

# The Indonesian Government Imagery in the Instagram Comic strip with Covid-19 Themed

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**Abstract.** At the beginning of 2020, there has been the spread of the deadly Covid-19 virus to various countries resulted in a pandemic. Indonesia is one of the countries affected, so the government provides a policy that is expected to reduce the number of Covid-19 cases. The policy issued has drawn criticism from various parties, one of which is the cartoon mice comic, this comic is one of the comics that often comments on social life and the Indonesian government with its comic strips posted on Instagram. This study aims to find the image and role of the government depicted in mice cartoon comics in overcoming Covid-19 in Indonesia, therefore there is a need for analysis and research with descriptive methods and critical discourse analysis approaches to see how the image of the Indonesian government in comic mice cartoons. The results of the analysis of the two comics concluded that the image of the government displayed in the comic strip did not only come from the author's idea but also based on the news that emerged from the government's response to the spread of the Covid-19 virus in Indonesia, with an image style that was distinctive from mice cartoon comics. With this research, the researcher hopes that it can become a recommendation in making comic narratives, especially those discussing social life and government, and can be a reference for research that has the same object.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Comic Strip, Imagery, discourse analysis, Government.

## 1. Introduction

In Indonesia, comics have been known since 1930 through the newspaper Sin PO, which is published every week, and began to develop until 1968, marked by various types of comics, ranging from comics with the theme of cultural diversity in Indonesia, comedy comics, to national struggle comics [1]. One famous comedy with a social message is the comic Mice Cartoon. Mice cartoon comic is one of the comic strips that often depicts government figures and social problems in Indonesia. currently, many mice cartoon comic stories are related to Covid-19. So there is a need for research that explains the image of officials or governments that appear in comic strips, especially in dealing with and providing policies during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, the author will analyze the comic strip with the theme of Covid-19, especially the Mice Cartoon comic strip that has raised government figures. The purpose of this study was to determine the image of the government that the Mice Cartoon wanted to show in the comic strip.

Previously, cartoon mice comics were often used as objects of research. For example, research which conducted by S Maryam, IDP Wijana in 2014, analyzed a collection of mice cartoon comics

with humorous discourse analysis, and a semiotic study on comic book comic mice conducted by AP Prayoga in 2018, and research entitled "Creative Thinking Processes. The creation of Mice Cartoon in Harian Rakyat Merdeka for the 2019 Presidential Election Period "was carried out by DP Aprilia, S Iswidayati, and T Triyanto in 2019. Until this research was made, no one has researched the comic strip mice cartoon with the theme Covid-19. Therefore, the author tries to research the mice cartoon comic strip that has the Covid-19 theme. especially comic strip mice cartoons that are digitally published via Instagram.

Digital comics are very popular today. Apart from having easy access, digital comics have become more interesting because they have a format that is not limited by the print area like conventional comics. It's just that digital comics depend on the device used and the internet connection [2]. So that now comics can be enjoyed conventionally, namely printed media, and read with digital media such as computers and smartphones. Digital comics are an alternative to enjoying comics, especially during a pandemic like when this research was written. This is because digital comics are easier to get and access by anyone. One type of digital comic that is popular in Indonesia is a comic strip (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Komik Put On, komik Strip Pertama di Indonesia [1]

A comic strip is a series of panels containing pictures accompanied by writing that tells an entertaining story [3]. Usually, comic strips have a serial story combination of text and images, dialogue balloons, recurring characters, and ongoing serial narratives inserted in printed media such as newspapers or magazines that have been known since 1880 [4]. Figure 1 is a cut from the comic strip Put On, which was the first comic strip in Indonesia that was published through the Sin Po daily newspaper which was first printed in 1931 to 1943 [5]. Currently, the enthusiasts for printed magazines and newspapers have begun to decrease and the public prefers digital media so that many comic authors have started to release and share their comics using digital media, such as social media and web providers of digital comics. With social media, authors can easily share their latest comics and can easily see the content of comments from readers. One of the social media that is often used to display comic strips is Instagram. Instagram is a mobile application launched in 2010, which can easily capture and share moments in the form of photos and videos. Also, filters can be added to the photos or videos that will be shared so that they can look more attractive [6]. Instagram is one of the most popular social media in Indonesia, this can be seen from the growing number of users, especially during the pandemic. The researcher hopes that this research can add references in making comics, especially for people who are interested in making comic strips and research with objects.

## 2. Method

This research is qualitative because it aims to find meaning and build an understanding of the topic under study [7]. This study uses a descriptive method with critical discourse analysis with a three-dimensional discourse analysis approach. Many comic strip mice cartoons with the theme of the Covid-19 virus, but the author will take two samples that describe the interaction between the government and the community. in K. Kasmana, McCloud explained there are five ways to communicate comics, through the selection of moments, frames, pictures, words, and plot [8].

