

The Construction of Democratic Ideology and Institutional Identity in the Lyrics of the Song Mars KPU: An Analysis of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse

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Abstract

General elections in Indonesia often face a crisis of public trust that requires the KPU to strengthen its legal and cultural legitimacy. Using a qualitative approach and Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis method, this study aims to uncover the hidden meaning and ideological representation behind the lyrics of "Mars KPU". The results of the analysis show that this march is not just a ceremonial anthem, but a discursive text that is full of ideology and institutional power. In the micro dimension (text), diction and imperative sentences construct an authoritative, idealistic, and filial image of the KPU, while the pattern of overwording of moral vocabulary (fair, honest, clean) dampens the collective anxiety of the community. In the meso dimension (discourse practice), this march functions double as an indoctrination of the internal integrity of the KPU as well as a massively distributed public participatory persuasion. In the macro (sociocultural) dimension, this discourse responds to the need of contemporary political history for a clean democracy to legitimize state power. In addition, the discourse acts as an instrument of cultural hegemony and the state's ideological apparatus in shaping the Indonesian national community. This research proves that institutional march functions strategically as a discursive instrument in the formation of institutional identity.

Keywords

Ideological Construction, Song Lyrics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough, Democracy, Institutional Identity



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INTRODUCTION

General Elections (Elections) occupy a central position as the foundation of procedural democracy as well as the main mechanism for legitimizing state power. In Indonesia's political architecture, the General Election Commission (KPU) carries out strategic responsibilities that go beyond just electoral administrative matters; this institution functions

as a guardian of democratic morality. However, contemporary sociopolitical realities show that the democratization process is often faced with existential challenges in the form of a crisis of public trust ((Widhiandono, 2023)(Nazril, 2024)*public distrust*), sharp polarization, to systematic delegitimization of the organizing institution. This phenomenon indicates that institutional legitimacy is no longer enough to be enforced only through formal legal instruments (Kravchenko, 2025). As emphasized in the discourse on institutional resilience, the KPU needs to penetrate the cultural realm and the discursive realm to restore public trust. Making a persuasive and ideological medium of communication an urgent need to build a positive narrative in the eyes of the public. In the scope of political communication, language is never neutral or just a functional medium of information transmission. Language is a fundamental instrument for representing, constructing, and even manipulating social reality (Novalia, 2024)(Purwanti, 2020).

One of the most effective instruments in carrying out this function of hegemony is music, in particular the marching song (*Anthem*). The significance of music as a political instrument lies in its ability to operate beyond aesthetic boundaries, acting as a tool of mass mobilization as well as a means of instilling ideology. Through evocative rhythms and repetitive lyrics, a march is designed to build the internal cohesion of the organization while projecting the image of authority outward, thus allowing institutions such as the KPU to emotionally and cognitively internalize messages into the collective consciousness of citizens. As emphasized, ceremonial music is never separated from the interests of power; it is always involved in the production of political meaning, both explicitly through the lyrical content and implicitly through the ritual of its performance (Abubakar Siddique, H., & Sidal, S., 2022)(Navarro, 2024)(Street, 2012).

"Mars KPU" emerged as a crucial research subject considering the intensity of its massive and ritualistic use. This song is present in various administrative and public spaces, ranging from routine apples, official inaugurations, Technical Guidance (Bimtek) activities, campaign periods, to echoes at Polling Stations (TPS) on voting day. Behind its function as an invitation to participation, there is a hidden ideological content (*hidden curriculum*) about how the KPU defines itself and positions the people. For example, the emphasis on the diction of "Luber Jurdil" or the narrative of "Unity" is not just a slogan, but a normative construction that directs how the people should behave in a democratic system. Therefore, a theoretical approach is needed that is able to dissect these ideological layers to uncover how the practice of power works behind seemingly ceremonial texts. This study applies Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (AWK) model as the main analytical tool. The selection of this framework is based on its ability to bridge microlinguistic analysis with macro-socio-political structures; . Systematically, this study dissects the Mars KPU through three dimensions (Farhadytooli, 2025)(Statham, 2022).

Text Dimension (Micro). Analyze linguistic features, diction, and verbal representation in lyrics to see how the message is structured textually. Discursive Practice Dimension (Meso). Examine the process of text production by the KPU and the consumption of the text

by the public. In this dimension, the aspects of intertextuality and interdiscursivity are crucial to see how the KPU Mars absorbs elements of the national patriotic song genre to strengthen its institutional authority. Sociocultural Practice Dimension (Macro). Evaluate the relationship between texts and Indonesia's macro political reality, including power dynamics and state efforts to maintain stability through discourse.

A study of song lyrics has been conducted, for example related to the relationship of meaning in the lyrics of the song "Cakra Kostrad" and "Hymne Kostrad" which form a narrative of strengthening identity, fighting spirit, and noble values of Kostrad soldiers. Song lyrics are not only a medium of expression, but also build emotional bonds between Kostrad members and the mission to maintain the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia. While dissecting political rhetoric in constructing an exclusive national identity. In the realm of personal digital discourse, the application of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (AWK) has proven to be relevant to reveal the practices of power. The latest research analyzes Dedi Mulyadi's self-representation through a communication style that is grounded, humanist, and rich in Sundanese cultural symbols on his YouTube channel. This study highlights the importance of understanding contemporary discursive practices that combine local narratives and netizens' participation in shaping leadership images in the era of digital democracy. Based on observations from April to July 2025, it was found that the production of non-protocol content, the use of simple diction, and the use of cultural symbols are strategies to control public narratives and blur the class gap between elites and society. Socioculturally, this practice represents digital populism that appears to be egalitarian, but in reality still reproduces power (Rijani, A. & Ekowati, S. H., 2023) (Wodak, 2009)(Woodhams, 2015)(Rezzi Nanda Barizki, Hiswanti, Iswahyu Pranawukir, 2026).

