

## Representation of Conflict in the Soap Opera “Asmara Gen Z” on SCTV

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### ARTICLE INFO

**Keywords:** Framing Analysis; Conflict Representation; Gen Z Soap Operas; Distributive Justice, Mass Media

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### ABSTRACT

Generation Z is the first generation to use digital technology and exhibits distinct media consumption characteristics, yet television remains relevant when it presents content, such as *soap operas*, that resonates with their experiences. This study aims to analyze the *representation of conflict in the soap opera “Asmara Gen Z”* episode 322 through Robert Entman’s four dimensions of framing to uncover the ideological values and social responsibilities conveyed to Gen Z audiences. The research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing Entman’s framing model analysis and in-depth interviews with six Gen Z informants. The results indicate that the conflict is framed as a personal character conflict reinforced by an inconsistent school policy system. The “*9 Ilmu*” group is represented as a highly solidary group expected to yield, whereas “*Tirta Persada*” is depicted as a privileged group making excessive demands. This study concludes that *soap operas* transmit four paradoxical values: passive adaptive solidarity, empathy, ambiguous distributive justice, and maturity as passivity, collectively reinforcing the ideology of “*Privileged Compassion.*” Recommendations are directed at *soap opera* creators to develop narratives that are more attuned to issues of distributive justice, emphasizing solutions centered on personal attitude change rather than systemic reform.

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## INTRODUCTION

Gen Z (1997-2012), as the first digital natives, have media consumption patterns that differ significantly from previous generations (Hidayat et al., 2024). Although the majority of Gen Z in Indonesia access streaming videos every day, APJJI (2025), Television remains relevant when it presents content that authentically represents their social reality. In this context, soap operas serve not only as a medium of entertainment, but also as agents of socialization that shape the audience's perception of social conflicts through systematically constructed narratives (Berger, P.L. & Luckman (1966).



**Figure 1. The TV Series “Asmara Gen Z” Episode 322**

Source: Vidio Application, 08 October 2025

The soap opera “Asmara Gen Z,” which has been airing on SCTV since December 9, 2024, addresses social conflicts in the lives of Gen Z, particularly issues of justice, solidarity, and morality. The show achieved a TVR of 3.2 and a share of 17.5%, indicating the enthusiasm of Gen Z viewers (Bintang Tabloid, 2024). Uniquely, this soap opera uses the real identities of actors Fattah, Aqeela, Mohan, Raisa, and Zara. The storyline centers on the conflict between “9 Ilmu” and “Tirta Persada” over the ownership of a school building.

Episode 322, “Asmara Gen Z,” which aired on October 8, 2025, was chosen as the focus of the study because it represents a complete conflict through three interrelated phases: initial confrontation, intensive negotiation, and final resolution. This conflict raises a dilemma: maintaining the right to achievement or opening access for humanitarian reasons, which shows that the representation of conflict can influence the formation of Gen Z audiences' identities and social values (Nurfalah et al., 2020).

The urgency of this research lies in three critical aspects. First, Gen Z is still in the process of forming their identity and moral values Nurfalah et al., (2020), Thus, the representation of conflict in the media they consume intensively can shape the way they understand social conflict in real life. Second, conflict content that simplifies issues of structural justice can cause learned helplessness in adolescents facing similar situations. Third, as these soap operas are widely watched by Gen Z, it is important to understand the moral values transmitted through the framing of conflict so as not to normalize injustice or create problematic moral expectations (Khumayah et al., 2025).

Although, (Qanita Salma et al., 2025) has analyzed the framing of moral values in the soap opera “Preman Pensiun” and (Qanita Salma et al., 2025) Researching the interaction of the audience of “Asmara Gen Z” through the Uses and Gratification perspective, there has been no research that specifically analyzes how this soap opera frames social conflicts based on class inequality and distributive justice from Entman's framing perspective. Previous studies have tended to focus on individual moral issues or audience reception, while analysis of the construction of social conflict based on class inequality in teen soap operas is still very limited (Listyani et al., 2022).

This study aims to analyze the representation of social conflict in episode 322 of the soap opera “Asmara Gen Z” through four dimensions of framing Entman (1993): a) problem definition, b) diagnosis of causes, c) moral evaluation, d) implied solutions and revealing moral

values and social responsibilities transmitted to Gen Z audiences, particularly in representing the values of empathy, solidarity, and social justice. Thus, this study contributes to media text studies and practical insights for soap opera creators in presenting socially responsible content.

## METHOD


This study used a qualitative approach to analyze in depth how conflict is framed in the soap opera “Asmara Gen Z” and what social values are represented through Entman's framing. This research used Robert Entman's framing analysis method. Robert Entman's framing analysis was chosen because it provides a systematic and comprehensive analytical framework.

