



# Critical Discourse Analysis on Komik Kita Comic Strip: Another Attempt at Political Propaganda

Rizky Anugrah Putra

Department of Literature, Universitas Alkhairaat Palu, Indonesia

## ABSTRACT

The rapid dissemination of knowledge through information technology is facilitated by expanding access, but this development has drawbacks due to political interests. One of the media used to spread propaganda that promotes polarization is comics. The researcher analyzes how popular comics mix provocative discourses to influence their readers and what themes they adopt. Using critical discourse analysis, the researcher examines three main dimensions of propaganda discourse production, dissemination, and impact in comics. The data analyzed includes 1237 comic strips by Komikkita, of which 87% contain political propaganda, and 10.9% contain propaganda that targets followers of a particular religion. The study suggests that comic writers carry out the mission of a particular group through their media, indicating that discourse cannot be separated from the motives and values that the discourse architect wants to disseminate. This finding supports the elementary theory of discourse initiated by Van Dijk.

## KEYWORDS

Critical Discourse Analysis;  
Comic Strip;  
Political Propaganda.

## ABSTRAK

Kemajuan teknologi informasi memungkinkan penyebaran informasi secara cepat dan luas, namun juga memiliki kelemahan karena adanya kepentingan politik. Salah satu media yang digunakan untuk menyebarkan propaganda yang memicu polarisasi adalah komik. Peneliti menganalisis bagaimana komik populer mencampurkan wacana provokatif untuk mempengaruhi pembacanya dan tema apa yang diadopsi. Dengan menggunakan analisis wacana kritis, peneliti mengeksplorasi tiga dimensi utama produksi, penyebaran, dan dampak wacana propaganda dalam komik. Data yang dianalisis mencakup 1237 strip komik dari Komikkita, di mana 87% mengandung propaganda politik, dan 10,9% mengandung propaganda yang menargetkan pengikut agama tertentu. Studi ini menyiratkan bahwa penulis komik menjalankan misi kelompok tertentu melalui media mereka, menunjukkan bahwa wacana tidak dapat dipisahkan dari motif dan nilai yang ingin disebar oleh arsitek wacana. Temuan ini mendukung teori dasar wacana yang diinisiasi oleh Van Dijk.

## KATAKUNCI

Analisis Wacana Kritis;  
Komik Setrip;  
Propaganda Politik.

## Contact

Rizky Anugrah Putra

✉ [rizkyanugrahputra@unisapalu.ac.id](mailto:rizkyanugrahputra@unisapalu.ac.id)

🏠 Department of Literature, Universitas Alkhairaat Palu, Indonesia

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## 1. Introduction

Technological developments and social dynamics control people's language routines. Language communities reflect those aspects in their verbal activities, which are no longer dominated by direct verbal interaction but tend to be administered by gadgets or other technologies. Moreover, information that used to take time and money to transmit now only takes seconds to circulate quickly in the community. This convenience is a double-edged in the development of public language. It causes countless pieces of information to be disseminated in various mediums, making it increasingly problematic for the public to filter out accurate and factual information.

Certain groups use this empty gap with a specific pursuit to influence people's minds with narratives that benefit or abuse certain groups. As a result, there is disinformation in the community, and polarization is unavoidable. This is seen as covert propaganda that has been widely studied since internet facilities can be easily accessed by the public (Farkas & Neumayer, 2020). However, this ideological dissemination process does not just happen; it is structured in stages and carried out continuously so that people believe in certain information repeatedly conveyed without validating it (Pascale, 2019). With the rapid growth of social media, which is effortlessly accessible to the public, language, a medium of communication, has been transformed into a mechanism to influence the masses, also known as propaganda.

Moran (1979) illustrates that propaganda requires careful and structured planning and a consistent dissemination process so people can be internalized whatever information they convey. Propaganda becomes a pseudo-communication tool because the interaction seems one-way with the propagandist. However, the reaction from the public is delegated to the group that is the target of the propaganda. Fairclough (2013) asserts that discourse circulating on social media in verbal form is seen as a tool to influence, invite, debate, and refute an idea or situation experienced by someone. Without realizing it, the owner of the discourse and the owner of the media have specific goals and desires so that information media today is not an institution that maintains neutrality because, at one time, the dominant group will try to dominate the non-dominant group. In the context of Indonesia, before the presidential election, various propaganda circulates on social media that sometimes use various means to get on stage.