Although the study on Dedi Mulyadi and this study both apply the AWK Fairclough model to reveal the reproduction of power behind the text, there is a positioning (*positioning*) and fundamental research gaps. First, from the aspect of subject and medium of discourse: Dedi Mulyadi's study highlights individual political actors in the contemporary digital space (social media) that take advantage of informality (non-protocol) and the participation of netizens. On the contrary, this study dissects the representation of state institutions (KPU) through artistic instruments that operate in public and administrative spaces that are very formal and ritualistic. Second, from the aspect of discursive strategy: if Dedi Mulyadi's personal discourse is constructed to create the illusion of egalitarian populism that melts the class gap, the discourse of the KPU Mars is precisely designed in a hegemonic-normative manner to assert hierarchical authority, form internal cohesion, and project a permanent identity. If the campaign jingle is short-term persuasive, then the institutional march firmly embeds an ideological identity. It has also outlined how the mass media constructs the reality of power. However, there is a research gap ((Eriyanto, 2001)*research gap*) significant: Studies that critically evaluate the marching songs of state institutions, especially election organizers, are still very minimal (İmİK Tanyildizi, 2020).

If the jingle is short-term persuasive, then the mars is hegemonic-normative that forms a

permanent identity. So far, institutional mars tends to be ignored as a serious object of study and is only considered as a decorative attribute. Departing from the gap in the research, this study formulates a research question: "How are democratic ideologies and institutional identity constructed in the lyrics of the KPU Mars through the analysis of Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse?" The strategic goal of this research is not just to dissect linguistics, but to dismantle the practices of power, legitimacy mechanisms, and political socialization strategies that operate behind the text. Through this analysis, it is hoped that it can be revealed how state institutions seek to instill collective consciousness in the midst of contemporary political complexity, as well as the position of cultural instruments as a pillar supporting democratic stability in Indonesia.

Systematically, this article is organized into five parts. After this introduction, the second part describes the research methods used. The third part presents the results and discussion described in layers through Fairclough's three dimensions, complemented by an interdimensional dialectical synthesis. The fourth part contains conclusions, theoretical-practical implications, research limitations, and recommendations for further research. The fifth part contains a bibliography that is a reference for this research.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method. The qualitative approach was chosen because it seeks to understand the phenomenon in depth and focuses on the meaning behind the text. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research aims to explore in depth the latent meanings, ideological content, and construction of institutional identity hidden behind the lyrical text of "Mars KPU". The critical approach of the Fairclough model views language not as a neutral medium, but as a social practice ((Bonnes, 2024)*social practice*) (Aziz, H., & Fattah, M., 2023).

This research relies on three main concepts, namely Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (AWK), Democratic Ideology, and Institutional Identity. First, Critical Discourse Analysis (AWK) according to Norman Fairclough. Seeing Language as a Social Practice (Fairclough N., 1989) *social practice*) which is always in a dialectical relationship with power structures. It rejects traditional linguistic views that separate texts from their contexts. It offers a three-dimensional framework of analysis: (1) Text (micro), which dissects the vocabulary, grammar, and structure of texts; (2) Discourse Practices (meso), which examines how the text is produced, distributed, and consumed by audiences; and (3) Sociocultural (macro) Practices, which relate texts to historical, political, and power contexts in society. This view has implications for the existence of a dialectical relationship between specific discourse texts and the social, institutional, and power relations that shape them. Second, the ideology of democracy. Democracy is not only understood as a system of government, but also as an ideology that contains a set of values and beliefs. In the context of elections, the democratic ideology often formed by state institutions emphasizes aspects of procedural compliance, the principle of direct, general, free, secret, honest, and fair (LUBER

JURDIL), as well as the creation of order. This discourse is used to discipline citizens to participate in the corridors provided by the state (Fairclough N. , 1995)(Martins, 2025)(Xing, 2024)(Reli, 2024)(Haryatmoko, 2016).

Third, institutional identity. Institutional identity refers to how an organization defines "who we are" and "what our goals are". State institutions need a strong identity to gain authoritative legitimacy from the public. The formation of an image as an institution that is devoted, independent, and sacred from corruption is an institutional branding strategy to cover up structural weaknesses that may occur in the field (Alvesson, 2001)(Volkan, YÜNCÜ, 2020). The subject of this research is the General Election Commission (KPU) of the Republic of Indonesia as an institution that produces, legitimizes, and disseminates the "Mars KPU" as an instrument of national political socialization. The object of the research is focused on the lyrics of the song "Mars KPU" which is echoed in various official agendas such as routine apples every Monday morning, technical guidance (technical guidance), inauguration of officials, campaign periods, and implementation at Polling Stations (TPS). The main data of the research are in the form of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and metaphors in the lyrics of "Mars KPU". The data source was obtained from the official documents of the KPU regulation regarding the Election March as well as the official audiovisual recordings of the KPU Mars published through the institution's official communication channels (KPU, <https://www.youtube.com/@KPURepublikIndonesia/videos>, 2026).(KPU, <https://jdih.kpu.go.id/keputusan-kpu>, 2026).

Data collection in this study was carried out through two main techniques, namely documentation studies and literature studies. Documentation studies were carried out by transcribing the lyrics of the song "Mars KPU" precisely, as well as collecting various policy documents, regulations, and KPU circulars that stipulate the use of the mars in formal state agendas. Furthermore, a literature study was carried out to contextualize the data findings by collecting various scientific literature, indexed journal articles, and reference books related to critical discourse analysis, democracy theory, institutional identity theory, and the sociology of political music (Hussain, 2020)(Alvesson, 2001)(Street, 2012).

