential to shape inclusive public discourse in digital political journalism

INTRODUCTION

Freedom of the press is one of the main pillars of modern democratic systems. It not only guarantees the public's right to know the truth but also serves as a tool of social control capable of balancing power. Stacks & Salwen (2009) argue that, in practice, this idealism often clashes with political and power interests—especially when the media attempts to voice sensitive and controversial issues related to the government. Harahap (2017) notes that this situation becomes even more complex in today's digital era, where information spreads rapidly yet remain vulnerable to manipulation and pressure from various actors. A concrete example of this condition can be seen in the *Bocor Alus Politik* program, broadcast on YouTube via the Tempodotco channel.

Bocor Alus Politik first aired on May 20, 2023, as an investigative journalism initiative exploring various political, legal, and social issues in Indonesia. The program adopts a news feature format that not only informs but also educates and invites the public to think critically about national political dynamics. However, Probel (2025) states that the program's boldness in revealing facts and presenting critical perspectives toward government policies has led to intimidation. The delivery of a pig's head and rat carcasses to Tempo's editorial office symbolizes the real terror faced by free and responsible journalism. This incident underscores that press freedom in Indonesia still faces serious challenges, especially when confronting power actors unwilling to accept criticism.

In this context, Irene (2021) emphasizes that the role of journalists as gatekeepers becomes crucial. They are not only tasked with filtering and selecting which information is worthy of publication but are also responsible for maintaining the integrity and objectivity of the news presented to the public. West & Turner (2019) explain that the gatekeeping concept—first introduced by Kurt Lewin and later developed by communication scholars like Shoemaker and Vos—is highly relevant for understanding how information is constructed, selected, and presented amid both internal and external media pressures. The gatekeeping process is

not merely technical selection but also reflects the values upheld by the media and its journalists.

This research seeks to explore how the gatekeeping process is constructed in the production of the *Bocor Alus Politik* program at Tempodotco. It places Muslim journalists as key actors in the information filtering process, considering religious and moral values as integral to their professional integrity. This is important because Tempodotco's newsroom includes journalists from diverse religious backgrounds, including Muslims. Febriany (2019) reported that in situations where media independence is under threat, how Muslim journalists uphold both professionalism and Islamic values as gatekeepers becomes a central question in this study.

This study contributes novelty in two main areas. *First*, in terms of object of study, it highlights *Bocor Alus Politik* as a representation of digital investigative journalism in Indonesia—a topic that has not been widely explored in academic research, particularly within the YouTube platform context. Most previous studies focus more on print or traditional online media, while the migration of journalism to social media and video platforms like YouTube has received less scholarly attention, as discussed by Hanum (2012). *Second*, this study integrates a religious perspective—specifically Islam—in understanding the gatekeeping process. As presented by Yunarika et al. (2022), the role of Muslim journalists is analyzed not only from a professional standpoint but also from religious values believed to influence ethical journalistic practices.

Additionally, the research introduces an interdisciplinary dimension combining communication studies, journalism, and Islamic studies. This integration is rarely found in contemporary gatekeeping literature in Indonesia. Hence, this study enriches communication science while also contributing to the development of ethical journalism rooted in strong moral values.

Theoretically, this research expands understanding of gatekeeping theory, particularly within the context of new media and social platforms. By examining the information filtering

process in an online television program like *Bocor Alus Politik*, the study shows that traditional gatekeeping theories remain relevant but must be adapted to digital challenges. As noted in Hidayat's (2021) study, gatekeeping is not only influenced by organizational and professional factors, but also by personal, cultural, and religious values held by journalists. Practically, this study offers critical reflection for the Indonesian journalism field. Amid increasing political pressure and information polarization, journalists are required to uphold integrity and courage in reporting the truth. Ngazis (2021, Pambayun & Saraguh, 2024) found that Islamic-based journalism research shows that religious values, particularly Islam, can serve as a strong moral foundation for journalists. This is important not only for Muslim journalists but also for media institutions in fostering a culture of integrity and responsibility.

