

# Humor Critical Discourse Covid-19 Countermeasures

Sugeng Adipitoyo<sup>1,\*</sup> Adam Damanhuri<sup>1</sup> Danang Wijoyanto<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author: sugengadipitoyo@unesa.ac.id

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study are to find (1) the historical and social contexts contained in the critical humorous discourse of the response to covid-19, (2) the diversity of power that is opposed by the critical discourse of humor against the response to covid-19, and (3) ideology that is upheld by a critical discourse of humor against the response to covid-19. Based on dominant discourse of overcoming covid-19 (corona virus disease-19) in Indonesia, which does not close to the emergence of all forms of discourse against it. The form of serious discourse against it is considered very dangerous for the makers and disseminators of it, because the right to freedom of opinion has not been properly granted. Therefore, the form of humorous discourse is an alternative discourse against the dominant discourse developed by people to tackle Covid-19. As a form of critical discourse, humorous discourse is a social practice that always holds historical and social contexts, resistance to power, and enforcement of certain ideologies. This research relies on the critical discourse analysis approach (critical discourse analysis approach) as one of the models in qualitative research, by elaborating 4 approaches, namely the social cognition approach, the social change approach, the historical approach, and the French ideological approach. Data in the form of critical humorous discourse on the response to covid-19 was collected through accessible social media (WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook). Data were analyzed using interpretive methods further. This research is expected to find concepts and propositions about (1) the historical and social context contained in the critical humorous discourse of the response to covid-19; (2) the diversity of power that is opposed by the critical discourse of humor against the response to covid-19; and (3) ideology that is upheld by a critical discourse of humor against the response to covid-19. These concepts and propositions can be used as the basis for improving government policy.

**Keywords:** Critical discourse, Historical and social context, Resistance to power, Ideology

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The response to covid-19 (coronavirus disease 19), which by our country, Indonesia, is carried out by the health protocols issued by the World Health Organization (World Health Organization, WHO) does not always reap positive assumptions of protecting Indonesian citizens but also invites negative views towards government authorities now, such as arrogance of power, domination, or authoritarianism. The large-scale open campaign carried out by the government in the context of tackling Covid-19 is also often accompanied by a covert campaign against this government policy. Some of the covert campaigns were taken seriously, but some were carried out jokingly through intriguing humor. The covert campaign which is seriously carried out seems to be filled with doubts by the initiators of the discourse because they think that the right to freedom of speech in this country has not been

fully enforced. Unlike the case with covert campaigns that are carried out humorously. Covert campaigns, whether carried out seriously or jokingly through humor, always accompany every component of the response to covid-19 carried out by the government, such as the components of staying at home, working from home, wearing masks (used mask), wash your hands every time (wash your hand at anytime), and keep your distance (social distance is changed to physical distance), as well as emergency measures to lock down area access (lockdown) and large-scale social restrictions/PSBB (large scale social restriction). Besides, there are also major components, such as the WHO statement which originally fought the corona (to fight covid-19) which was later revised to make peace with corona (make peace with covid-19). All of these components are enforced simultaneously, regardless of

economic class or others. Of course, it has different reactions and impacts.

### **1.1. Discourse Insight**

In a macro-sociological study, the language of the COVID-19 response by the government or hidden resistance either seriously or through humor is seen as a form of discourse. This is because, as explained by Fairclough and Wodak in vanDijk [1] that discourse is essentially social practice, causing a dialectical relationship between certain discursive events and the situations, institutions, and social structures that form it. In addition to grasping certain historical and social contexts, dialectical relations among certain discursive events also attach ideological effects that can produce and reproduce unequal power relations. Inequality of power is an important factor in critical discourse analysis studies. Inequality of power which is an important factor in this critical discourse analysis, if it occurs in a serious discourse it does not necessarily carry out a sociopragmatic function as is the case in a humorous discourse which carries out the functions of solidarity, persuasion, and conflict management as noted by Dynel [2].

