#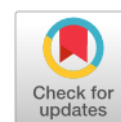 State Intervention Behind The Election of The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar: A Critical Discourse Analysis of The Film Boy from Heaven

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to reveal the forms of Egyptian state intervention in the religious institution of Al-Azhar, as represented in the film Boy from Heaven. The film portrays the state intelligence apparatus's involvement in the process of electing the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar as part of a political project aimed at controlling religious legitimacy. This study uses Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis approach, which includes three dimensions: text, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice. The results of the study found eight forms of intervention, including the production of dominant narratives, recruitment of informants, coalitions with extremist groups, intimidation, threats, legitimating narratives through murder, periodic monitoring, delegitimation politics, and arrests of candidates. These representations show the state's authoritarianism to obtain political interests and how language and narrative are used as tools of hegemony. These findings reflect the dynamics of political-religious relations in Egypt and expand the application of the critical discourse approach in studying language through fictional media.

1. Introduction

The dynamics of the relationship between political power and religious institutions remain relevant in various societies, including those in the Middle East. In this context, religious institutions often legitimize power and a field of contestation by political actors. One real example of this phenomenon is the long history of the Egyptian state, where the relationship between the state and religious institutions, such as Al-Azhar, is often not neutral but rather full of political interests. This situation shows how representational politics works; the state uses religious symbols, such as appointing the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar is deliberately controlled and mediated to obtain his hegemonic interests (Chang, 1996; Hall, 2012).

The position of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in Egypt is not only limited to being a religious authority but also has significant political influence. Therefore, the government often intervenes

in various ways to ensure that elected officials agree with the ruling regime's political interests. The state directs religious institutions in multiple ways, making official religious institutions, such as Al-Azhar, face two challenges in recent years. Supporters of the existing political order see it as a useful tool. Arab regimes seek to use all state religious institutions to strengthen their own rule. However, they also face international pressure to engage in counter-extremism efforts through their religious authorities (Brown, 2017).

The above phenomenon can be observed in Boy from Heaven, an Arabic-language political thriller released on 26 October 2022. Although fictional, this film depicts the complex relationship between politics and religious institutions. Tarek Saleh, the director, describes how state intervention in religious institutions such as Al-Azhar can occur systematically. The narrative in this film centers on the political intrigue that underlies the election of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, where the state actively manipulates the election process through its intelligence apparatus (T. Saleh, 2022).

Film is a social representation media that is entertaining and full of ideological content (Novianti et al., 2022). As a multidimensional and complex cultural product, the film has a language system that contains meaning as an implied form of culture, which is manifested in written, pictorial, or oral signs and plays an important role in producing, interpreting, and changing meanings that cannot be separated from ideology and stereotypes (Nurani, 2020). In this context, film is used as a space for conveying certain ideologies consciously created by the creator through narration, dialogue, depiction of each character, and symbolic visualization. In this way, film can build the audience's perception of the raised social and political realities.

A critical discourse analysis approach can be used to dismantle a film's ideology because it is considered full of ideological content. Ideology is generally understood as ideas, basic beliefs, and dynamic worldviews. Raymond Williams groups ideology into three categories: first, as a belief system adopted by a particular social group or class; second, as a construction of thought that is illusory or false consciousness; and third, as a mechanism in the creation and organization of meaning (Samsuri et al., 2022).

Hall (2012) stated that film is a medium of representation where the process of meaning occurs actively. The film comprises two main elements: narrative and cinematic. These two elements support each other in conveying the overall meaning. Representation process of creating meaning for a concept that has been formed in the human mind, then re-articulating through a sign system, one of which is through language (Susanti & Rosyidi, 2020).

Based on the above description, this study focuses on Boy from Heaven. This research focuses on government intervention, specifically the role of intelligence officers in influencing the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar's selection process, as depicted in the film Boy from Heaven. This will focus on

the government's forms of intervention through intelligence officers in a series of processes for selecting the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, which are raised in the film. This film will focus on the forms of government intervention through intelligence officers in a series of processes for selecting the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. Therefore, an analytical tool that allows us to reveal the relationship between the state and the religious institution of Al-Azhar is needed to uncover this aspect. Thus, this research uses the CDA approach developed by Norman Fairclough.