From a policy perspective, the findings of this research can serve as input for stakeholders such as the Press Council, journalist organizations, and journalism education institutions to design training and regulations that emphasize not only technical aspects but also ethical and spiritual dimensions in journalism.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the construction of the gatekeeping process in the production of the *Bocor Alus Politik* program at Tempodotco, by highlighting how information is selected, edited, and presented by the editorial team. It also identifies internal and external factors influencing the gatekeeping process within Tempodotco—ranging from editorial considerations, political pressure, to media organizational dynamics. Furthermore, it explores the role of Muslim journalists as gatekeepers in a multicultural newsroom, and how Islamic values influence editorial decision-making in news production.

By focusing on *Bocor Alus Politik*, this study demonstrates that gatekeeping is not only about selecting and filtering information, but also about courage, integrity, and values. In the face of political pressure and threats to press freedom, media like Tempodotco and its journalists continue to play a

vital role as guardians of truth. Sopiyan & Madreal (2024) assert that by exploring the role of Muslim journalists as subjects who integrate professional and religious values, this study offers a more comprehensive perspective in understanding news production in the digital era.

METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach, aiming to understand social realities and the subjective experiences of media practitioners, particularly within the production context of the *Bocor Alus Politik* (BAP) program produced by Muslim journalists at Tempo.co. In line with Denzin's view as cited in Stake (2017), qualitative research allows the researcher to delve into the meanings constructed by research subjects in their social lives. This approach emphasizes an understanding of processes, meanings, and dynamics that occur within natural contexts—in this case, the digital newsroom environment of the *Bocor Alus Politik* YouTube channel.

The research uses a case study method, as defined by Pambayun (2013), which provides a framework for exploring a specific case in depth. In this study, the case concerns the gatekeeping process, or information filtering, in the production of digital political content for *Bocor Alus Politik*. Through this method, the researcher seeks to understand editorial dynamics from both internal (media actors) and external (audience) perspectives.

The research subjects consist of four main informants:

1. Husein, a Muslim journalist directly involved in producing BAP content,
2. Pramono Stefanus, Editor-in-Chief of Tempo.co,
3. Ihsan Zahri, the producer of BAP, and
4. Bahtiar Heraudie, an active viewer of the program.

The study was conducted at the Tempo Media office located in South Jakarta, from November 15 to December 1, 2024.

To collect data, the researcher employed three main techniques:

1. Non-participant observation, carried out on November 23, 2024, at PT Tempo Inti Media Tbk in Palmerah, where the researcher observed the production process directly without intervening.
2. In-depth interviews, conducted flexibly and unstructured with the four main informants. These interviews aimed to explore the informants' understanding, attitudes, personal values, as well as their professional and religious views regarding digital political journalism in the *Bocor Alus Politik* program.
3. Documentation, which involved collecting written sources, audiovisual materials, and social media content related to the BAP program.

The data analysis used four types of qualitative transcripts:

1. Core Transcript summarized the key points from conversations with Ihsan Zahri, Husein, Pramono Stefanus (editorial team), and audience member Bahtiar Heraudie;
2. Basic Transcript presented raw, unedited versions of interviews with the *Bocor Alus Politik* editorial team;
3. Full Transcript included vocal expressions and tone variations of all four informants to capture emotional and intentional nuance;
4. Conversation Transcript recorded non-verbal elements in detail, such as intonation, pauses, and laughter.

Together, these four transcript types were used to uncover deeper meanings behind the gatekeeping process in the production of *Bocor Alus Politik* at Tempo.co.

To ensure data validity, source triangulation was applied by comparing and cross-checking information from different informants. This method was used to strengthen the accuracy and credibility of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Hierarchy of Influence Approach in Exploring Gatekeeping in the Bocor Alus Politik (BAP) Program at Tempo.co

This study applies the Hierarchy of Influence framework to explore gatekeeping practices in the Bocor Alus Politik (BAP) program at Tempo.co, using observation and interviews with key informants: Husein (BAP journalist), Ihsan (BAP producer), Pram (Editor-in-Chief), and Bahtiar (audience of the BAP YouTube channel).