Data analysis was carried out systematically by operationalizing the three-dimensional model of Norman Fairclough Critical Discourse Analysis which consisted of the following stages of analysis: (Xing, 2024). Text Dimensions (Micro Analysis). Analyze the linguistic aspects contained in the lyrical text of the Mars KPU linguistically. The focus of the analysis includes the choice of vocabulary (diction) used to represent the identity of the KPU and citizens, grammar (such as the use of imperative or declarative sentences), interline transitions, and the use of political metaphors. This micro-analysis unpacks how discourse is constructed at the textual level.

Dimension of Discursive Practice (Meso Analysis). Examining the process of production and consumption of discourse. The researcher analyzes how the KPU as a state institution produces the text of the KPU's Mars as an institutional branding tool to build legitimacy. In this dimension, the aspects of intertextuality and interdiscursivity are analyzed to see how

the lyrics and rhythm of the KPU Mars absorb elements of the national patriotic song genre of struggle to instill an aura of sacredness and obedience in public political participation.

Dimensions of Sociocultural Practices (Macro Analysis). Analyzes the dialectical relationship between the discourse of the KPU Mars and the macro-political socio-political context in Indonesia. This analysis relates textual findings and discourse practices to contemporary realities, such as the phenomenon of public distrust crisis, political polarization, and state hegemony in constructing an orderly procedural democracy. This macro dimension evaluates the extent to which the KPU Mars functions as a state hegemonic instrument to discipline citizens' political consciousness. In order to maintain credibility (*trustworthiness*) findings, this study applies theoretical triangulation by crossing Fairclough's framework with the concept of institutional identity and cultural hegemony and triangulation of sources by comparing lyric texts and official KPU regulatory documents. The interpretation thus produced is not a single and absolute interpretation, but one of the possible readings that are accounted for systematically through a clear theoretical framework.(Alvesson, 2001)(Gramsci, 1971). In order to simplify the flow of analysis operationalization, Fairclough's three-dimensional analysis framework in this study is summarized in the table below:

Tabel 1 Dimensions of Fairclough

Dimensions of Analysis	Operational Focus	Purpose of Analysis
Text (Micro)	Lexicon semantics, vocabulary diction (LUBER JURDIL, Devotion), declarative/imperative sentences, lyrical metaphor.	Reveal the verbal representation of the identity of the KPU and the conception of procedural democracy.
Discursive Practice (Meso)	The process of production, distribution, and consumption of texts; intertextuality in the genre of patriotic struggle music.	Analyze how discourse is produced for institutional branding and public legitimacy.
Sociocultural Practices (Macro)	Electoral socio-political context, public distrust, polarization, regulation, and hegemony of power.	Evaluate the role of the KPU's Mars discourse in responding to the crisis of trust and maintaining the stability of the country.

Source: Processed Author, 2026

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Election March Lyrics

Election Commission

Realizing quality elections and regional elections
Uphold democracy
On the principle of direct, public, free, confidential, honest, fair, periodical

(Chorus)

Building a noble Indonesia
Dignified, clean, fair, and honest
For the People We Are Devoted
For Our Nation Serves
Indonesia, glory to my Neg'ri!

As an exposition framework, the findings of this study are presented in layers following Fairclough's three-dimensional model: starting with the smallest unit of analysis (words and sentences) on the text dimension, then extending to the process of production, distribution, and consumption of texts on the dimension of discursive practice, and ending with a broader socio-historical context reading on the dimension of sociocultural practice. These three layers do not stand alone, but rather presuppose each other dialectically with each other, as will be discussed in the synthesis section at the end of this chapter.

Text Dimensions (Microanalysis)

At this stage, the analysis is focused on the linguistic unit in the lyrics of the song "Mars KPU". affirms that the choice of vocabulary and grammar carries an ideological imprint; no linguistic choice is completely value-free, because each word chosen always eliminates the possibility of other words available in the language system. This principle is the basis of the following lexicogrammatical analysis.(Fairclough N. , 1989)

a. Vocabulary and Diction (Experiential and Expressive Values)

These lyrics are loaded with adjectives that have positive and idealistic connotations, such as "qualified", "noble", "dignified", "clean", "fair", and "honest". This lexical choice is not neutral; it is a discursive strategy of the KPU to set moral standards in general elections. The choice of the word "LUBER JURDIL" (direct, public, free, secret, honest, fair) that is explicitly affirmed shows an attempt to internalize the principle of constitutional elections in the cognition of the listener.

If explored further, the vocabulary in these lyrics can be mapped into two complementary semantic fields. First, the procedural-legal semantic field contains technical terms such as "direct, general, free, secret, honest, fair, periodic". These seven principles in public discourse are usually abbreviated as LUBER JURDIL, but here they are spelled out completely one by one, resulting in a foregrounding effect that highlights each item of principle as an entity worthy of individual attention, not just technocratic jargon memorized without meaning. Second, the moral-normative semantic field, contains evaluative adjectives such as "noble", "dignified", "clean", "qualified" that link procedural legality with moral

virtue, so that compliance with the principle of elections is not simply interpreted as administrative compliance, but as a manifestation of the collective dignity of the nation.