Discourse includes a text's idea and concept (Rohana & Syamsuddin, 2015). However, discourse is a tool that can interact explicitly and implicitly with the life of society (Fairclough, 1993; Ratnaningsih Dewi, 2019). Therefore, discourse has a broader dimension than just language or text; it reflects the perspectives, values, and power relations that exist in society. Discourse can spread, maintain, or debate certain ideas and interests in a social space.

According to Fairclough, CDA concerns how linguistic forms express and measure power. It has several characteristics: action, context, history, power, and ideology (Azwar et al., 2021; Surahman et al., 2022). Fairclough in Asri & Nurhayati (2024) and Muhammad & Rahayu (2024) offers a CDA model consisting of three dimensions of analysis: first, text analysis that includes linguistic structures such as word choice, metaphor, and grammar; second, discursive practices that trace the process of production, distribution, and consumption of texts; and third, social practices that link discourse to broader social, cultural, and political contexts. This approach allows researchers to explore how the state performs intervention practices through verbal language in the film's dialogue or narrative and other representative elements that reflect power relations. Fairclough emphasizes that discourse reflects social reality and actively shapes and reproduces social structure through language practices full of ideological meaning. Thus, this approach is relevant to dissecting how the film Boy from Heaven represents state intervention in religious institutions through discourse constructions across various text and context levels.

Several studies have applied this approach to various media. For example, Martalia et al., (2024) found that the discourse of religious moderation promoted by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion is not neutral but rather contains the ideological interests of the state to shape people's way of thinking about peaceful, tolerant, and government-agenda religiosity. Haslina (2023) found that Annies Baswedan built his image as a populist, nationalist, and religious leader in the 2024 presidential election. This study demonstrates that linguistic strategies strengthen political identity and attract public sympathy. Sulaeman & Mustofa (2022) studied the documentary Wadas Waras, which highlighted the inequality of power and criticised Jokowi's development projects by constructing a discourse that sided with the citizens succeeded in revealing gender inequality against women working as housewives in the film Rumput Tetangga (Novianti et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, in fictional media, Rarasati & Zawawi, (2024) reveal how Fairclough's CDA

approach represents the events of the Arab Spring. In a fictional narrative reflecting the political reality of the Middle East, this film highlights the discourse of power, repression, and popular rebellion against authoritarian regimes. However, no specific research has used Norman Fairclough's CDA to analyse the film Boy from Heaven, especially in the context of state intervention in religious institutions in Egypt. Therefore, this study will fill this gap by examining the three forms of Fairclough's CDA model dimensions to understand how state power works through religious mechanisms.

Find a single researcher who discussed this film either with a Critical Discourse Analysis approach or other models. Few studies have used cinematic works as a medium to examine state intervention practices in popular cultural discourse. This is where the gap that this study attempts to fill lies. Using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis approach, this study offers two levels of contributions: 1) conceptually, expanding the application of Fairclough's theory to the realm of cinematic representation of religious politics, and 2) empirically, providing a new understanding of the forms of state domination of religious institutions in Egypt through narrative construction in the film Boy from Heaven. Therefore, this article bridges media, political, and religious studies within the framework of critical discourse analysis.

This study aims to obtain an in-depth description of the various forms of Egyptian government intervention in electing the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, as represented in the film Boy from Heaven. Through Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis approach, this study aims to reveal how language is used as a powerful tool and how social practices of power work through religious institutions, especially in the context of relations between the state and religious institutions in Egypt. The focus of the analysis is directed at the three dimensions of Norman Fairclough's CDA to understand the forms of intervention that are displayed both metaphorically and narratively in the film so that it can provide an overview of how state power is inserted through religious discourse in fictional media.

2. Method

This study was designed with a qualitative descriptive research model using Norman Fairclough's CDA approach. Qualitative research is research used to explore Meaning in social phenomena or problems (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Descriptive research aims to obtain information about an ongoing condition and present it in the form of a narrative description. The main objective of this study is to compile a systematic, factual, and precise presentation of various facts and phenomena (Samsuri et al., 2022). This study emphasizes the basic principles that form meaning in social phenomena in society. The quality process is carried out through the stages of data processing and organizing, grouping into parts that can be analyzed, compiling a synthesis, searching and recognizing patterns, identifying important things that can be learned, and

determining relevant information to be conveyed to other parties (Sukraaliawan et al., 2021; Sutarjo & Nurlia, 2022).