Muslim Gatekeeper's Hierarchy of Influence in the Production of Bocor Alus Politik at Tempo.co

a. Individual Level

According to Shoemaker and Reese (2016), the individual level highlights how personal backgrounds—such as religious values, moral beliefs, education, and life experiences, significantly influence media content. Irene (2021) notes that editorial decisions are not solely shaped by organizational or market factors but are deeply influenced by the personal value orientations of journalists. Thus, each journalist serves as a "gatekeeper," bringing their subjective lens into the news production process.

In this study, Husein (2025), a BAP journalist, explicitly stated that Islamic values provide an ethical compass in his work. He said:

"As journalists, we must practice tabayyun, to check and recheck the accuracy of information. But ultimately, a journalist must convey the truth, especially Ṣidq."

Similarly, Ihsan (2025), BAP's producer, emphasized that his editorial decisions are guided by Islamic moral boundaries:

"My principle is: as long as it does not violate Islamic law... If it is not truthful, not trustworthy, does it violate sharia? That's what matters."

He also emphasized the importance of a multi-layered verification process before content is published:

"Every piece of content goes through several layers of checks... and we ensure that it doesn't violate Islamic principles."

Pram (2025), as Editor-in-Chief, added:

"When presenting issues, they must be accurate, clear, and accountable. We are not just content creators—we are journalists with responsibilities."

These testimonies confirm Pamela Shoemaker's assertion that editorial decisions are not solely institutional outputs but are shaped by personal values embedded within each media actor. In BAP, the individual level forms a key pillar in maintaining accuracy, responsibility, and public relevance in content production.

b. Media Routines Level

At this level, Shoemaker, and Reese (2016) explain that newsroom structures, editorial workflows, and standard procedures (e.g., editorial meetings, writing processes, and deadlines) significantly shape content. While they promote efficiency, routines also shape how media constructs reality.

In BAP, topic selection begins in Friday editorial meetings and aligns with major themes from Tempo Magazine. Husein (2025) described:

"On Fridays, we pitch in the larger meeting, and by Monday, in a smaller departmental meeting, we assign writers and determine sources."

Ihsan (2025) noted:

"We pitch ideas on Friday, assign responsibilities on Monday, prepare the script, and finalize the rundown before Thursday's taping."

Pram (2025) added:

"Every Friday, we define key issues in desk meetings. We align BAP with Tempo's overall editorial direction while keeping it sharp and conversational."

These structured routines ensure collaborative work and maintain editorial quality. Rahmi et al. (2024) argue that such systems do not merely coordinate tasks but also shape how media realities are constructed. Hodawya (2020) suggests that Islamic ethical values can be embedded in these routines, helping sustain critical and responsible journalism.

c. Organizational Level

At the organizational level, Shoemaker, and Reese (2016) emphasize how editorial policies, work culture, and institutional structures influence media content. While journalists bring personal values, final decisions often align with institutional goals.

In BAP, decisions on topics are not personal but collective. Husein explained:

"I don't decide on topics individually. We discuss everything in editorial meetings first."

Pram (2025) shared:

"We use Tempo's headline as a starting point and then explore a unique angle for BAP. The editorial direction must align with the Tempo ethos but with BAP's informal tone."

Ihsan (2025) added:

"Content undergoes multiple layers of review—from taping, editing, producing, to final approval by the editor-in-chief."

Thus, BAP operates with a structured, collective editorial system where decisions reflect shared responsibilities. Takashi (2017) emphasizes that such teamwork fosters professional integrity and aligns content with institutional vision and journalistic standards.

d. External Level

This level encompasses external pressures—economic forces, political dynamics, public opinion, and audience expectations. Although media organizations have internal policies, they operate within a complex social ecosystem.

Husein (2025) shared:

"We don't chase virality. We prioritize public relevance... like when we covered foreign convicts from Australia and the Philippines—it was more pertinent than other trending topics."

Pramono echoed this:

"We don't just follow trends. Our goal is to raise issues of public importance—if it goes viral, that's just a bonus."

Ihsan (2025) emphasized:

"The focus is not virality, but whether the information deserves to be known. Then we strategize for reach."

From the audience side, Bahtiar acknowledged BAP's objectivity but also noted occasional bias:

"It's objective and professional, but biases can still surface, like when discussing Prabowo, the critical voice stands out more."