The data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth observation of episode 322 of the soap opera “Asmara Gen Z” and in-depth interviews with six Gen Z informants (aged 19-22 years). Informants were selected using purposive sampling with the following criteria: they had watched episode 322 at least once and were divided into three regular viewers and three irregular viewers. Secondary data was obtained from relevant literature, including books, scientific journals, and articles.

As for data validity testing, the study applied Robert Entman's Framing Analysis matrix, which contains four elements: Define Problem, Diagnose Causes, Make Moral Judgment, and Treatment Recommendation. The results of the interviews were used as supporting evidence. The data was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing to reveal how the soap opera “Asmara Gen Z” frames social conflicts through both television and social media platforms such as TikTok and Vidio.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1. Entman's Framing Analysis Matrix Table**

No	Scene	Define Problem	Diagnose Causes	Make Moral Judgments	Solution
1.	 <p>Teacher Discussion Scene “9 Ilmu” and “Tirta Persada” (Minute 10, Part 1) Source: Video App, October 8, 2025</p>	<p>The conflict was framed as a conflict between personal character and inconsistent policy systems, as one informant said: “In my opinion, the conflict is interrelated between personal character and school</p>	<p>The main cause of the building collapse was prior sabotage by one of the students, “Tirta Persada.” The school's policy leaned toward favoring “Tirta Persada” due to pressure from one of the donors,</p>	<p>The “9 Ilmu” group is portrayed as protagonists who have high solidarity, calmness, and maturity through close-up expressions and structured dialogue, as the character Aqeela: “then make an agreement on the rooms</p>	<p>The solution offered is quite fair due to the restrictions on the area of the room proposed by “9 Ilmu”. However, the solution emphasizes a change in personal attitude. The informant said: “The solution is more geared towards a change in attitude, especially among the “9 Ilmu”</p>

	<p>Teacher Discussion Scene: "9 Ilmu" with "Tirta Persada" (Minute 26, Part 1) Source: Vidio App, October 8, 2025</p>	<p>policy, for example in the scene where the teachers "Tirta Persada" and "9 Ilmu" are trying to find a solution regarding the collapsed building." (Ayu)</p>	<p>Mrs. Karina. Two informants agreed, saying, "It is true that the building collapsed due to sabotage and also the school's inconsistent policy." (Salma and Nadia)</p>	<p>used." "Tirta Persada" is portrayed as antagonists with explosive emotions. The values highlighted are solidarity and empathy. According to two informants, "the expressions of '9 Ilmu' appear calm and mature, while 'Tirta Persada' is often shown from a tense perspective, and there is a very high value of solidarity in all circumstances in the '9 Ilmu' group." (Ayu and Nadia)</p>	<p>group, and the school policy system has not shown much change." (Nadia)</p>	
<p>2.</p>		<p>Discussion Scene between Ms. Anita and Mr. Budi with "9 Ilmu" (Minute 14, Part 1) Source: Vidio App, October 8, 2025</p>	<p>The damage to the building was framed as the result of individual sabotage that triggered a conflict over space. The problem was defined as an urgent facility crisis. "It started because of the character of the figure." (Ayu)</p>	<p>The direct cause was sabotage by one of the students of "Tirta Persada" to return to the main building. The indirect cause was jealousy over the victory of "9 Ilmu" in the quiz competition. In line with the two informants who said: "What I see as the cause is the character of the 'Tirta Persada' "</p>	<p>This act of sabotage shows the demanding, excessive, and unsportsmanlike character of "Tirta Persada." In contrast, "9 Ilmu" accepted the school's decision maturely despite having been previously isolated. In line with one informant, who said: "The 'Tirta Persada' side demanded justice selfishly because of the damage to their classroom building caused by one of the 'Tirta Persada' "</p>	<p>Sabotage created a crisis that forced the "9 Ilmu" to share their building. This emergency solution actually benefited the party at fault, but was framed as a humanitarian necessity. As one informant said: "Tirta Persada should have given in." (Alpina)</p>
	<p>Classroom scene of "Tirta Persada" collapses</p>	<p>This was supported by another informant who said: "When Ms. "</p>	<p>When Ms. "</p>	<p>"When Ms. "</p>	<p>"When Ms. "</p>	