Based on the above background, this study intends to formulate concepts and propositions about (1) various historical and social contexts contained in the critical discourse of covid-19 humor; (2) the diversity of powers opposed by the critical discourse of covid-19 humor; and (3) ideology that is upheld by the critical discourse of covid-19 humor. Research findings are in the form of concepts and propositions about various historical and social contexts contained in the critical discourse of covid-19 humor, the diversity of power that is opposed by the critical discourse of covid-19 humor, and enforced ideology. The critical discourse of covid-19 humor can be used as material for the government's evaluation of the current covid-19 response. Based on the contribution of such research findings, this topic needs to be investigated immediately.

To achieve the above concepts and propositions, this study must elaborate various approaches in critical discourse analysis. The critical discourse analysis approach that is elaborated is the social cognition approach developed by Teun A. van Dijk [1] since the 1980s, which holds that cognition is an important element in discourse production. Discourse production includes a process called social cognition or sociocognition [3]. The next approach, the social change

approach developed by Norman Fairclough Fairclough [4], which follows a lot of Foucault's thinking about discourse as a social practice, holds the view that discourse can produce and reproduce the status quo and transform it. Furthermore, the historical approach in discourse analysis developed by Ruth Wodak [3], with the view that discourse analysis must include the historical context of discourse of a depicted community. Finally, the French approach or the ideological approach, which is heavily influenced by Foucault's discourse and Althusser's ideological concept. Discourse and ideology meet in the use of language and materialization of language in ideology.

Based on the elaboration of the four approaches to critical discourse analysis, it is found that discourse always holds social and historical contexts, resistance to power, and ideological enforcement. The three grips of discourse content can be understood through the main characteristics of discourse as a form of social practice and / or action, which associate that discourse is a form of interaction. Discourse is not placed as in a closed and internal space, but discourse is understood as something that is expressed consciously, controlled, not something out of control, or expressed outside of consciousness.

Discourse is seen as something that is produced, understood and analyzed in a particular context. Contexts such as settings, situations, events, and conditions always surround communication. Language is not understood as an internal mechanism of linguistics alone, not an object isolated in a closed space, but understood in the context as a whole. Therefore, the meaning of discourse, namely text, context, and discourse. A similar view was also expressed by Halliday and Hasan [5], namely language, context, and text. Text is all forms of language, not just words printed on a sheet of paper, but also all kinds of communication expressions, speech, music, pictures, sound effects, images, and so on. Context includes all situations and things that are outside the text and affects the use of language, such as participants in the language, the situation the text is produced in, the intended function, and so on. Thus, discourse is interpreted as text and context together.

The depiction of text and context together in the communication process is an important concern of discourse analysis. For this reason, it requires not only a cognitive process in a general sense but also a specific picture of the culture that is carried. Discourse is in a certain social context, meaning that discourse is produced in a certain context and cannot be

understood without including the accompanying context. One important aspect of being able to understand a text is to place the discourse in a certain historical context. An understanding of discourse will only be obtained if it is given the historical context of the discourse produced. The socio-political situation and the atmosphere when the discourse is produced can be used to understand why the discourse is developed or developed like that, why the language is used like that, and so on.

Every discourse that appears, in the form of text, conversation, or whatever, is not seen as something natural, natural, and neutral, but is a form of resistance to power. The concept of power is one of the key relationships between discourse and society. The implication is that critical discourse analysis does not limit itself to the structure of discourse, but also links to certain social, political, economic and cultural forces and conditions. Power is about discourse, it is important to see what is seen as control. One person or group controls another person or group through discourse. Control does not always mean physical and direct, but also mental or psychological control. The dominant group may get the other group to speak and/or act as desired. The dominant group can do that because they have more access to things such as knowledge, money and education [6].

Power control over discourse can take various forms and can turn into control over context. Control over context can easily be seen from who can and should speak, and who can only hear and say yes. A secretary in a meeting because he does not have the authority, his job is only to listen and write, not to speak. Power control is also manifested in the structure of discourse. A person who has more power determines not only which parts should be displayed and which are not, but also how they should be presented. This can be seen in the accentuation or use of certain words.