The primary data source that the researcher used in this study was an Arabic-language political thriller film titled Boy from Heaven, directed by Tariq Saleh, with information that can be accessed via the Internet Movie Database website (IMDb). The film was released on October 26, 2022, and premiered at the 75th Cannes Film Festival on May 20, 2022. Meanwhile, the researcher took secondary data from literature that supports and is relevant to the chosen study area, such as books, journals, scientific articles, and websites. Only important parts will be selected through this 2-hour, 6-minute film based on the emergence of representative elements that describe state intervention, such as the intelligence officers' main dialogue and actions.

Data collection was carried out through the following stages: 1) watching the film repeatedly to capture the context and meaning of the dialogue, 2) copying or transcribing several main dialogues that are considered to describe the elements being studied, 3) noting important dialogues, and 4) looking for other related references. After the data was collected, the next stage was to analyze the data using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis approach. According to Fairclough (2013), analysis in the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach consists of three main stages, namely description (text), interpretation (discursive practice), and explanation (socio-cultural practices). The description stage examines linguistic forms in discourse or text, such as word choice, sentence structure, and style, without considering external context. Furthermore, the interpretation stage involves giving meaning to the text by linking it to the context of discourse production and distribution, including the communication situation that underlies it. Meanwhile, the explanation stage links the interpretation results to broader social and cultural structures.

In data processing, researchers performed several systematic stages, namely: 1) identifying data that is related to the focus of the research, 2) analyzing some selected scenes and dialogues in the film Boy from Heaven, and 3) classifying data based on the aspects formulated by Fairclough through the Critical Discourse Analysis approach, and 4) compiling conclusions that answer the questions of the research problem.

3.   Results and Discussion

This section presents the researcher's findings regarding the forms of state intervention in electing the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, as shown in the film Boy from Heaven. The analysis was conducted using Fairclough's CDA approach, which includes three main dimensions: text, discourse, and socio-cultural. These three dimensions are interconnected in dismantling the relations of power, ideology, and the discourse production and consumption process that form the film's dominant narrative.

Through this approach, the researcher attempts to uncover how the Egyptian National Security Agency apparatus shapes, controls, and distributes discourse to legitimize its involvement in the religious realm. The researcher obtained eight findings that were grouped into several forms of intervention that appeared prominently in the film, such as the production of dominant narratives, recruitment of informants, legitimizing narratives, forming coalitions with extremist groups, periodic monitoring, delegitimizing politics, intimidation and threats, and manipulation and arrest of candidates. Each intervention was analyzed based on linguistic data from the film's dialogue, production context and Egypt's socio-political realities. The following are the findings in Table 1 form:

Table 1. Forms of State Intervention Represented in Boy from Heaven Based on Fairclough's Dimensions

Fairclough Dimensions	Form of Intervention	Data Content	Result
Text Dimensions	Dominant Narrative Production	Excerpts 1 and 2	5 Excerpts
	Recruitment of informants	Excerpt 3	
	Coalition Of Informants with Extremists	Excerpt 4	
	Intimidation and Threats	Excerpt 5	
Discursive Practices	Legitimative Narrative Through Zizo's Murder	Excerpts 6 and 7	5 Excerpts
	Periodic Monitoring	Excerpt 8	
	Politics of Delegitimization (Investigation of the Illegal Wife of One of the Candidates)	Excerpt 9 and 10	
	Manipulation and Arrest of Candidates	Excerpt 11	
Socio–Cultural Practices	-	Relationships, social and cultural processes in the data	Situational, institutional, social

From the several forms of intervention in the table above, researchers classified them into three sub-chapters based on the Norman Fairclough CDA theoretical framework:

3.1.   Text Dimensions

The textual dimension centers on linguistic elements and discourse structures present in the film, independent of its external context. These include diction, rhetorical style, metaphors, and other linguistic strategies employed by powerful actors to construct dominant narratives. This finding demonstrates that the Egyptian National Security Agency apparatus uses language as a tool to control its hegemonic narrative. This aligns with what (Fairclough, 2013) said in his book Language and Power, which emphasizes that language is the main means of implementing ideological power because it shapes and influences social understanding and behavior. Language is not neutral but is used to reproduce domination and hegemony. Meanwhile, this finding is also reinforced by previous studies. In the framework of CDA, language is seen as an ideological tool that can shape social reality, direct public opinion, and perpetuate power through discourse that

seems neutral but is full of interests (Haslina, 2023; Martalia et al., 2024; Rarasati & Zawawi, 2024). In the research context, several forms of state strategies were found in controlling the dominant and hegemonic narratives, which were grouped based on the forms of intervention above, namely:

3.1.1. Dominant Narrative Production

One representation of the state's dominant discourse on religious institutions can be seen in the statement of General Sakran, Head of Egypt's National Security Agency, in a closed meeting. Excerpts 1 and 2 provide an explanation.

Excerpt 1:

شيخ الأزهر دلوقتي بقا مدى الحياة. مش مسألة فتوى هنا ولا هناك. اختيار الشيخ الجديد قضية الأمن الوطني بالدرجه الأولى. ما ينفعش حد يقعد على الكرسي مدى الحياه غير رئيس الجمهورية. ما ينفعش! ما يصحش يكون فيه فرعونين في البلد (T. Saleh, 2022).

"The Grand Imam is now appointed for life. The election of the Grand Imam is a matter of national security. No one should serve for life, except our president! We don't want that! We can't accept having two pharaohs in this country!"

General Sakran's statement above mentions that the election of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar is part of state security affairs, showing control of power over religious institutions. God willing The expression اختيار الشيخ الجديد قضية الأمن الوطني بالدرجه الأولى is said not only to be informative, but also to be determinative, containing a strong message that the election of the Grand Imam is no longer purely a matter for the religious institution but rather part of national political stability. Furthermore, the phrase ما ينفعش حد يقعد على الكرسي مدى الحياه غير رئيس الجمهورية shows a single narrative of power that asserts that lifelong authority is only worthy of being held by the head of state, no one else, including the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. At the same time, this statement also becomes a form of delegitimization of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar as a figure who has the potential to have independent long-term authority.

The use of the metaphor of فرعونين in this expression strengthens the ideological representation that the state does not tolerate the emergence of religious figures who can be an alternative to the center of authority. According to Hinds & Badawi, (1986), فرعونين has the meaning of *tyrant* and *giant,* implying authoritarian rule and absolute domination. Thus, the

phrase, "ما ينفعش! ما يصحش يكون فيه فرعونين في البلد" emphasizes an ideological naturalization that absolute leadership is only the exclusive right of the president, not a religious figure. So the use of the word فرعونين مانقعيف does not highlight the figure of the ancient Egyptian king but rather a metaphor that contains connotations of authoritarian, iron-fisted rule and centralized domination.

Excerpt 2:

الرياسه عايزة الببلوي, أراءه تناسب الرياسه. خلوهم يختار (T. Saleh, 2022).

"The president wants Beblawi." His views agree with the president's. Make sure he gets elected!"

The excerpt above highlights several important aspects. First, the sentence الرياسه عايزة الببلوي represents a direct power relationship, in which الرياسه (the President) is positioned as the authoritative subject in determining who is entitled to occupy the position of Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. The choice of the word عايزة does not merely indicate preference, but carries the meaning of obligation, implying a necessity. Thus, this text constructs a discourse of domination used to demonstrate the state's superior position over religious institutions. Second, the phrase أراءه تناسب الرياسه conveys the message that candidates who will take control of Al-Azhar must be ideologically compatible with the state's political views. Third, the imperative sentence خلوهم يختار appears in an imperative form that contains an instructional meaning. Textually, this imperative sentence form indicates a practice of hegemony, as the state authority not only expresses its desires but also directs actions. This aligns with concept that texts often contain directive speech act functions that serve as a means of social control (Fairclough, 2013).

3.1.2. Informant Recruitment

One of the systematic agendas carried out by the Egyptian National Security Agency to intervene in religious institutions was the recruitment of secret informants. They targeted Al-Azhar students to be used as intelligence gathering tools. The first informant ever appointed was named Zizo, but his position as an informant was already known by Sheikh Negm, one of the Grand Imam candidates. Then Zizo resigned and was asked to find a replacement. This process is explicitly described in a conversation between Colonel Ibrahim and Zizo, the commander of the order.