<p>(Minute 06, Part 1) Source: Vidio Application, October 8, 2025</p>	<p>Anita and Mr. Budi discussed urgent assistance with ‘9 Ilmu’.” (Desy)</p>	<p>teacher, who was too eager to return to the new building, and the fault lies with the ‘Tirta Persada’ group” (Desy and Alpina)</p>	<p>students.” (Alpina)</p>
<p>3.  Scene from “9 Ilmu” (Minute 12, Part 1) Source: Vidio app, October 8, 2025</p>	<p>Emotional conflict between groups using cinematic techniques that build structured sympathy for “9 Ilmu” through camera angles, background music, emotionality, and contrasting expressions. As stated by the informant in the interview: “The conflict that occurred was caused by emotional feelings (envy) towards ‘9 Ilmu’ and the conflict was also framed based on merit and needs, so the struggle for this building led to who was considered</p>	<p>Emotional pressure stems from the expectation that “9 Ilmu” must give in even though they are in the right. The structural privilege gap between majority and minority groups at school. In line with two informants who said: “The ‘Tirta Persada’ group has a position as the main students at school and the conflict also began with interpersonal problems of jealousy towards the victory of ‘9 Ilmu’ (Salma and Nadia).</p>	<p>“9 Ilmu” shows a calm and rational attitude by expressing disappointment. “Tirta Persada” shows an emotional attitude that is demanding and tense. This visual construction reinforces moral polarization. This is consistent with two informants who stated: “The ‘9 Ilmu’ group obtained the main building through their achievements and in accordance with the agreement that if ‘9 Ilmu’ did not provide assistance, the ‘Tirta Persada’ group would always view ‘9 Ilmu’ negatively (Salma and Dessy).</p>
<p> Scene: “9 Ilmu” Expression (Minute 28, Part 1) Source: Vidio app, October 8, 2025</p>			
<p> Scene from “Tirta Persada” (Minute 28, Part 1) Source: Vidio app, October 8, 2025</p>			

worthy and who was considered problematic.” (Nadia)

4.



Scene: “9 Ilmu” Students Discussing with Mr. Budi (Minute 15, Part 2)  
Source: Vidio app, October 8, 2025

The internal deliberation process of “9 Ilmu” revealed a moral dilemma between defending rights based on merit or opening access for humanitarian reasons. The conflict between merit and need. One informant said: “The actions of ‘9 Ilmu’ were not wrong because they were defending their rights, and ‘Tirta Persada’ also needed space to study, so both sides needed to be treated fairly. Therefore, the actions taken by both sides were correct because they were defending their existing and acquired

The dilemma arises because the school system does not provide fair alternative solutions. “9 Ilmu” is forced to choose between being selfish or empathetic. Two informants agreed: “The ‘9 Ilmu’ are not selfish. They follow the rules and accept the consequence s even though they are treated unfairly. When the ‘9 Ilmu’ are isolated, they always look for solutions to make their new place livable, as in the previous episode” (Nadia and Ayu)

The solidarity of the ‘9 Ilmu’ group is very strong; they make decisions by supporting each other even under pressure. This contrasts with ‘Tirta Persada’, which is more individualistic. Three informants agreed that: “The strongest values are meritocracy and solidarity. Solidarity emerges strongly from their attitude of remaining committed even when treated unfairly. Solidarity itself, especially among ‘9 Ilmu’, always seeks a solution together. (Nadia, Salma, and Dessy)

The collective decision to share on certain conditions demonstrates ethics of care but lacks ethics of justice. The moral message that can be drawn from this story is the importance of fighting for one's rights, but still resolving conflicts in a mature manner. Courage is not about making a fuss, but about using the right methods without having to bring down the other party, even if we are the ones who are disadvantaged. As stated by some informants, the moral values conveyed already cover everything, because they are interrelated. (Salma, Alpina, and Dewi)

5.		<p>rights.” (Salma)</p>	<p>Conflict resolution was framed as a fair compromise and a win-win solution, even though in reality the “9 Ilmu” lost their legally obtained exclusive rights. Two informants shared the following opinion: “The solution provided was a win-win solution for both groups, only using the classroom space, with restrictions on the area that could be used.” (Salma and Alpina)</p>	<p>The agreement was reached not because the system had changed, but because the “9 Ilmu” were mature enough to share. The school system remained inconsistent and biased towards the majority group. One informant said: “The solution is more inclined towards a change in attitude, especially that of the ‘9 Ilmu’. The school system has not changed much and still leans towards ‘Tirta Persada’.” (Nadia)</p>	<p>The values of maturity and self-sacrifice were highlighted as a morally superior response to injustice. The “9 Ilmu” won morally because they sacrificed a lot, but practically they lost. The “9 Ilmu” still got their rights. However, one informant said: “Neither side gave in because both sides defended their statements, so in the end both groups agreed on a compromise.” (Salma)</p>	<p>Explicit solutions regarding territorial restrictions. Implicit solutions regarding individual compromise, mature responses to systemic injustice. Ultimately, as one informant said: “The ‘9 Ilmu’ allowed the use of one building on the condition that each party retained their respective rights, with territorial restrictions aimed at avoiding renewed conflict.” (Alpina)</p>
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Based on framing analysis Entman (1993) Based on the soap opera “Asmara Gen Z” episode 322 and in-depth interviews with six Gen Z informants, the study identified the transmission of four paradoxical values:

Passive-Adaptive Solidarity appeared in eight of the twelve scenes analyzed, constructed through cinematic techniques (close-ups of calm expressions and structured dialogue). All informants mentioned solidarity as a dominant value, but it was passive-adaptive in nature: accepting injustice without fighting the structures that created it.

Asymmetric empathy, the burden of empathy is only on the aggrieved party. "9 Ilmu is required to be mature and yield, while" Tirta Persada" has no demands from any party. However, one informant said:

"It should be '9 Ilmu' that gives way." (Alpina, 17 November 2025).

Internalization of the expectation that victims must show empathy towards perpetrators, thereby creating an ethics of care without an ethics of justice. This condition not only weakens the position of victims but also obscures the need for justice. Ambiguous distributive justice, conflicts based on the rights of "9 Ilmu" and the urgent needs of "Tirta Persada" are resolved in principle. Although four of the six informants criticized that the system had not changed, they still considered the solutions offered to be fair enough, reflecting the ambivalence between critical awareness and normative acceptance.

Maturity as Passivity, constructed as the ability to give in rather than demand systemic change. Four informants associated maturity with being unemotional, which can create conditions of learned helplessness. The Gen Z audience believes that the views expressed will have no impact. The audience's ambivalence reflects the impact of paradoxical value transmission: although four of the six informants criticized the system for not changing and considered the solution to be fair enough, it reflects the ideology of "Privileged Compassion" which maintains dominance with a veneer of empathy.

## DISCUSSION

The four identified paradoxical values reflect the complex process of constructing social reality. Berger, P.L. & Luckman, (1966) explains that the media does not merely reflect reality but actively shapes the audience's understanding through three stages: externalization (media production by creators), objectification (representation of conflict in narratives), and internalization (acceptance of values by Gen Z audiences). Framing conflict as a personal character issue while concealing structural privilege reflects the media's tendency to individualize structural conflict.

The framing of conflict as a matter of personal character reflects the media's tendency to individualize structural conflicts Van Dijk (2017) criticizing that media discourse often creates an "illusion of equality" that emphasizes individual solutions while perpetuating systemic injustices where the "9 Ilmu" approach should be more empathetic.

There is a significant difference between regular viewers who focus on structural policies and non-regular viewers who focus on interpersonal dynamics. This shows that the intensity of media consumption and media literacy play a fundamental role in shaping the analytical abilities of audiences. These findings expand on Gerbner's cultivation theory perspective that long-term exposure to media cumulatively shapes worldwide audiences (Nevzat, 2018).

This finding is consistent with the criticism Van Dijk (2017) that ideology plays a role as the cognitive basis of systems of domination, in which media narratives can reinforce or challenge existing power structures. Framing that emphasizes personal factors has the potential to divert attention from structural injustices, creating an "illusion of equality" while maintaining structures of domination. This confirms the argument Hall (2013) about the "constructionist" approach to representation, in which the media actively constructs meaning

through a system of selectively chosen signs and symbols. In this context, sabotage is the main cause, while the system of privilege allows the “Tirta Persada” group to receive special treatment, which is only mentioned implicitly.

The representation of empathy in soap operas presents a problematic paradox. This understanding is in line with the concept of “ethics of care” developed by Gilligan, (1982) emphasizes attention, empathy, and responsibility towards others as part of moral development. However, the burden of empathy is disproportionately placed on the disadvantaged party. The “9 Ilmu” group, which won legitimately, must give in for the sake of social harmony. This pattern has the potential to normalize the expectation that the weaker party must give in for the common good. Such a construction can create “learned helplessness” in young audiences who are forming their identities and moral value frameworks (Khumayah et al., 2025). This confirms that framing conflicts that prioritize the “ethics of care” without integrating the “ethics of justice” (procedural justice, structural change) can normalize injustice by wrapping it in the rhetoric of kindness (Vinney, 2025).