These insights support Ojebuyi's (2023) argument that online news operates within a dynamic and pressurized social-media-driven environment. Yet, BAP retains its focus on public interest, accuracy, and issue balance.

e. Social System Level

The social system level refers to how broader ideological systems, cultural values, and societal norms influence media content. Shoemaker and Reese (2016) and Salonen et al. (2023) emphasize that media reflects and responds to these societal dynamics.

Husein (2025) noted:

"BAP themes align with Tempo Magazine. We aim to present impactful and relevant issues for Indonesia's democratic climate."

Pram (2025) added:

"Media must help sustain public reasoning. Even if our format is casual, the issues must remain substantial and socially significant."

Ihsan (2025) said:

"We won't cover sensational topics without educational value. We try to ground complex issues in accessible language, especially for grassroots audiences."

From the audience's view, Bahtiar stated:

"BAP successfully bridges political topics for younger audiences with a clear tone, although some may take it at face value if they're less critical."

These perspectives affirm that BAP not only delivers news but also serves as a social actor in Indonesia's democratic ecosystem. According to Fauzi (2021), journalism must respond to dominant social values such as democracy, justice, and public ethics.

Islamic Journalism Perspective: Muslim Gatekeepers in Bocor Alus Politik

This study also incorporates the Islamic Journalism framework to analyze how Muslim

journalists practice gatekeeping in BAP. Islamic journalism is not merely informative but a form of dakwah, guided by Qur'anic and Prophetic values. It promotes amar ma'ruf nahi munkar (enjoining good, forbidding evil).

Febriany (2019) asserts that information is a trust (amanah), and delivering it must serve the maslahah (public good). This means that factual correctness must go hand in hand with adherence to sharia principles.

Yinarika et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of values such as *Ṣidq* (truth), *amanah* (responsibility), *tabayyun* (verification), and broadcasting ethics in newsroom practices.

Husein (2025) quoted the Qur'an (Al-Hujurat: 6; At-Taubah: 105) and stated:

"We need to practice tabayyun... A journalist's job is to reveal the truth—Ṣidq above all."

Ihsan (2025) reiterated:

"As long as we do not violate sharia, we are on the right track. That's the main principle."

According to Krisnawan et al. (2024), the role of a producer is not merely technical but value-driven, ensuring that content upholds moral and educational standards.

From the audience's view, Bahtiar remarked:

"BAP speaks with honesty in a millennial way. It reflects current hot topics and pushes public reflection, even if it sometimes feels controversial."

He appreciated BAP's moral foundation—even if not explicitly dakwah, it embeds values that encourage awareness depending on the recipient's critical lens.

Discussion

This study deeply explores how Muslim religious identity influences gatekeeping practices in digital political content production, specifically through a case study of the "Bocor Alus Politik" program on Tempodotco. The research makes a significant contribution to the development of mass communication theory, particularly the *Hierarchy of Influence* and *gatekeeping theory*, by emphasizing Islamic values within digital journalism practices in

Indonesia. Moreover, this context reinforces the relevance of Shoemaker and Reese's (2016) *Hierarchy of Influence* theory in the Indonesian digital landscape.

At the individual level, Islamic values such as *Ṣidq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (responsibility), and *tabayyun* (verification) serve as ethical foundations guiding editorial decisions. This aligns with Takahashi (2011), who noted that journalists' personal backgrounds influence news construction. However, this study extends the theory by showing that religious identity is not merely a personal background but a value system that internalizes the entire media production process. Moral and spiritual dimensions form a collective framework not fully captured in the classical *Hierarchy of Influence* model.

The findings also validate and expand on classical gatekeeping models by Kurt Lewin (1947) and David M. White (1950). While White emphasized the individual's subjectivity in news selection, this study finds that gatekeeping in digital media is collaborative, layered, and dialogical. At *Bocor Alus Politik*, editorial decisions involve journalists, producers, and chief editors through a system of checks and balances. Bahri (2019) notes that this approach reflects a shift from a linear model to one that is more complex and negotiated, echoing the dynamic and ethically conscious nature of today's digital newsrooms.