Excerpt 3:

شـوف لي ملك جديد. ويـفضل يكون طالب جديد لسـه بشـوكه خقش تد ملم ددشـد. اشـفيو شرقي

ببتط ددشـد تلف اكقشـف (T. Saleh, 2022).

> *"Find me a new angel. A freshman with no connections"*

Textually, the phrase ملك جديد (new angel) does not refer to a holy being, as the nature of an

angel who never commits sins, but rather a metaphor for an innocent and clean figure, which in this context means a target who has not been exposed to the system and does not yet have institutional or social loyalty at Al-Azhar. This phrase indicates how the state uses symbolic rhetoric to reduce the identity of students to objects of intelligence, not subjects of education.

The phrase ويفضل يكون طالب جديد لسـه بشـوكه (a new student with no connections)

emphasizes the preference for individuals who are easy to control. This is a form of ideological infiltration strategy, namely, the state selects vulnerable individuals who can be instrumentalized for internal surveillance.

3.1.3. Coalition of Informants with Extremists

The Zizo murder case is still a mystery; the real perpetrator has not been revealed. Colonel Ibrahim wrapped the case as a symbolic legitimacy to infiltrate the internal environment of Al-Azhar, strengthen supervision, and expand the state apparatus's control over the institution. Simultaneously, he began to track the whereabouts of a student named Adam, whom Zizo had previously recommended as a candidate for his replacement. After successfully finding him, Colonel Ibrahim scheduled their first meeting at the same cafe as Zizo, a place that symbolically marked the secret communication space of power. On that occasion, Ibrahim was instructed to monitor the activities of a study group suspected of being followers of the Ikhwanul Muslimin, and at the same time, narratively linked as the party responsible for Zizo's murder. The incident was recorded in Ibrahim's statement.

Excerpt 4:

كل إللي عايزك تعمله. إنك تحضـر صلاة الفجر إللي. وتشـوفي كمان مين تاني من صـوم. حافظـلي

أشـكالـهم أقرم (T. Saleh, 2022).

> *"What I want you to do is to perform the morning prayer." And observe who else is doing*
> *it. Remember their faces. Learn their names"*

Ibrahim's statement above acts as a form of imperative instruction that implies a hierarchy of power and a subordinate relationship between Adam as an object of control and Ibrahim as an

agent of the state. Textually (first dimension), the word كل إللي عايزك تعمله contains a direct command language structure, which does not provide room for negotiation. This sentence not only expresses a desire but also includes an obligation in the form of an intelligence task disguised as a political monitoring tool. The act of monitoring anyone who attends the morning prayer, memorizing their faces, and recording their names is a surveillance strategy with a hidden political purpose. As a representative of a state agent, Ibrahim uses a religious narrative to infiltrate surveillance practices aimed at bringing down a certain candidate in the election of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, because one of the participants in the study group that was spied on was known to be the candidate's assistant. Thus, this action is not just a form of personal subordination but part of the state's hegemonic strategy over religious institutions, where power works through discourse and representation manipulation.

3.1.4. Intimidation and Threats

One form of threat and intimidation that the National Security Agency has carried out is as described in the dialogue between Colonel Ibrahim and Zizo in an American-style cafe.

Excerpt 5:

زيزوا: أنا تكشفت. لازم تخليني أخلع.

ابراهيم: بتعرف إيه حكم المرتد؟ الإعدام! (T. Saleh, 2022).

> *"Zizo: "I've been caught. You have to let me go"*
> *Ibrahim: "Do you know the punishment for traitors? Death!"*

This dialogue reflects a form of existential threat launched by the state against individuals considered to have defected or failed to carry out the state's mission. The phrase أنا تكشفت (I've been caught) shows that another party has revealed Zizo's position as a spy. In this context, the sentence is an admission that his life is now in danger because he is no longer a safe secret agent.

However, Colonel Ibrahim's response with the sentence بتعرف إيه حكم المرتد؟ الإعدام! (Do you know the punishment for apostasy? Death!) has a much deeper meaning than just a physical threat. The word مرتد (apostasy) in Islamic discourse refers to someone who leaves the religion, and the punishment is traditionally considered to be the death penalty. However, in the context of state discourse, this term is recontextualized ideologically: apostasy here is no longer a religious issue but a metaphor for betrayal of the state. Thus, the state symbolically equates defection from the intelligence mission as a form of ideological apostasy, a sacred act that is considered to betray absolute loyalty to the regime. This shows the unification of state political interests and religious

morality, where the apparatus has the right to define sin and determine punishment.