One of these efforts is to use nicknames or branding that indicate insults and so on so that there is a polarization in society caused by political preferences. In addition, there are various studies that examine how propaganda circulates and is influential in Indonesian society. Contemporary media sometimes play a role in shaping the image of certain groups in society. However, Nugroho et al. (2013) found that one of the print media in Indonesia took a position as a party that played an active role in criticizing the government; as a result, pro-government groups labelled this media as "kadrun" media. Kadrun is one of the most popular terms in mid-2019. It is used to label people intolerant to diversity and conservative, often associated with adherents of the majority religion in Indonesia.

This term can disperse so quickly because of the role of online media, which persists in introducing and promoting this term and also embraces pro-government media activists to introduce the term. The Indonesian internet community also considered that groups that

supported the government blindly were labeled with buzzerRp. Buzzers are seen as one of the groups influencing the general public by operating their proponents on social media. Buzzers manipulate stunning personal descriptions and branding to influence others so that whatever they say will be valid for their followers (Juliadi, 2018). Neyasyah (2020) emphasized that these buzzers also cause hashtag conflicts on various social media platforms. The buzzers use hashtags and verbal discourse to frame specific individuals or groups and other mediums like entertaining videos and memes.

In addition, humour has become a medium that is readily accepted by the public. Humour can be easily accessed on diverse platforms without having to expend. In addition, it is an alternative amusement to divert one's attention from the complexities of life crises and social pressures (Yue et al., 2016). On the other hand, comedy is subjective because everyone has a different outlook on jokes (Wortley & Dotson, 2016). In addition, the combination of comedy and comics becomes a complementary combination because the semiotic aspect can make it more comfortable for readers to understand the narrative aspect of a joke (Vandaele, 2010). Because of the ease in channelling narratives, propaganda discourse will be more easily transmitted if it combines these two aspects. Comics have long been used for educational purposes. However, before the second world war, comics were often used as propaganda to vilify the opponent's image or foster a fighting spirit (Scholz et al., 2014).

Furthermore, comics are also one of the convincing media to influence netizens, especially millennials. Most internet users come from a millennial society, where using comics as a propaganda medium is exhilarating. At this point, the researcher notices that the research mentioned above has not explored the discourses that are produced and circulated using the comic strip format on social media platforms. Therefore, it will be fascinating to study and analyse the patterns formed from comics that tend to contain controversial issues framing certain groups. In this case, the researcher has *Komik Kita* as the object of study to be studied because, based on initial observations, some sensitive content is used to weaken the image of certain groups. To achieve this, the researcher carried out research utilizing the Fairclough critical discourse analysis model to uncover the phenomena that occurred.

### 1.1. Contextual Information About The Term *Cebong* and *Kadrun*

In the last few years since the world trade center incident, the world has been shocked by the issue of radical groups bearing religious elements. Along with this issue, some parties deliberately take the opportunity to accumulate much support or bring down their political adversaries in Indonesia. These issues then created polarization in Indonesian society, initiated by differences in political views. In line with this situation, there were born terms pinned to specific groups, such as *cebong* and *kampret*. According to Hayat & Nurhakki (2022), the term *cebong* was applied to supporters of one of Indonesia's presidential and vice-presidential candidates at that time, Joko Widodo and Ma'ruf Amin. This diction portrays a negative image of their supporters.

*Cebong* itself is pinned based on information obtained by the media which declares that Jokowi enjoys the sound of frogs at night because it delivers a natural and tranquil impression so that it can ease the stress after work (Harahap, 2017). This information is disseminated by

groups against the government using social media as a means of transmission. On the other hand, the term *Kampret* refers to a group of Prabowo Subianto, and Sandiaga Uno supporters also used to anathematize their group. The term *kampret* was present amid community polarization after Prabowo defined the Koalisi Merah Putih with the abbreviation KMP.

KMP was later spoofed into *Kampret* to insult Prabowo's supporters (Afifiyah, 2019). After Jokowi was elected president of Indonesia in the 2019 election, he appointed Prabowo, his political opponent, to become defence minister. This step is seen as an effort to reduce the impact of polarization on society after the election. On the other hand, Prabowo's move to accept entry into the cabinet of the elected president was met with his supporters' disappointment which created a new chapter in media propaganda in Indonesia.