It is interesting to note that the words "just" and "honest" appear repeatedly in two different parts: in the opening line as part of the principle of LUBER JURDIL and in the refrain as part of the description of the ideals of "noble Indonesia". This repetition is known as *over-lexicalization* or *overwording*, which is the appearance of an excess of words that are close to the meaning to refer to one domain of experience. mentioning (Fairclough N. , 1989)*overwording* As a marker of "ideological preoccupation": the more a value is emphasized repeatedly, the more likely it is that it is actually at stake in social reality. The repeated assertion of the "fairness" and "honesty" of elections, therefore, can be read as a compensatory response to the public's anxiety about the fraud and vote manipulation that has historically often colored elections in Indonesia.

On the contrary, no less important is the vocabulary that is deliberately omitted from the lyrics: there is not a single word that refers to conflict, dispute, fraud, money politics, or the uncertainty of results, terms that appear in election reporting. This absence is not a textual coincidence, but an ideological choice: the lyrics systematically construct the reality of elections as a fully ideal and clean space without traces of structural conflict, in line with the function of mars as a *celebratory text* that affirms ideals, rather than documents problems.

b. Grammar (Imperative Mode and Power Relations)

The lyrics of this march are dominated by the sentence of order (imperative). There are verbs such as "realize" and "enforce". The use of this imperative verb positions the KPU not as a passive entity, but as a subject of authoritative agents who hold control over the implementation of democracy. This lyric does not read "Let's realize" (inclusive/equivalent), but "realize" (directive). This subtly emphasizes the power relationship (authority) of the KPU in the implementation of elections.

When read through the framework of Halliday-style transitivity which is one of Fairclough's important references, the clauses "(KPU) Realize quality elections and regional elections" and "(KPU) Uphold democracy" can be categorized as a material process, which is a process that describes concrete actions taken by an actor (Actor) against a target ((Halliday, 2014)*Goal*). In this construction, the KPU, although not explicitly referred to as a grammatical subject because the imperative form dissipates its subject, is still understood as a single actor in action, while "elections and regional elections" and "democracy" are positioned as the targets that are realized and enforced by it. This kind of transitive construction removes the possibility of an alternative reading in which the people participate as active actors in realizing democracy together; the main agency is linguistically centered on institutions.

In the refrain, the pattern changes to a relational and *behavioural process* through the clause "For the People We Serve / For the Nation We Serve". Here, the KPU is no longer described as "doing" something to external objects, but is attributing traits to itself (*self-attribution*) as a party that is devoted and devoted. This shift from a directive material

process to a declarative-attributive relational process produces a subtle rhetorical effect: the KPU first positions itself as the ruling authority (in the opening stanza), then immediately softens the authoritative image by affirming the altruistic motive behind it (in the *refrain*), so that hierarchical power relations are wrapped in a language of devotion that seems humble.

Another aspect that deserves attention is the absence of *hedging* modalities or markers of uncertainty such as "maybe", "should", "expected", or the form of question sentences. All propositions are presented in a *high modality* categorical modality, which indicates an absolute level of epistemic and affective commitment to the truth of the statement conveyed. This absence of linguistic doubt strengthens the KPU's position as an authority that is not only administratively powerful, but also epistemically powerful in defining what is a "quality" democracy without any room for negotiation of meaning.

c. Pronoun System (Pronoun) and Identity

The institutional identity is very thick in the stanza: "For the People We Serve / For the Nation We Serve". The use of the pronoun "we" refers exclusively to the KPU institution and all its apparatus. Through this sentence, the text constructs the KPU as an altruistic community service entity (filial and devoted). This construction is important to legitimize the existence of the institution in the eyes of the "people" and "the nation". What is interesting to underline is the structure of the relationship between "we" (KPU) on the one hand and "the people" and "the nation" on the other. Instead of using a direct second-person pronoun such as "you" or "us" that is inclusive and unites the speaker and the listener in a collective entity, this lyric instead uses the form of an apostrophe, which is the mention of a third party ("people", "nation") as if they are being addressed directly as the recipient of the offering (*dedication*). This structure results in an asymmetrical relationship: the KPU is positioned as an active actor who gives (filials, serves), while the "people" and the "nation" are positioned as passive recipients of this service, not as equal partners who contribute to building democracy in a participatory manner.

Ideological ambivalence arises at this point. On the one hand, the lyrics call for "uphold democracy" which is conceptually rooted in the idea of people's sovereignty (the people as the holder of supreme power). But on the other hand, the pronoun structure and transitivity relations analyzed in the previous two subsections actually place the KPU as a single active actor, while the people tend to be positioned as objects to be served (rather than subjects who are sovereign and actively participating). The tension between the explicitly referenced ideology of participatory democracy and this linguistically reproduced pattern of implicit power relations is one of the important findings that shows how a text that seems to praise the people can simultaneously reproduce the paternalistic structure of the citizenry that is typical of Indonesian political history.

d. Textual Cohesion and Refrain Repetition Function

In terms of textual cohesion, the refrain part "building a noble / dignified, clean, fair, and honest Indonesia" is constructed through the *asyndetic listing technique*, which is the

juxtaposition of a series of adjectives without explicit logical connections, resulting in an accumulative and dense effect. This technique is commonly found in state slogans and formulations of a nation's noble values, because the pattern of repetition and juxtaposition of sounds (in this case, rhyming suffix patterns, such as "noble" and "honest") produces a mnemonic effect: easy to remember, easy to re-sing, and easily attached to the collective memory of the listener.