3.2. Discursive Practices

Discursive practice encompasses discourse production, distribution, and consumption processes. Within this dimension, the analytical focus lies on how the film's narrative is produced and consumed within the Grand Imam's selection context. The following findings reveal the covert strategies employed by the state to manipulate this process through information control and interpretation:

3.2.1. Legitimative Narrative through Zizo's Murder

The murder of state informant Zizo was a consequence of the revelation of his dual role in the context of state intervention in the election of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. The revelation of Zizo's identity as an intelligence agent in front of Sheikh Negm sparked concerns from the National Security Agency, especially regarding the potential for the infiltration strategy that had been carried out to be exposed. To quell the turmoil and maintain the credibility of state institutions, the government then produced a legitimizing narrative that reconstructed the murder case as an unknown event but instead acted like someone who would eradicate this problem. The legitimized narrative can be seen in excerpts 6 and 7.

Excerpt 6:

نهارده الصبح تم العثور على جثة أحد طلابنا في الأزمة والعقيد إبراهيم هنا هيحكج في اللحظة

بغض الله يكون في عونه للكشف على الحديثة (T. Saleh, 2022).

"This morning, the body of one of our students was found at Al-Azhar, and Colonel Ibrahim is here to explain the incident. May Allah help him uncover the truth behind this incident."

Excerpt 7:

أنا بأعتذر جداً على معضعتكم في الوقت الحساس ده وإحنا ممكن نعلق التحقيق لحين الإنتهاء

من إختيار الشيخ الأزهر الجديد ممكن أن تفضلوا وتنظروا لي متى هي عصابة؟

(T. Saleh, 2022)

"Forgive me for disturbing you at such a sensitive time. We can suspend our investigation until you have chosen the new Grand Imam. "Could you let us know when the announcement will be made?"

Colonel Ibrahim produced this legitimating narrative when speaking in front of all Al-Azhar students and scholars. He acted like a National Security officer responsible for resolving this case.

This legitimate narrative was then consumed by all Al-Azhar students and scholars, who, in the process, showed acceptance of the construction of meaning offered, thus playing a role in strengthening the state's legitimacy for its actions.

In this context, the legitimacy narrative functions as a hegemonic tool to manipulate public perception and cover up state involvement in repressive actions. In line with Fairclough's opinion, discourse not only represents reality but also produces and regulates public understanding of that reality. Thus, actors of power use this narrative to disguise truth, maintain political stability, and prevent the delegitimization of the ruling regime.

3.2.2. Periodic Monitoring

Limited communication is one of the periodic surveillance strategies implemented by Colonel Ibrahim towards his informant, Adam. This form of communication occurs privately and under control, with a symbolically chosen location, namely, an American-style cafe that functions as a neutral space and a safe place to convey directions. Adam must report all forms of information successfully collected during the infiltration process in the Al-Azhar environment. Colonel Ibrahim acts as an operational controller through imperative instructions, actively regulating the rhythm of the informant's work. His speech shows a hierarchical relationship that positions Adam as an object of strategic control rather than a dialogue partner.

Excerpt 8:

العقيد ابراهيم: جيب تاسميهم؟

أدم: لا

العقيد ابراهيم: أبوك عندها تسدد سفرهم عشان كده عجيه عندما تعليش ممكن يروح فيها هدعا عندنا مستشفى غريبة مدهلية أنها دهت مضل عمليه ومش عارف أنها تنسعته عندما تساشن يشتغلوا معانا سيطلبوا على عنده لا تتصلش من أمام متعبلة الكده عايزة سامي تطلب أن تصلوا وفادي في الجامع (T. Saleh, 2022).

> *Colonel Ibrahim: "Do you have a name?"*
> *Adam: "No." Colonel*
> *Ibrahim: "Your father has gallstones. That's why he is in pain. If left untreated, he will die. We have a hospital in Dakahlia. I will arrange the surgery. He won't know that you're helping him. We do not forget those who work for us. But I must ask you—do not to contact your village Imam again! Furthermore, I want to know who prays at the mosque."*

In Norman Fairclough's (CDA) model, the dimension of discursive practice in one of the interventions found is in the form of the National Security Agency's control mechanism over the informant, namely, Adam. In this situation, Colonel Ibrahim, as the creator of the discourse, is then consumed by Adam as an ideological subordinate position because he not the action is a form of submission.