### 1.2. The Influence of Islamic Political Movements on Propaganda Labelling.

Hayat & Nurhakki (2022) view that Rizieq Shihab's influence in Islamic politics is a scourge for the government because he can motivate and awaken Islamic groups to be actively involved in specific movements. It causes the propaganda model to no longer focus on and vilifies the supporters of the presidential candidate. The target of propaganda is aimed at Muslims, resulting in polarization and identity indecision among these groups. So, the term *kadrun* emerged, popularized by several media activists such as Denny Siregar. They associate the term with Islamic groups who closely guard the concept of fundamentalism and tend to behave harshly. *Kadrun's* diction is also pinned to Islamic groups with radical views, and this causes the Indonesian people to be affected due to a lack of understanding and correction of the labels attached (Bustomi & Zuhairi, 2021). Based on the analytical study, the argument that embeds the term *kadrun* with Muslims who use specific attributes is overgeneralized because no robust data support conclusions the conclusion. Over time, the term *kadrun* is no longer labelled only for Muslims, but this term is applied to anyone against the government. Thus, it proves that this identity conflict is only a motive used for the political interests of certain groups. In line with that, the researcher found that the term *kadrun* was also implanted in "Komik Kita." They are described as uneducated, materialistic, and opportunistic. Moreover, the visualization tends to lead to adherents of certain religions who generalize the group's behaviour, leading to disinformation in the community.

## 2. Method

This study utilized a critical discourse analysis model to explore social representations and linguistic phenomena from a text (Tenorio, 2011). Employing critical discourse analysis, researcher would efficiently provide a systematic and factual portrayal of a phenomenon being investigated (Bergvall & Remlinger, 1996). In the linguistic aspect, the researcher desired to explore how power is used to influence the subconscious mind of others (van Dijk, 2015). In this study, researcher processed data in the form of sentences in comic strips on Instagram social media created by the Komikkita account. The researcher used a purposive sampling technique to collect data from comic strip episodes retaining offensive or propaganda information. The researcher accessed the data using a documentation technique which will later be scrutinized using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model. In addition, the researcher

diverged the analysis process into three stages. First, the researcher dissected the visual aspects of comics according to the social context. Second, researcher examined the cohesion and coherence of the discourse in the comics. Third, researcher examined how this comic encloses a relationship with modern propaganda. The analysis results would answer the tendency to use comics for social media propaganda.

### 3. Results and Discussion

In this section, the researcher divided the findings into three parts. They are the results of microstructural, microstructural, and macrostructural. Nevertheless, the researcher found an illustration of the character spotlighted in this comic: a person who wears a *gamis*, *peci*, and beard. These attributes define certain religious groups, so readers and researcher consider these characters represent particular groups. In addition, this character is described as uncultured and opportunistic, only caring about their gain. Those original forms of propaganda are reflected in the presentation of character visualization.

**Tabel 1.** Comic Strip Theme Per-Episode

No.	Theme(s)	Frequency
1	Politics	1077 (87%)
2	Religion	135 (10.9%)
3	Health	25 (0.20%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1237</b>

Based on the data above, the researcher found that most of the themes presented by comic artists are associated with politics and the Muslim community. Most of the characters featured in each episode often portray parodies of political or government figures. The parody character that often appears in each episode is the former governor of Jakarta, Anies Baswedan and is often criticized and ridiculed through this comic strip. In addition, the supporter of Anies Baswedan is nicknamed Kadrun by this comic artist.



**Figure 1.** Komikkita–Comic Strip Panel Vilifying a Particular Figure

#### 3.1. Microstructure

The picture above shows a parody of Anies Baswedan, which seems to be commenting on the behaviour of political sympathizers who often clash in the media.



"Supporter behaviour defines supported trait" – 1st Panel

"Smash 'em! Beat em! Strip them!" – 2nd Panel

This supporter diction refers to sympathizers of political figures who defend their lord at all costs. In comparison, the word supported refers to the political figure. At first glance, these two panels portray irony, in which Anies attempts to explain that the harsh behaviour of his haters represents the people they support. However, in panel 2, it can be seen that four men can be assumed to be a Muslim group (based on the attributes they wear), issued three dictions that explicitly describe violent actions, namely hitting, beating, and stripping. Thus, it can be concluded that this episode aims to describe Anies Baswedan's supporters as barbarians who tend to solve problems with brutality.



Figure 2. Celebrating Halloween

The comic strip above illustrates two people interacting. In the dialogue above, a Muslim woman asks a man with a beard. "You are on fire; what are you going to do?" The bearded man replied, "Wanna celebrate Halloween." The communication above will be complex to inspect without comprehending the context and pragmatic aspects because comics do not always employ a good language structure. Speaking of context, Middle Eastern countries, especially Saudi Arabia, recently held an event titled Scary Weekend, a series of Halloween festivals welcomed with happiness by the Saudi people. It has drawn criticism because ultra-conservative groups forbade the ceremony of the Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, which his companions never exemplified.