Therefore the author will only describe the selected comics through images and text. The primary data used in this study are comic strips taken from the official Instagram account of Mice Cartoon Indonesia, and secondary data obtained from scientific journals that have the same discussion and research object.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Citra/Image

The image in a broad sense is a reflection of the identity of a person or organization. Meanwhile, according to Elvinaro Ardianto, the image can be said of how a person or organization is seen from the point of view of others [9]. Meanwhile, according to Dr. Kankan Kasman, M.Sn. In his lecture, he stated that visual images are light sensations received by the retina which are then translated into energy impulses in the brain and processed and then translated into meaningful entities as signs or visual images. Therefore a person can have many different images [10].

According to Frank Jefkins, there are several types of images that are studied in imaging activities, including shadow images, which are the views of company insiders regarding the public's view of their organization. These images are often inaccurate, even just an illusion as a result of insufficient information, knowledge, or understanding. Furthermore, the prevailing image, which is the opposite of the shadow image, the prevailing image is the view of outsiders towards an organization. But as with the image, the image that is formed does not necessarily correspond to reality. Next is the expected image, which is the image desired by the company or individual. This image is different from the real image because the image that is expected is more against the good side than the real image [11].

#### 3.2. Mice Cartoon Indonesia

Comic Mice Cartoon Indonesia is a comic that has been known for 20 years. This comic is the work of an artist named Muhammad Mirsad. Since its appearance in the Kompas newspaper, this comic has often criticized people's lives in Indonesia with funny humor and story content that is happening or the current trend, one of which is currently happening with virus Covid-19. With its distinctive visual story and characters, comic mice cartoon Indonesia can be easily recognized as Indonesian comics and many readers feel that the stories presented are very relevant to Indonesian people [12]. See Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2.** Comic Strip Mice Cartoon Indonesia.  
Source: [www.instagram.com/micecartoon.co.id/](https://www.instagram.com/micecartoon.co.id/).

In this study, the authors took samples of two comic strips that Indonesian mice cartoon comics distributed from March 2020 to April 2020, because at that time it was the beginning of the spread of the Covid-19 virus in Indonesia. Besides, the comic strips chosen were comics that contained government-to-government interactions, interactions between the government and the Covid-19 virus, and interactions between the government and the community. The reason is, on that date, the

government issued many firm policies to the public which invited criticism. Meanwhile, in the following months, many policies issued by the government were relaxed and withdrawn.

### 3.3. Critical Analysis Discourse

The critical discourse analysis developed by Norman Fairclough is a suitable method for research analyzing social and cultural problems. In discourse analysis, there is a three-dimensional approach to discourse, namely, text analysis, discourse practice, and social analysis [13]:

1) description (text analysis), which describes all text referring to speech, writing, graphics, and their combinations or all linguistic forms, according to Norman Fairclough, text can be in a visual form such as photographs, illustrated images, or a combination of the two.

2) Interpretation (discourse practice), namely all forms of text production and consumption. In this dimension, there is a process of linking the production and consumption of text or there is already an interpretation. The focus is on how the author of the text draws on existing discourses and genres by paying attention to how power relations are played out.

3) Explanation (social analysis), usually embedded in broad social-cultural goals, networks, and practices. In this dimension, intertextual understanding has begun to enter, social events in which it appears that the text is shaped by visible social practices and the image of the government.

### 3.4. Comic strip on March 4, 2020.

The following is the first sample of the Mice cartoon comic strip where there are two official figures with the theme Covid-19, this comic was shared by the author on March 4, 2020 (See Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Comic strip appeal to stay calm

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/micecartoon.co.id/>

#### 3.4.1. Text description

In the comic strip that was distributed on March 4, 2020, two characters were smiling sitting down and opening their hands. The two characters have short, neat black hair. They wore long-sleeved white shirts with gold pin accessories. The character on the left has a red and white ribbon, while the other one on the right has a pen/pin inserted into his shirt pocket. The two characters are wearing black trousers in the same position. These comic strips using a gradient background from yellow to orange.

Even though the expressions of these two people are smiling, the two people in the picture are seen sweating on their foreheads and around their faces with a reddish color in the middle of their faces. At the top of these two people, there is a red word balloon with white writing and written in capital letters, character on the left says "JANGAN PANIK" or "DON'T PANIC", while the character on the right says "JANGAN HEBOH" or "DON'T GET EXCITED", the color of the word balloon is red and

the usage capital letters represent the emphasis given by the government at that time. Meanwhile, the two characters in this comic strip represent high-ranking officials in Indonesia, although the comic script does not write who is in the comic if seen from the line of his face, the person on the right of his face looks like the minister of health who served in the 2019-2024 period. namely Terawan Agus Putranto, while the one on the left is President Jokowi Dodo.