This study enriches the literature on Islamic journalism, which has mostly been normative, by offering empirical evidence. The value of *tabayyun* is operationalized through a layered verification system, editorial meetings, and cross-division coordination. These findings support previous studies by Sopiyan and Madreal (2019) on Muslim journalists in conventional media and extend them into digital media and podcast formats. The findings show that Islamic principles do not hinder journalistic professionalism but rather reinforce media integrity and credibility. These values are practiced without sacrificing objectivity, demonstrating that *dakwah* can be carried out through critical, data-driven political journalism.

In the face of rampant misinformation on social media, *Bocor Alus Politik* stands as an example of how *tabayyun* can be applied. The journalists not only verify data but also present it accurately (*tabligh*), creating an educational space for the public. This distinguishes the study's findings from Vinanda (2020), who emphasized time pressure as the main challenge in digital journalism.

This research aligns with Irene's (2021) study at Okezone.com, which highlighted the importance of internal and external organizational factors, but adds a religious dimension that had been previously underexplored. Unlike Handayani (2020), who focused on the dominance of social media algorithms, this study shows that media outlets with strong editorial values can maintain independence from virality and algorithmic pressure.

Furthermore, the study extends the *Hierarchy of Influence* theory by incorporating a spiritual dimension as an influencing variable even at the organizational level. Gatekeeping in the digital era is no longer strictly hierarchical but consensual and value-based, aligning professionalism with moral integrity. Practically, this study suggests that integrating religious values can strengthen journalistic standards and serve as a foundation for developing media ethics curricula in Indonesia. The *Bocor Alus Politik* model provides a concrete example of how media can be educational, religious, and professional at the same time.

However, the study has limitations, as it focuses on only one program from one media outlet during a limited period (15 November–1 December 2024), thereby missing out on long-term dynamics. Its focus on producers also sidelines the audience perspective. According to Andersin (2017), this could pose a confirmation bias, as both the informants and researcher are Muslim, although efforts were made to mitigate this through triangulation. The study also does not compare gatekeeping practices across different religions or media outlets, leaving room for broader academic exploration.

In conclusion, the study challenges the secular–religious dichotomy in media and offers a new model of Islamic value-based digital political journalism. Gatekeeping in *Bocor Alus Politik* demonstrates that religious values can be institutionalized within editorial processes without compromising professionalism. Azawar et al. (2020) state that this is a significant contribution to mass communication theory, Islamic journalism, and the practice of digital media in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes several key points: At the individual level, journalists from Bocor Alus Politik (BAP) at Tempo.co demonstrate that Islamic values such as *Ṣidq* (honesty), *amanah* (responsibility), and *tabayyun* (clarification) strongly influence the information filtering process. Their Islamic identity is not a hindrance but a moral strength that enhances integrity and objectivity in journalistic practice. These values serve as a critical foundation for every editorial decision they make on a personal level.

At the level of media routines and organizational structure, BAP content production follows a well-organized editorial workflow—from weekly thematic meetings and data collection to script preparation for taping. These routines emphasize the importance of verification, collaboration, and content alignment with Tempo Magazine’s agenda. On the other hand, Tempo.co’s editorial policy fosters a professional culture that upholds integrity and freedom of expression. The organization provides space for Muslim journalists to implement their religious values, if they adhere to journalistic codes of ethics. It also facilitates collective decision-making, reflecting a democratic work culture.

At the external and societal levels, BAP journalists maintain independence amidst social media pressures and the expectations of digital audiences, who often prioritize virality. They firmly reject surrendering to viral logic alone and continue to uphold the principles of public interest, issue relevance, and social benefit. Beyond this, the BAP program not only serves as an information channel

but also contributes to public education, supports the democratization of information, and strengthens critical media literacy in society. Their commitment to developing offline initiatives such as campus discussions is tangible evidence of the media’s ongoing effort to broaden its social impact.

Overall, this study shows that gatekeeping practices by Muslim journalists in digital media like BAP are the result of an interaction between personal Islamic values, professional routines, organizational policies, external pressures, and social contexts. The Hierarchy of Influence model proves relevant in understanding this complexity. Meanwhile, the principles of Islamic journalism provide a moral framework that reinforces ethical practices in today’s digital journalism.

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