The function of the refrain in the Mars genre actually goes beyond the mere aesthetic function. As emphasized in the study of the sociology of political music (Street, 2012; Abubakar Siddique & Sidal, 2022), melodic and textual repetition in the refrain function as an affective technology that works below the threshold of the listener's critical awareness. When a phrase is sung repeatedly on various occasions, such as Monday morning apples, inaugurations, and at the polling station, listeners tend to internalize the message emotionally and automatically, without going through a process of deep rational-critical evaluation of the ideological content behind it. Thus, textual cohesion at the level of sound and sentence structure is one of the linguistic mechanisms that allows this Martian ideological message to transform from just a written text to a part of the collective consciousness that is lived *and re-enacted ideology*.

e. Metaphor and Personification of the Nation

The closing line "Indonesia, glory to the nation!" contains the personification of the nation as a living entity that can experience glory ("glory"), a metaphorical convention that is commonly found in the genre of national anthem and Indonesian struggle songs, including in the national anthem "Indonesia Raya" which is one of the main intertextual references of the KPU Mars (discussed further in the intertextuality subsection). This personification constructs the nation not as an abstract political-administrative entity, but as a living subject who has fate, honor, and a future that can be fought for together. The use of the possessive first-person singular pronoun "ku" (not "we" or "we") in the phrase "neg'ri ku" is also ideologically significant. Instead of affirming collective ownership of the nation ("our country"), the lyrics individualize the relationship between the singer/listener and the nation into personal and intimate relationships ("my country"), a rhetorical strategy prevalent in the national anthem genre to evoke personal affection and a deep sense of emotional attachment to the collective entity that is actually abstract. This kind of collectivism personalization strategy is relevant to be read through the concept of *imagined community* which will be further elaborated on the sociocultural dimension.

f. Recapitulation of Micro Dimension Findings

In summary, the following table presents the relationship between the linguistic features found in the Mars KPU lyrics and their ideological functions:

Table 2 Recapitulation of Text Dimension Findings (Micro)

Linguistik	Examples in Lyrics	Ideological Function
Evaluative-positive adjectives	quality, noble, dignified, clean, fair, honest	Setting the moral standard of elections; overwording signifies collective anxiety over the issue of fraud
Imperative Verba	Create, Uphold	Positioning the KPU as an authoritative actor/agent (material process)
Relational-attributive processes	We Serve, We Serve	Softening the authoritative image into an altruistic-servant image
Our pronouns vs People/Nation	We Are Dedicated to the People	Asymmetrical relations: KPU actively gives, passive people receive
Listing of asidetics & rhymes	noble – honest; clean, fair, and honest	Mnemonic effect; repetition as an affective technology
My personification and possessiveness	"Bring me my country.	Affective personalization of the collectivity of the nation

Source: Processed Author, 2026

Discourse Practice (Mesographic Analysis)

This dimension looks at how texts are produced and consumed. Productionally, these lyrics are created based on institutional mandates. Mars was not born out of a vacuum or pure pop culture, but was deliberately designed (*by design*) by the state/formal institutions to fulfill the function of positive propaganda and policy socialization (elections). (Rijani, A. & Ekowati, S. H., 2023)

a. Text Production: Institutional Mandate and Standardization

As a text produced under the umbrella of official regulation (KPU, <https://jdih.kpu.go.id/keputusan-kpu>, 2026), the KPU march occupies a special position compared to popular songs in general: it was not born from cultural market negotiations, but was administratively determined as an official text that must be used uniformly throughout the KPU work units, from the central level to the ranks of the KPPS at the village/sub-district level. This administrative determination character makes the KPU Mars what in the study of organizational discourse is called a "*codified text*", a text whose authority does not derive from popularity or aesthetic appeal alone, but from the legal-administrative legitimacy inherent in it.

This standardization of production has important implications: the uniformity of lyrics and arrangements throughout Indonesia serves as a symbolic control instrument that ensures there is no room for local variations or reinterpretations that can change the ideological content of the message. In contrast to regional songs or folk songs that naturally experience variations in lyrics between regions, Mars KPU is designed to be sung identically by KPU officers in Aceh and Papua, resulting in a nationally uniform auditory experience. This strategy implicitly supports the narrative of unity and uniformity that has been one of the pillars of Indonesia's statehood ideology since the beginning of independence.

b. Text Distribution: Multichannel and Ritualization

In terms of consumption and distribution, this march is listened to repeatedly. This song becomes a mandatory curriculum for election organizers (from the central level to the KPPS in the villages) to memorize. At the internal level, the consumption of this text serves as an indoctrination to maintain the integrity and pride of the corps (*esprit de corps*). At the external level (the voting community), this text is distributed through mass media, public service advertisements, and loudspeakers on voting day as a persuasion tool to remind the public of their democratic obligations (towards a "noble Indonesia").

When mapped, there are at least five main distribution channels that complement each other and produce a saturation effect (exposure saturation): (1) a weekly ritual in the form of morning apples every Monday in all KPU offices and their ranks; (2) formal training forums such as Technical Guidance (Bimtek) for ad hoc election organizers; (3) ceremonial ceremonies such as the inauguration of KPPS officials and members; (4) public spaces during the campaign period through public service advertisements on television, radio, and social media; and (5) peak moments in the form of playback through loudspeakers at polling stations on voting day. These five channels operate simultaneously in the five-year election cycle as well as in the weekly cycle of institutional routines, creating a pattern of exposure that, according to . In the banal concept of nationalism, this is referred to as the internalization of national ideology through the repetition of "trivial" and routine things that go unnoticed by critics, rather than through moments of nationalism that are lively and explicitly realized. (Michael Billig, 2026)

The expansion of digital channels through official uploads on institutional YouTube channels (KPU, <https://www.youtube.com/@KPURepublikIndonesia/videos>, 2026) and social media is also noteworthy as the latest development in the distribution pattern of KPU discourse. This digital distribution expands the reach of mars from physical-ceremonial spaces to cyberspaces that can be accessed repeatedly independently by audiences, especially the younger generation who are more familiar with digital platforms than announcements through conventional loudspeakers.

c. Text Consumption: Internal Audience versus External Audience

The dimension of discourse consumption needs to be differentiated based on the position of the audience. For internal audiences, such as KPU employees, KPPS members,

Voting Committees, and democracy volunteers, the consumption of the KPU Mars functions like a corporate hymn or a military corps march: a ritual that fosters *a sense of belonging*, professional pride, and affective commitment to institutional values. This function is in line with the literature on institutional identity (Alvesson, 2004; Yüncü, 2020) which emphasizes that symbolic artifacts such as mars, logos, and uniforms play an important role in uniting geographically dispersed members of organizations under the same collective identity.