However, the government permit Halloween celebrations. As a result, many netizens regard Arab society has double standards in their religious establishment. However, it is one of the approaches carried out by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman. He wants to carry out social reforms to make Saudi Arabia modern and accepted by the international community (Ahmad & Planasari, 2022). This later became the subject of ridicule by certain groups, as reflected by the production of the comic discourse above. They think that the Kadrin are too oriented to the middle east, and in the end, the middle east has started to carry out social reforms.



**Figure 3.** Discourse About a Muslim Woman Who Brought a Firearm Outside The Presidential Palace

Figure 3 shows two panels of comic strips discussing an incident that staggered the Indonesian people at the end of October 2022, where a woman wearing a niqab was arrested by the police of the Republic of Indonesia for carrying a semi-automatic firearm. The first panel displays a news headline broadcast on television, followed by comments from two men on the second panel. The phrase in the first sentence contains a denotative meaning. Meanwhile, in the second panel, a man makes the following comments.

“Among them, beautiful women are prone to be polygamous, and ugly ones are made bait; it is a pity.” – 2nd Panel

The word “they” in the sentence above refers to a group of devotees of the Islamic religion in the context of an incident involving Muslim women bringing firearms. In addition, the phrase “beautiful women are a prone to be polygamous” is a form of satire that criticizes the teachings of the Islamic religion, which is accused of implementing polygamy based on nonreligious needs. Then at the end of the caption, there is the sentence, “the ugly ones are made bait.” The phrase “ugly” refers to women who conduct violation acts considered physically unattractive. At the same time, the word “bait” refers to the connotative meaning that this woman accomplished her actions, not because of her own will but has undergone a brainwashed process which is actually used as a tool by certain groups.



**Figure 4.** Ridicule aimed at the attributes and attitudes of a Muslim

Figure 4 portrays a man wearing a *peci*, *gamis*, and beard who is illustrated as having a sexual attraction to a woman who wears a closed niqab. Then on panel 2, the man was wide-eyed after

finding out that the person suspected of being a woman was a man wearing women's clothes. It contradicts Islam's teachings, which require a man to keep his sight, so the depiction of this comic does not follow an appropriate Muslim attitude. The comic illustration above can be interpreted as having a satirical meaning which alludes to the fact that the niqab can be used by certain parties to do bizarre things.



Figure 5. A Parody of President Giving a Presidential Speech

In figure 5, the comic artist made a parody of President Jokowi, who is giving a presidential speech. On the first panel, the president gave the following statement.

"There is no tolerance for those who disturb the Pancasila" – 1st Panel

"Those yellow teeth must be panic now"- 2nd Panel

The word "those" in the sentence uttered by the president on the first panel refers to the government's opposition group. These opposition groups are often associated with Muslims, and those not aligned with the government are often seen as radicals. The word "yellow teeth" is a form of dysphemism towards Muslims, who are seen as a society whose majority comes from the lower class. It can also be seen in the second panel that several characters are depicted wearing peci, beards and have yellow teeth.

### 3.2. Mesotstructure

The researcher investigated the discourse dissemination process made by Komikkita. The researcher discovered that comic artists used four platforms to spread their propaganda: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and websites (<http://komikkita.com/>). The researcher believes that the comic discourse was first produced on April 8, 2017, based on their first post entitled "Suara merdu bukan jaminan laku". The comic does not provide transparent information and the location where he/she operates, but in the description, he/she made comics intending to defend the sovereignty of Indonesia. Komikus utilized a widely used platform by netizens, making it more comfortable to disseminate the discourses they produce. Sometimes this comic will continue to be reposted until it reaches other platforms. Based on the visual concept, comic artists appear to follow the visual style of popular comics such as Benny & Mice by Benny Rachmadi and Muhammad Misrad. It can be identified from the visualization of the character's face, which is almost similar to the comic visual style often displayed weekly in the Kompas



newspaper. In addition, based on the webpage, this comic consists of five sections: home, politics, receh, gossip and Pak Dhe's story. Although it consists of five sections, the content of the four sections tends to be similar and contains criticism. Uniquely, the Pak Dhe's Story section contains praise for the government and the incumbent president so that it can be ascertained that the information and illustrations provided by comic artists are not balanced and tend to take sides.

### 3.3. Macrostructure

The macrostructural analysis is the last element of critical discourse analysis. At this stage, the researcher attempted to uncover the social context outside the discussed media or discourse and how that context influences the discourse's dissemination process. In addition, the element of macrostructural analysis consists of three main dimensions: institutional, social and situational. At the situational level, the researcher found that these comic artists tended to actively produce provocative discourse and criticism after regional heads or heads of state elections.