## **1.2. Ideology Insight**

Text, conversation, and others are forms of ideological practice and/or a reflection of certain ideologies [6]. As with the classical theories of ideology, among others, the view that ideology is built by a dominant group to reproduce and legitimize their domination through one of its main strategies is to make public awareness that domination is taken for granted, discourse views ideology as a dominant group medium to persuade and communicate the production of power and domination they have to the public so that it looks legitimate and true. The ideology of the dominant group

is only effective if it is based on the fact that members of the community, including those that are dominated, perceive this as truth and reasonableness.

According to van Dijk [6], this phenomenon is referred to as "false consciousness". This false awareness arises, because the dominant group manipulates ideology towards groups that are not dominant through disinformation campaigns, media control, and so on. Discourse is useful in the framework of disseminating ideology. Ideology is mainly intended to regulate the action and practice of individuals or members of a group. Ideology makes members of a group act in the same situation, can relate their problems, and contribute to forming solidarity and cohesion within the group [6].

From this point of view, ideology has several important implications. Ideology is inherently social, not personal or individual; ideology requires dissemination among members of a group, organization, or collectivity with other people. The things that are disseminated to group members are used to form solidarity and unity of steps in action and attitude.

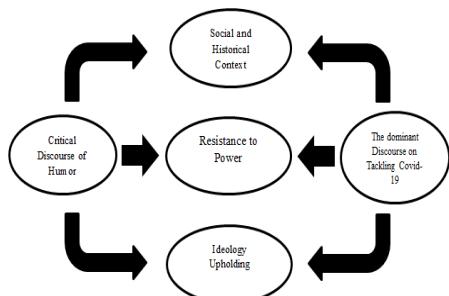
Based on the above view, discourse cannot be understood as something neutral and takes place naturally, because in every discourse there is always an ideology to dominate and fight for influence. Therefore, discourse analysis cannot place language in a closed manner, but must look at the context, especially how the ideology of the existing groups plays a role in shaping discourse. In discourse, a person's ideology can be analyzed and interpreted.

The main characteristic of discourse, according to Michel Foucault as quoted by Aditjondro [7], is its ability to become an association that functions to form and preserve power relations in a society. In a society, there are usually various kinds of discourses that are different from one another, but the power to choose and support certain discourses so that these discourses become dominant, while other discourses will be marginalized or submerged.

The response to covid-19 by the Indonesian government is currently the dominant discourse supported by power. As the dominant discourse, it often gets attacks from various angles, especially hidden counters. Covert attacks can be taken seriously and can also be conveyed through funny humor. Attacks that occur in serious discourse do not necessarily carry out a sociopragmatic function such as those in humorous discourse which carry out the functions of solidarity, persuasion and conflict management as noted

by [2]. Humordiscourse also appears with another awareness, namely as a discourse that ismarginalized (marginalized discourse) and/or hidden (hidden discourse).

Based on all the descriptions above, the conceptual flow in this study can be described as follows.



**Figure 1** The conceptual flow

## 2. METHOD

This study relies on the critical discourse analysis approach (criticaldiscourse analysis approach) as one of the models in qualitative research [8]. As a qualitative research model, the strategic stages of thisresearch include (1) data collection, (2) data analysis, and (3) presenting theresults of data analysis.

Data in the form of critical discourse on covid-19 humor is collectedthrough accessible social media (WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook). Data collection was carried out by observation method with copying technique. Data were analyzed using interpretive methods. This method will be aimed at understanding and explaining (1) the various historical and social contexts contained in thecritical discourse of covid-19 humor; (2) the diversity of powersopposed by the criticaldiscourse of covid-19 humor; and (3) ideology upheld bythe critical discourse of covid humor-19. The results of data analysis are presented through formulas and charts as well as ordinary narratives. These formulas andcharts are presented based on the results of analysis regarding (1) varioushistorical and social contexts contained in the critical discourse of covid-19humor; (2) the diversity of powers opposed by the criticaldiscourse of covid-19humor; and (3) ideology upheld by the critical discourse of covid-19 humor.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The social and historical contextsurrounding thecritical discourse ofhumor against the response to

covid-19 includes social and historical contexts (1)the PSBB program, (2) stay at home, (3) must keep your distance, (4) wear amask, (5) ) washing hands frequently with soap, (6) working from home, and (7)new normal conditions. These seven social and historical contexts underlie thecreation of a critical discourse of humor that regulates every dominant discourses that exists in each of these social and historical contexts.