The conflict over the building represents distributive justice tension between merit and urgent needs. In distributive justice theory, Rawls in his research Handayani et al., (2025) emphasizing the importance of procedural justice and the difference principle that inequality can only be justified if it benefits the most disadvantaged groups. However, this soap opera actually reverses this logic: the group that already has structural privilege, “Tirta Persada,” as the majority with donor support, receives additional benefits in the name of emergency needs, while the minority group, “9 Ilmu,” which has already experienced marginalization, must share the fruits of their achievements. This ambivalence shows that Gen Z audiences are aware of the complexity of moral dilemmas, but the representation in soap operas does not provide a framework for criticizing the system that creates these false choice dilemmas.

Moral evaluation is constructed through systematic cinematic techniques that asymmetrically convey values of maturity and empathy. “9 Ilmu” is visualized with close-ups of calm expressions and rational dialogue, building sympathy as well as the expectation that they must “give in maturely.” In contrast, “Tirta Persada” is visualized with medium shots of aggressive gestures and tense music, justifying their demands as ‘emotional’ and “unsportsmanlike.” The paradox of value transmission: this visual polarization teaches Gen Z that solidarity and empathy are the highest virtues, but are only demanded from the disadvantaged. This construction creates guilt in the victims while normalizing the privilege of “Tirta Persada,” a mechanism that Van Dijk (2017) criticizes as an “illusion of equality” that maintains the structure of domination.

The ambivalence of the audience reveals the impact of paradoxical value transmission: although four of the six informants criticized the system for not changing, they still considered the solution to be fair enough. The tension between critical awareness and normative acceptance reflects the internalization of the value of maturity-passivity. Gen Z accepts the logic that systemic change is unrealistic, so personal adaptation is the “mature” response (Berger, P.L. & Luckman, 1966).

This is in line with the argument Hafidhuddin (2022) that the narrative framing in soap operas effectively shapes the moral discourse that influences audience expectations, and supports the findings Listyani et al (2022) that framing analysis can identify hidden moral

values and dominant social structures. In the context of Gen Z being in a critical phase of identity and moral values formation (Nurfalah et al., 2021), Representations of conflict that emphasize the sacrifice of the aggrieved party without criticizing the system can reinforce anxiety and helplessness in audiences facing similar situations (Khumayah et al., 2025).

Episode 322 of the soap opera “Asmara Gen Z” reinforces an ideology that could be called “Privileged Compassion,” in which groups with structural privilege can maintain their position. The values of maturity and self-sacrifice of the “9 Ilmu” group win morally. Firmadhina & Krisnani, (2021) confirming that soap opera consumption can influence Gen Z's perceptions of social conflict and inequality in real life, and supporting the argument Qanitah Salma et al., (2025) that media plays an important role in the psychological well-being of Gen Z and influences the process of identity formation (Nurfalah et al., 2020).

Overall, Entman's framing analysis of episode 322 of the soap opera “Asmara Gen Z” shows how popular media does not merely reflect reality, but actively shapes Gen Z's understanding of social justice. Framing that emphasizes the ethics of care without the ethics of justice, that imposes sacrifice on the disadvantaged, and that creates an “illusion of equality” by maintaining structural domination, has serious implications for the formation of the moral identity of the growing generation (Vinney, 2025). This finding reinforces the urgency of critical media literacy for Gen Z so that they do not simply accept the dominant narrative, but are able to identify and question the structures of injustice hidden behind rhetoric of empathy and social harmony.

## CONCLUSION

The study concluded that episode 322 of the soap opera “Asmara Gen Z” conveyed four paradoxical values to Gen Z audiences: (1) passive-adaptive solidarity that accepts injustice without structural resistance, (2) asymmetrical empathy that burdens victims of injustice to “understand” the perpetrators, (3) ambiguous distributive justice that benefits privileged groups, and (4) maturity as passivity in the face of an unjust system. These values are transmitted through a framing that emphasizes the ethics of care over the ethics of justice, where personal solutions (giving in, empathizing) are prioritized over systemic change, potentially creating learned helplessness in Gen Z who consume this narrative intensively. Theoretically, this study reinforces and expands the framing analysis in Indonesian teen soap operas with three main contributions. First, it proves that popular media plays an active role in shaping Gen Z's views on distributive justice, rather than merely reflecting existing values. Second, it confirms Van Dijk's criticism that media discourse creates an “illusion of equality” by emphasizing personal solutions while maintaining structures of domination. Third, it enriches Entman's theory by showing how the four dimensions of framing work synergistically through narrative and cinematography to shape the moral perceptions of young audiences who are in the process of identity formation. Practically, the results of this study are relevant to several parties, such as soap opera creators and media regulators such as the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission. This study has several limitations, such as focusing on only one episode and a limited number of informants. Therefore, further studies are recommended to conduct longitudinal analyses to identify consistent framing patterns by increasing the number of informants to understand how cultural contexts influence the framing of social conflicts.

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