The researcher found evidence in the productivity of the website timeline, which is quite active after the 2017 Jakarta governor election and 2019 presidential election. In 2017, many comics possessed propaganda that cornered the elected Jakarta governor, whom comic artists considered incompetent. In addition, this comic supervised responding to social problems related to the followers of the majority religion by using caricature visualization depicted in the previous figures. This ultimately contrasted with the slogan of the comic artist who wanted to maintain the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia; instead, it dimmed the social atmosphere and started polarization.

The researcher still encountered sufficient evidence at the institutional level showing that certain institutions support the discourse production process. However, the researcher believes that comic artists were interested in constructing provocative discourses. However, on the other hand, they still support one of the political camps, so it appears that comic artists are not defending the people's interests but the interests of the parties. At the level of social structure, the discourse circulated by comic artists has succeeded in influencing the public to disseminate the term *kadrun*. The researcher found that the comments column was filled with aid and responses that support and denounce people who are against the government. In addition, the objective of comic artists who desire to vilify the image of adherents of a specific religion tends to be triumphant because it displays responses that show abhorrence towards certain religious groups based only on their attributes and various negative stereotypes attached to them.

### 3.4. Macrostructural Dimensional Discourse and Neutrality

A discourse that disperses in electronic and print media cannot be separated from group interests. van Dijk (1989) affirms that discourse is a device used to convey reality under the interests of the discourse architect. So that the media is no longer contesting to provide valid information but are competing to be the fastest media in conveying news by neglecting the precision of the news. The affinity with comic discourse is that the pattern employed by modern comic artists no longer makes a comic contain an aesthetic, literary discourse with a helpful

message. Comics tend to construct discourse according to the demands of certain groups. Comics that used to be synonymous with humorous and fantasy stories are now filled with dark satirical humour and various propaganda Scott (2007) that are cornering specific communities. Based on this reality, van Dijk (2015) reiterates that, in the end, a discourse will never be free from specific values. Hence, political and ideological missions now contaminate the discourse that ideally should contain objective information.

That is why the current comic artists operate various platforms to circulate their thoughts because they understand that propaganda is a tool to create collective truth (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). This comic is a stimulus that illustrates that the followers of the majority religion are a hazard to state sovereignty and undermine cultural identity (Santesso, 2013). Looking back, the majority religion in Indonesia has never experienced this massive disorientation. However, along with the ease of access to information, the disorientation process is getting more massive, which creates distrust among the community. This discourse phenomenon can ultimately be categorized as an attempt to spread propaganda and fear towards adherents of a particular religion Larsson (2007) so that religious adherents hate each other and claim that the other party is radical. In Indonesia, the definition of radical is still diverse and tends to be obscured by certain parties. Then amid this conflict, certain groups will ride it for political purposes.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study aims to reveal the forms of themes raised by komikkita artists in their discourses and their association with propaganda discourse. The researcher believes that of the 1237 comic strips produced by comic artists, 87% of the discourses are political propaganda, and 10.9% are propaganda that vilifies certain religious groups. The researcher found numerous parodies of characters, such as political figures, government figures, celebrities, and characters with specific religious attributes. In the microstructural aspect, provocative dictions and dysphemism are used to corner certain groups. Based on the mesostructured aspect, the researcher discovered that comic artists attempted to use all popular social media platforms to disseminate their discourses.

Meanwhile, based on macrostructural analysis, the discourse produced by comic artists is assumed to be successful in controlling the community and causing polarization in society, especially in social media. Uniquely, this contradicts the comic artist's statement that he wrote in his social media page description, which said he wanted to protect the sovereignty of the Indonesian state. Based on the above phenomenon, it can be apprehended that comic artists use discourse for specific groups' missions and purposes. The fundamental theory initiated by Van Dijk is evident in this phenomenon which exemplifies that the media is an instrument that cannot be disconnected from specific values.

In the end, the researcher must admit various shortcomings in preparing this research. This can be seen from the microstructural analysis model which still does not provide a complete picture of the linguistic aspects that describe the phenomenon. The researcher is restricted because comic grammar tends to be unstructured to analyse. Apart from this, the researcher has not carried out a comprehensive macrostructural study by looking at the actual response

of the readers of the comic discourse. Because of these shortcomings and gaps, the researcher suggests furthering researchers to conduct critical discourse analysis research by combining and approximating various analytical models to exhibit and correspond to the findings of the existing phenomena.

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