For external audiences, the voting community in general, consumption patterns tend to be more passive and situational; this march is often heard as *background listening* in the midst of voting activities at polling stations, rather than listened to reflectively as a text whose lyrics are carefully examined. It is this character of passive consumption that actually reinforces, rather than weakens, its ideological effectiveness: as explained in the textual cohesion subsection above, messages that are absorbed repeatedly without explicit critical evaluation are more easily internalized as "reasonableness" than messages that are delivered argumentatively and invite open debate. It should be noted as a methodological limitation that this text-based research does not reach empirical audience reception data (e.g., through interviews or surveys of KPPS officers and voters); The above consumption pattern claims are theoretical inferences based on the character of the text distribution, and are open to further testing through *reception studies* in the future.

d. Intertextuality: Genealogy of National Anthem Genres and Struggles

In this dimension, the aspect of intertextuality is crucial to see how the KPU Mars absorbs elements of the national patriotic song genre to strengthen institutional authority. Genealogically, the KPU Mars can be placed as part of the long tradition of the Indonesian march and state hymn that originated from the national anthem "Indonesia Raya" as well as various "struggle songs" in the era of the independence revolution. The similarity of diction such as "jaya", "luhur", and the affirmative-optimistic structure of the closing exclamation ("Indonesia, Jayalah Neg'ri ku!") echo a rhetorical pattern similar to the patriotic exclamations in the national anthem, so that the KPU Mars intertextually "borrows" the affective and historical authority that has been attached to the national anthem genre.

This kind of intertextual lending of authority is an effective legitimacy strategy: by placing itself in the same genre as the national anthem, the KPU Mars implicitly aligns its mission (the holding of quality elections) with the great mission of the nation itself (the glory of the country). This reading is consistent with a broader pattern in the institutional realm of the Indonesian state, where various government institutions and apparatus, ranging from ministries, the TNI, the National Police, to the civil service corps, commonly have their own institutional marches that follow similar genre conventions: a firm and optimistic tone of Mars, lyrics that emphasize the nation's devotion and glory, and repetitive stanza-refrain structures. This kind of genre convention makes institutional march a separate discourse genre (*institutional anthem genre*) in the Indonesian political communication ecosystem, which so far, as emphasized in the introduction, has not received much critical attention in

academic studies.

e. Interdisciplinarity: A Blend of Bureaucratic, Devotional, and Patriotic-Militaristic Discourses

In addition to intertextuality at the genre level, the lyrics of the KPU Mars also show rich interdiscursiveness, which is the mixing of several different *orders of discourse* in the same text. First, bureaucratic-administrative discourse appears in the use of technical election terms such as "elections", "pilkada", "periodical", and the enumeration of the principle of LUBER JURDIL, a vocabulary commonly found in regulatory documents, not in the lyrics of popular songs in general. Second, devotional-religious discourse appears in the choice of words "filial" and "serving", two words that in Indonesian have a strong connotation of the relationship of children's devotion to parents or the people to the Almighty, thus presenting nuances of piety and moral purity to the institutional image of the KPU. Third, patriotic-militaristic discourse appears in imperative verbs such as "realize" and "uphold" which are commonly found in military slogans and calls for the struggle for independence.

A mixture of three conventionally distinct orders of discourse from different social spheres: state bureaucracy, religious/familial, and military/struggle. This is what Fairclough aptly describes as interdiscursiveness: a single text that borrows authority from various orders of discourse while simultaneously reinforcing its legitimacy in the eyes of diverse audiences. Election officials who hear this march can capture the resonance of bureaucratic discipline, as well as moral-spiritual appeals and patriotic fervor, in a package of texts less than two minutes long. It is this interdisciplinary complexity that explains why an institutional march lyric that seems simple on the surface actually harbors a density of ideological meaning that is far more complex than its first impression as a mere ceremonial song.

f. Discourse Chains: From Regulation to Rite and Digital Recontextualization

As a conclusion to the meso dimension, it is important to map the *discourse chain* that the KPU Mars has gone through since it was produced to be consumed by a wide audience. This chain starts from the official text of the KPU regulation/decreree that establishes and ratifies the march as an institutional identity; continues to the production of official audiovisual recordings; then it is realized performatively in various institutional rites (apple, technical guidance, inauguration); then re-recorded and uploaded to official digital channels; and ultimately has the potential to be further recontextualized by mass media, netizens' social media accounts, and other election socialization materials. Each stage of this recontextualization has the potential to shift the function and meaning of the text a little, from a binding legal text to a disciplinary performative rite, to digital content that is consumed casually. However, the core of its ideological message (KPU authority, procedural compliance, and noble democratic ideals) has been consistently maintained throughout the chain, demonstrating a strong level of discourse control by the KPU as a single textual

producer.