3.2.3. Politics of Delegitimization

Colonel Ibrahim implemented a political delegitimization approach as the main tactic to continue eliminating a candidate for the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. The politics of delegitimization can be understood as a discursive and political strategy aimed at undermining the moral, social, or institutional legitimacy of a particular individual or group (Sholikhah, 2023). In power contestation, this strategy is generally used to weaken public trust in the targeted party, thus opening up space for a shift in authority or a change in the power structure. Delegitimization is performed through direct criticism of performance and disclosure of personal scandals or negative strategic framing. This practice of political delegitimization can be seen in Excerpts 9 and 10.

Excerpt 9:

أدم: النهارده هو طلب مني أجيب حاجات للأطفال بتاع ابن ابنه.

العقيد ابراهيم: طيب؟

أدم: هو ما عندوش ولاد (T. Saleh, 2022).

Adam: "Today he asked me to buy baby supplies for his son's son."
Colonel Ibrahim: "And?"
Adam: "He doesn't have a son."

Excerpt 10:

العقيد ابراهيم: مين أبوه يا ريم؟

ريم: أرجوك يا باشا، ما تسألنيش كده

العقيد إبراهيم: ما تخافيش. ما فيش حد هيأذيكي

ريم: الشيخ دوراني راجل كبار. هو زي أبويا. إحنا ما ناقصناش حاجة. الغلط غلطي (T. Saleh, 2022).

Colonel Ibrahim: "Who is his father, Reem?"
Reem: "Please, sir, don't ask me that"

> *Colonel Ibrahim: "Don't be afraid. No one will hurt you"*
>
> *Reem: "Sheikh Durani is an extraordinary man. He is like a father to me. We lack nothing.*
>
> *It's my fault"*

Concerning the film Boy from Heaven, the politics of delegitimization is carried out by leaking sensitive information that attacks the personal reputation of Sheikh Durani, a Grand Imam candidate. The politics of delegitimization reveals that the concerned person had impregnated a girl out of wedlock. Ibrahim involved Adam in this scenario. The goal was to damage Sheikh Durani's reputation as a religious figure before Adam and lower his social acceptance of his candidacy. Moreover, this strategy aimed to convince Adam to participate in the agenda to overthrow him.

3.2.4. Politics of Delegitimization

The strategy of political elimination implemented by the state apparatus in the film Boy from Heaven is also seen through the arrest of one of the candidates for Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Negm. Although Sheikh Negm explicitly admitted his involvement in the murder of informant Zizo, the film's narrative shows that the confession was not based on objective facts but rather a form of symbolic sacrifice laden with moral burden and institutional responsibility. Colonel Ibrahim is fully aware that Sheikh Negm is not the real perpetrator but still uses the confession as a form of legitimacy to remove the candidate from the competition arena as a representation of state power. In this context, the arrest is used as an instrument of delegitimization and political elimination wrapped in a narrative of legality and morality.

Excerpt 11:

ورحمة أمي، لو الموضوع ده رجع علينا، إنت اللي تخلص مش أنا. فاهمني؟ اسمع، إنت ما

سبتليش أي خيار. اقبضه! (T. Saleh, 2022).

> *"I swear to you, if this comes back to us, you're done, not me. Understand? Listen. You're*
> *not giving me a choice. Catch him!"*

This action reflects the state's use of legal and symbolic apparatus to remove figures not aligned with its ideological and political interests. It also demonstrates that power-controlled discourse can construct law and truth.

3.3. Socio-Cultural Practices

The socio-cultural practice dimension examines the relationship between discourse and broader social structures. The finding reveals the state's hegemony over the Al-Azhar institution, which can be observed across various levels of socio-cultural practice, from contemporary situational contexts to institutional structures and cultural dimensions. This finding shows how

the state's hegemony over Al-Azhar institutions. To explain the relationship between discourse structure and social structure, Fairclough (1993) emphasized that the analysis needs to focus on key concepts such as power and ideology and how both operate through discourse (Güldal & Sezer, 2023). Referring to Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough argues that social practices consist of three levels: situational, institutional, and social (Hasibuan & Khairani, 2021).