Apart from the facial lines that are very easily recognized by the wider community, it can also be seen from the accessories used by the two characters. So that the representation that appears in this comic strip is a very influential figure on policies regarding Covid-19 in Indonesia, even though the figure is not clearly written that it is President Jokowi and the Minister of Health, but readers can easily recognize and can benefit from the conditions. and the situation at that time.

#### 3.4.2. *Discourse Practice*

Discourse practice on the comic strip on March 4, 2020, emerged from the visuals shared by the author of Indonesian cartoon mice and responded to with comments given by other Instagram users. In the comments column, you can see the stage of consuming text given by other users in interpreting the form of text, in verbal or visual form, which is uploaded by the author. So it can be seen that the discourse conveyed by comic mice cartoons can be interpreted differently by other Instagram users.

This comic strip tells the story of two officials who, when seen from the line of their faces, the person sitting on the left looks like President Jokowi, apart from a similar facial image, the identity of a president is strengthened from the accessories on the shirt, namely a gold pin with a red and white ribbon as a reinforces the message that this man is President Jokowi. Meanwhile, the male figure sitting on the right looks like dr. Terawan, who is the current Minister of Health. These two figures are seen giving a firm direction or appeal because they use capital letters on their word balloons for readers and the Indonesian people so they don't panic and don't get excited, their hands are open, and because there are fine lines around their hands, they make their hands seem to be moving.

The visual representation contained in this comic strip has a relationship with the caption and the situation at that time, where the Covid-19 virus began to enter Indonesia and eventually became a national disaster on March 02, 2020 [14]. Until this research was conducted, there were 293 comments from other Instagram users, and it shows that the form of discourse produced varies between one user and another.

#### 3.4.3. *Social Practices*

In social practical terms, the comics that were distributed on March 4, 2020, via Instagram showed the government's response to the rapid development of the Covid-19 virus in Indonesia, with the caption "Wankawan jangan panik dan jangan heboh ngeborong semua ya. Paling penting adalah jaga kesehatan!" or "Don't panic and don't get excited about all of it, OK. The most important thing is to stay healthy! " 293 comments have been documented on November 10, 2020. This comic was launched after an appeal from the government to the public, who at that time were busy because positive cases of Covid-19 were found in Indonesia and were increasing, as well as news that the government would implement a lockdown or closure access between cities and within cities so that many people have started buying up shopping for daily necessities or groceries for necessities.

After Covid-19 spread throughout the world and became a pandemic, this outbreak finally entered Indonesia, until March 2020 there were 1,528 cases of Covid-19 in Indonesia [15]. The central government, especially the president and the minister of health, who at that time was only about to draft policies, were overwhelmed because they had created a stir among the public, but they also ordered and urged them not to panic. In the picture, the face of the president and the minister of health is emitting water on the forehead and emitting small splashes of water as if it were sweat, this illustrates that they are panicking. To this figure it also looks bigger than the proportion of humans in general, this is because at the beginning of the year the government and the minister of health were like guaranteeing and having a big head that the Covid-19 virus would not enter Indonesia due to various things such as climate, Indonesian habits, and food consumed by the Indonesian people such



as spices and herbs, but it turns out that on March 4 it was reported that 2 people were positive for Covid-19. this seems to be a blow to the government.

When viewed from the image composition, these two official figures are taken from the point of view of the medium shoot, the front view because all the front parts of the characters can be seen except for the legs. The positions between the characters are made close together as if they are sitting very parallel. In this picture, the layout of the two characters is very symmetrical where the composition between the right-left and top-bottom parts is almost the same to form a balance. Likewise, the shape of the word balloon looks the same even with different text contents. In this comic, the government is imaged as inconsistent between words and expressions, where the word balloons are written “don't panic” and “don't be excited” but from the look on their faces they look panicked, and when seen from the news on March 4, 2020, it is the government that provokes the public so that this happens. furor. The image generated by the government can also be seen from the various comments written by Instagram users.

### 3.5. Comic Strip on April 7, 2020.

Second Mice cartoon strip comic sample is a comic strip that was shared on April 7, 2020, This comic strip was chosen because it has a theme related to Covid-19 and there is an interaction between representatives of the people and the government (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Komik strip rakyat kebingungan

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/micecartoon.co.id/>

#### 3.5.1. Text description

The comic strip was shared on April 7, 2020, can be divided into four objects. for the first object is around group representing the Covid-19 virus, this character description is a sign that the Covid-19 virus has spread widely in Indonesian society, this group of viruses is at the top of the male character wearing a white shirt and The green sarong that represents the little people, each of which has a viral character, has a pink color and sharp eyes. Unlike the previous comic strips where the virus was depicted as having hands and feet, this time the virus was described as simpler. The second character in this comic is a male character who is depicted wearing a black cap and wearing a white undershirt with a green sarong. This character who represents the common people has two faces, one facing to the right and the other facing to the left with a facial expression that seems to ask for attention and help. The people's hands are holding the character's sleeves on the right and left of the panel. Also, there is a white word balloon with black text that says “ inilah saatnya INDONESIA BERSATU” or "This is the time for INDONESIA to UNITY".