Sociocultural Practices (Macro Analysis)

The sociocultural dimension analyzes the social context outside the text that influences the discourse. In the context of Indonesian society, procedural democracy (elections) has a long and winding history, starting from the Old Order era, depoliticization in the New Order era, to political reform in 1998. In the post-reform era, there is an extraordinary demand from society for political transparency. (Rohmah, 2024)

a. The Historical Trajectory of Procedural Democracy in Indonesia

To understand why the discourse of "fairness" and "honesty" of elections is so strongly emphasized in the KPU Mars, it is necessary to trace the historical trajectory of Indonesia's turbulent procedural democracy. In the era of Guided Democracy during the Old Order period, the holding of elections was stagnant and the centralization of power was far from the ideals of the 1955 multiparty elections. Entering the New Order era, elections were held on a regular five-year basis, but took place under the shadow of a single hegemony of dominant political forces and a "*floating mass*" policy that limited grassroots political participation outside the election season, so that elections in this period were often criticized as a mere formality rite rather than a substantive political competition mechanism.

The 1998 political reforms opened a new chapter of political liberalization: the multiparty system was restored in the 1999 elections, followed by the decentralization of authority through direct elections of regional heads (pilkada) since the mid-2000s, as well as the establishment of the KPU as an independent and permanent election organizing institution. Each of these historical phases leaves a residue of collective memory that shapes the way contemporary Indonesian society views elections, in the form of a mixture of optimism for post-reform electoral democracy and structural vigilance against potential power manipulation rooted in the long experience of the previous authoritarian era. The discourse of "Uphold democracy" in the KPU's Mars, thus, cannot be read ahistorically; it is a discursive answer to the collective anxiety formed through the long and uphill experiences of the democratization process.

b. The Crisis of Public Trust and Contemporary Political Polarization

The phrases "Uphold democracy" and "Dignified, clean, fair, and honest" would not appear prominently if they were not motivated by sociocultural conditions that have historically often been colored by the practice of money politics, fraud (vote manipulation), and public distrust of institutions. (Sigit Sapto Nugroho, 2023). The contemporary context presents increasingly complex challenges: the post-2014 era is marked by sharp political polarization on social media, the rise of disinformation and SARA-infused hate speech in the run-up to and during the election period, and the recurring controversy surrounding the accuracy of the digital vote recapitulation system that erodes the trust of some people. The decline in young voter participation and the increasing political apathy of the digital native

generation have also added to the pressure on the legitimacy of the KPU. It is in the context of this multidimensional pressure that the KPU Mars can be read as a compensatory discursive response: the greater the threat of delegitimization in the factual-structural realm, the more intensely the strengthening of the ideal image in the symbolic-affective realm.

c. Mars as the Ideological Apparatus of the State and the Instrument of Hegemony

Therefore, the discourse built by the KPU through this march is the discourse of "Trust Building" and "Consolidation of Democracy". This march becomes an instrument of cultural hegemony (to borrow Gramsci's term), where the KPU seeks to instill a common consensus among the community that the electoral system they hold is the only constitutional, clean, and dignified way for the sake of "Glory to my Neg'ri!" The concept of hegemony asserts that the power of the dominant class or group is not solely enforced through physical coercion, but is much more effective and sustainable through the production of consensus (consent), where the controlled group also internalizes the values of the dominant group as "reasonableness" or (Gramsci, 1971)*common sense* which is unquestionable. Read through this lens, the KPU Mars serves as one of the cultural devices that produces voluntary willingness (*Agree*) citizens to accept procedural democracy with periodic elections as its sole mechanism as the only legitimate and possible form of democracy, while implicitly ruling out alternative discourses of more deliberative or participatory democracy outside the voting booth.

This framework can be further deepened through the concept of the ideological apparatus of the state (*Ideological State Apparatus/ISA*) formulated by . According to Althusser, the modern state reproduces the relations of production and the obedience of citizens not only through the repressive apparatus ((Althusser, 1971)*repressive state apparatus*), such as the military and the police, but also, even more fundamentally, through ideological apparatuses spread across various institutions, such as education, religion, media, family, and culture. In this framework, the KPU as a state institution that produces and disseminates Mars as a cultural text can be understood as part of the state's ideological apparatus that works through symbolic-cultural channels, complementing the function of its repressive apparatus in the form of the authority to establish and enforce electoral rules legally. This combination of legal-administrative (repressive) authority and symbolic-affective (ideological) authority makes the KPU an institution with a dual capacity to discipline citizens' political consciousness.

d. Mars and the Reflection of the Nation's Community

Another relevant sociocultural dimension to elaborate is the contribution of the KPU Mars to the formation of the so-called imagined community ((Anderson, 1983)*imagined community*). Anderson argues that the modern nation is essentially an imaginative construct that is made possible, among other things, by collective experiences conducted simultaneously by individuals who have never physically met or known each other. When the KPU Mars was played simultaneously at thousands of polling stations across Indonesia on the same polling day from Sabang to Merauke, each individual voter who heard it

participated in a nationally synchronized auditory experience, even though he or she had never met another voter at a different end of the country. The "meanwhile" experience (*meanwhile*) is what, according to Anderson, becomes one of the important affective mechanisms in building a collectively imagined sense of nationality.