If seen from a situational level, the discourse in this film was born due to tensions between religious institutions and the state. The largest infiltration ever occurred into Al-Azhar during the reign of Gamal Abdul Nasser through Law 103 of 1961 to reorganize Al-Azhar. This law placed religion, making it part of the state bureaucracy. At the time, Nasser understood that controlling Al-Azhar was essential for ensuring domestic control and advancing foreign policy goals. Nasser's control of Al-Azhar opened the way for Sadat and Mubarak to similarly manipulate Al-Azhar. All three used Al-Azhar and Islamic symbolism for political gain, albeit with different approaches. They controlled Al-Azhar because they recognised the following: 1) the institution could legitimise their policies; 2) Al-Azhar could act as a counterweight to religious groups such as the Ikhwanul Muslimin, Salafis, and Wahhabism; and 3) Al-Azhar's power was essential to maintaining stability and influence in the Arab and Muslim world (Morsy, 2013). In addition, the discourse in the film also emerged due to the proposal of Mohammad Abu Hamed, a member of parliament of the Free Egyptian Party, forabill called the "Azhar Law," in which one of the most controversial contents of the law is the transfer of the authority to appoint the committee of Al-Azhar's great scholars from the Grand Imam to the president and the limitation of the term of office of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar to eight years. This proposal raises concerns about the potential reduction of Al-Azhar's autonomy and state control over religious institutions (Quisay, 2017).

At the institutional level, the film reflects a deeper ideological struggle over the relationship between the state and religion in the Egyptian political system. The state's reforms and interventions in Al-Azhar, such as those initiated through Nasser's 1961 Law 103, were part of a larger political project to integrate religious authority into the framework of state power. Within this framework, the state sought to control religious discourse and reorganize social and religious legitimacy structures to align with the agenda of political power. Mohammad Abu Hamed's proposed "Azhar Law" bill, which seeks to transfer the authority to appoint the clerical committee to the president and limit the term of office of the Grand Imam, is a contemporary manifestation of a power structure that seeks to institutionalise the subordination of religious institutions to the state system. This contrasts with Egypt's 2014 constitutional amendments that affirm Al-Azhar's independence from government intervention. Therefore, at the constitutional level, this conflict shows the tension between the principle of the autonomy of religious institutions guaranteed by law and the political practices of the state that seek to expand its ideological control over strategic

institutions such as Al-Azhar.

From the social side, it is known that Egyptian society has broader dynamics and ideological struggles between religious authorities and the modern, centralistic, and secular state. Al-Azhar's subordination by the state shows how political power seeks to organize the social structure and monopolize religious legitimacy as part of a project to form a national identity and social control. In Boy from Heaven, the government attempts to intervene in Al-Azhar through the Grand Imam's election to obtain broader political interests through the National Security Agency apparatus.

4.　Conclusion

The film is a miniature manifestation of social reality. Through this medium, various prevailing social dynamics are represented symbolically through language, narrative, and visualization. The film is also a space for effective ideological delivery in reflecting on the structure of the practice of power, relations between groups, and forms of state intervention in certain institutions, including religious institutions. Film is one of the important tools in producing and disseminating discourse that is full of political and ideological meaning. The film Boy from Heaven highlights the Egyptian National Security Agency's efforts to control the Al-Azhar institutions so that it is under government control. For that reason, they intervened in electing the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar to ensure that the Grand Imam elected was in line with their power interests.

Based on the analysis results, this study found eight forms of government intervention in electing the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. The forms of intervention were identified from various actions taken by the National Security Agency, such as recruiting informants, delegitimizing politics, and arresting a candidate. Although fictional, its meaning and representation reflect the socio-political reality that has been or is happening. Hence, it still has contextual relevance to Egypt's dynamics. These findings were analyzed comprehensively through data correlation between text dimensions, discursive practices, and socio-cultural dimensions with the Norman Fairclough Discourse Analysis approach model that the researcher obtained. This research also enriches the scientific treasury in linguistic studies, especially in using the Critical Discourse Analysis approach as information regarding the replica of the reality of political tension between religious and state institutions, as told in the film. In addition, this research can also be used as an additional reference for linguistic, media, and cultural politics researchers.

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