Unlike the previous comic Strip, the characters that represent the government are only showing half the body and one hand. The characters on the left and right represent the Indonesian government. These two characters have the same posture and image because they only show the hands and half of their body, but they have a larger posture compared to the represent people characters. there is text on the hand of the government character, the character on the right text is "REGION" or "DAERAH", while the character on the left text is "CENTER" or "PUSAT". because of the texts, we can say these two characters are representative of the regional government and Central Government.

### 3.5.2. *Discourse Practice*

Discourse practices that emerged from the comic strip visuals distributed on April 7, 2020, were responded to with 128 comments given by other Instagram users and 7,104 likes. In the comments column on this post, you can see the consumption stage of text provided by other users in interpreting the form of text in verbal and visual forms uploaded by the author. So it can be seen that the discourse conveyed by comic mice cartoons can be interpreted differently by other Instagram users. In the comments column, many responded about the incompatibility of the central and local governments in providing rules and policies related to preventing the spread of Covid-19.

In this comic strip, it has a narrative where a commoner is asking the central and local governments to unite, especially the people who are overshadowed by the covid-19 virus, which is increasingly widespread. The first character which is a group of viruses can be described as the covid-19 virus in Indonesia which is increasingly becoming endemic, and the positive cases are getting higher every day. The character of the virus has a fine line that makes it seem as if the virus is moving forward towards the character of the people. The depiction of folk characters in the second character represents the image of the little people who are seen wearing simple clothes. This character is depicted with two faces as if looking to the right and left where there are characters that represent the central government and local governments. On the hands of the people's character, there are several fine lines as if their hands are not only holding but also tugging at the sleeves of the central government and local governments. the word balloons that are exhaled by the people's characters emphasize the sentence "Indonesia Bersatu" because in this sentence it uses capital letters and larger text size, this has become a criticism and call from the author for the government. The background on this panel only has a blue to dark blue gradient.

This comic strip appeared in response to news about the incompatibility between the central government and local governments in providing that had started sticking out from March 2020. On March 14, 2020, a spokesman for the Indonesian government for handling the Covid-19 virus reminded him at a press conference regions have the authority to set policies in their respective regions, but must pay attention to central policies so that they can be more effective and efficient.

### 3.5.3. *Social Practices*

Social practices for the comic strip that was shared by the author on April 7, 2020, has the caption "Ayolahhh pakkkk" or "Come on, sir." This comic was made as a criticism of the central government and regional governments which at that time seemed less compact in providing policies regarding the Covid-19 protocol, this can be seen from this comic strip where the central government and local governments turned their backs to each other, the central government turned to the left, while the government the area leads to the right. This is a new fear for the little people whose lives are very dependent on their policies. If you look at this comic, the little people are still overshadowed by the Covid-19 virus in large numbers, this large number indicates that this virus is spreading among Indonesian people.

Between the absence of a policy issued by the government, it will greatly affect the people, this is marked by the character of the people living in the middle between the central government and local governments. because the policies issued by the government will greatly impact his life. Besides, this can also be a sign that the people can unite the two parties by providing criticism or an invitation to unite. Although the status of the central government is higher than the regional government, in this

panel the posture of the central and local governments has the same height and size. This can indicate that the government both have the same level of authority in providing the same policies. Whereas the central government should still follow and pay attention to central policies. But it would be better if the central and regional governments collaborate and work together in helping the people.

#### 4. Conclusion

Mice cartoon comics give criticize to the government or parties who influence society often. After the author analyzed two comic strips from the mice cartoon themed Covid-19 with a critical discourse analysis approach, wherein each comic there were representations of government, the Covid-19 virus, and the people. The selected comic strip can be implemented with the image of the government or official that the writer wants to portray, where the government is an important figure and is very influential, especially on the little people. This can be seen from the posture that is described as always having a posture that is bigger and dominant than other images. however, the government sometimes looks less dignified, especially in the comics brought on March 4, 2020. This is consistent with the image of the government which is already visible and can be seen by the general public. On the one hand, the government has advantages and on the other hand, it has shortcomings that should be able to reduce for the sake of prosperity and show the Indonesian people. So that it can be drawn by the image shown by the author is a valid image (current image), because it describes following the conditions at that time.

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