Within this framework, the function of the KPU Mars goes beyond just technical socialization of elections; it also plays a role in the ritual of annual-periodic renewal of the national association of Indonesian citizens, in line with similar functions carried out by the national anthem "Indonesia Raya" in various official state ceremonies. Elections, thus, are not solely understood as an administrative political mechanism to elect people's representatives and heads of state/regions, but also as a periodic national rite that, through the mediation of marches and other symbols, helps to renew and reaffirm the sense of togetherness as one Indonesian nation.

e. Ambivalence and Limitations: The Risks of Top-to-Bottom Symbolism

Nevertheless, it is important to maintain a critical attitude towards the effectiveness and limits of the capabilities of such symbolic interventions. There is a potential gap between the ideal rhetoric offered by Mars ("clean, fair, and honest") and structural reality that is still colored by the politics of money, administrative errors, and the residue of public distrust that have been described earlier. When the gap between symbolic narratives and citizens' lived experiences is too wide, there is a risk that the discourse of Mars will be perceived as *empty propaganda* that is detached from reality, rather than as an authentic representation of institutional commitment.

As a *top-down instrument*, this instrument is produced unilaterally by institutions without going through a participatory consultation process with the wider public. The KPU Mars also has the potential to reproduce the distance between the state and the citizens that it is intended to bridge, as discussed in the analysis of the relationship between the pronouns "we" versus "the people/nation" on the micro dimension. Symbolic interventions such as institutional marches should ideally not stand alone, but need to be balanced with substantive reforms at the structural level, transparency of the vote recapitulation process, consistent law enforcement of election violations, and public information disclosure, so that the symbolic message carried by the march is not reduced to mere rhetoric that risks generating public cynicism instead of the intended trust.

Interdimensional Dialectical Synthesis

The three dimensions of analysis that have been described above cannot be understood in isolation; the strength of Fairclough's approach lies precisely in the dialectical relations that connect the three. Lexicogrammatical choices at the micro level, such as imperative verb dominance and overwording of moral vocabulary, can only be interpreted in their entirety when they are associated with massive patterns of production and distribution at the meso level (national standardization, cross-channel repetition), which in turn can only be understood in significance when linked to sociohistorical collective anxieties at the macro

level (crisis of trust, legacy of authoritarianism, contemporary polarization). The following table summarizes these dialectical interconnectedness.

Table 3 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Dialectical Synthesis on Mars KPU

Dimensions	Key Findings	Dialectical Linkages
Micro (Text)	Overwording of moral adjectives; imperative domination; asymmetrical relations between us vs People/Nation	Word choice is only fully meaningful when read in response to macro anxiety and reinforced by meso repetition
Meso (Discursive Practice)	Centralized production; multichannel distribution; bureaucratic-devotional-militaristic interdiscursiveness	Scale of distribution explains why micromessages can be massively internalized and escape critical evaluation
Macro (Sosiokultural)	The historical legacy of authoritarianism; contemporary distrust; hegemony & ISA; imagined community	It is this sociohistorical context that motivates and gives urgency to the textual and discursive strategies above

Thus, it can be affirmed that the KPU Mars is a *site of convergence* where linguistic-aesthetic interests, organizational-institutional interests, and political-historical interests meet and reinforce each other in a cultural artifact that seems simple but is in fact ideologically dense. These findings reinforce the argument put forward in the introductory section that institutional marches, rather than being seen as a purely decorative attribute, deserve to be positioned as an object of serious study in the realm of political communication and critical discourse analysis.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of Norman Fairclough's critical discourse, it can be concluded that the "KPU Mars" is not just an accompaniment song in ceremonial events, but a discursive text that is full of ideology and institutional power. In the micro realm (text), diction and imperative sentences are used to construct the image of the KPU as an authoritative, idealistic, and devoted institution; while the pattern of overwording in moral vocabulary (fair, honest, clean) indicates the existence of collective anxiety that is to be suppressed discursively. In the realm of meso (discourse practice), this march serves a dual function: as an indoctrination of integrity in the internal realm of the KPU and as a participatory persuasion in the public domain, which is strengthened through the massive standardization of production and distribution through various channels. In the macro (sociocultural) realm, the discourse produced is a direct response to the needs of contemporary Indonesian political history that yearns for a clean democratic process with integrity in order to build the

legitimacy of state power, as well as function as an instrument of cultural hegemony and the ideological apparatus of the state that contributes to shaping the imagined community of Indonesian nationality.

Theoretically, this research contributes by expanding the scope of the study of institutional march, which has often been underestimated as a decorative attribute, making it an object of serious critical discourse analysis, as well as bridging Fairclough's three-dimensional framework with Gramsci's concept of hegemony, Althusser's state ideological apparatus, and Anderson's imagined community in a coherent analytical framework to read the phenomenon of state institutional march in the Indonesian electoral context.

Practically, these findings recommend that the KPU should not rely solely on symbolic-discursive strategies such as march in an effort to restore public trust, but compensate with substantive reforms in the aspects of transparency of implementation, accuracy of vote recapitulation, and consistent enforcement of election laws, so that the gap between ideal narratives and structural reality can be reduced. In addition, a more open space for public participation in the process of creating or revising such institutional symbolic materials in the future can also be considered, in order to reduce the impression of completely *top-down* identified in the analysis of power relations in the micro dimension in this study.

This study has limitations that need to be acknowledged: (1) it is purely textual analysis without empirical audience reception data, so that claims about the persuasive and hegemonic effects of march are theoretical inferences that have not been tested through interviews or surveys of organizers and voters; (2) it only focuses on one artifact at a single point in time, has not captured the possibility of diachronic revision of the lyrics between election cycles; and (3) the interpretation of the resulting discourse remains interpretive and open to alternative reading by other researchers.

Based on these limitations, further research can be directed to: (1) an empirical reception study of KPPS officers and voters; (2) a comparative study of the KPU march with the march of election supervisory institutions such as Bawaslu and DKPP; (3) a diachronic analysis of changes in the lyrics and music of the state institutional march from time to time; and (4) the expansion of the object of study to cultural artifacts of other countries' institutions, such as community service jingles and official social media content of election organizers.

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