### 3.1. Critical Discourse of Resistance Humor to the PSBB Program

The declaration of a lockdown program from WHO in Indonesia when Covid-19entered the Jakarta area greatly upset the president of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo. The President termed the simple word regional quarantine, whileSandiaga Uno, deputy governor of DKI, was busy digging up the right terms forthe program through his personal Instagram social media and asking netizens.Finally, the term Large-Scale Social Restrictions emerged to Indonesianize theterm lockdown. PSBB has received a lot of criticism through humor as shown below.



**Figure 2** PSBB criticism through humor

The humorous criticism of *Penggawean Sepi Bojo Bengak-Bengok* (PSBB) "The job of a screaming wife is lonely" indicates that the PSBB will worsen the family economy and create social impacts on husband-wife familyrelations. A wife who does not receive family shopping money from her husband,because of the work being closed, naturally gets angry. Besides the humor, there is also humor that is reported by BugisPos.com as below.



**Figure 3** PSBB criticism through humor

### 3.2. Critical Discourse Humor Against the Stay at Home Program Only

Handling Covid-19 with a stay at the home program has had a major impact on the social and economic conditions of every citizen. However, what can I do, the government is already aware of the economic impact of these residents. Criticism of humor is the backbone of the multi-impact program. The involvement of the police to maintain the social order of the citizens so that they follow health protocols has also become a glare for netizens to criticize the government, as below.



**Figure 4** The involvement of the police in PSBB humor

The suggestion to stay at home and the police to maintain social order readily gave rise to the humor of "ojo metuan, menenga neng omah wae! Timbangane dicekel polisi!" 'Don't like going out, just stay at home! Weigher(rather than) caught by the police! The humor, in addition to implying that the duty of the police to deal

with public health regarding Covid-19 is considered inappropriate, it also laughs at the stay-at-home program.

The stay-at-home program has also been criticized by humor in turn as a convenience to being patriotic at this point. Criticism of humor, as it was viral in the early days of PSBB, is like these posters.

**JIKA KAMU INGIN  
MEMBANTU  
INDONESIA, TAPI  
PASSION KAMU  
ADALAH REBAHAN,**  
**INI KESEMPATAN  
KAMU.**

Dirumah aja, bantu Indonesia lawan Covid-19.

**Figure 5** The viral poster of PSBB humor



**Figure 6** The viral poster of PSBB humor



**Figure 7** The viral poster of PSBB humor

A patriotic spirit does not need to take up arms like the fighters for the independence of our country or also does not need to work hard and/or create jobs for the nation to fill independence. During the Covid-19 period, it was enough for a patriotic soul to lie at home. The

critical humorous discourse of resistance to stay-at-home programs does not show disagreement with patriotism. However, instead of revising the patriotism that has been understood and applied so far. When patriotism is understood in an emergency, will it apply to normal conditions? That is the logic of the emerging humorous discourse.

### **3.3. Critical Humor Resistance to the Compulsory Distance Program**

Maintaining a distance in encounters with people and avoiding crowds must be done to avoid Covid-19 transmission. The term compulsory to keep distance to translate social distancing or which is revised into physical distancing has also drawn criticism through extraordinary humor. Obedience to the rules established by the government as a form of citizen loyalty is insinuated through humor like this.

NENEK ini patut di acungi JEMPOL. Dia Patuh dgn Himbauan Pemerintah, Supaya "JAGA JARAK"



**Figure 8** The poster of the grandmother guarding the jatropha tree

The poster containing the portrait of the grandmother guarding the jatropha tree indicates that the problem of keeping the distance program is not an easy thing to do. This is also illustrated in the following humor.



**Figure 9** A family picture in a very smallhouse

The family in the picture above has many residents and a very small house. Therefore, it is illustrated how difficult it is to apply the rules of guarding distance in the house. For the sake of loyalty to the state, forced to carry out his way by hanging on the walls of the house.

The distancing program launched by the government to tackle Covid-19 is considered to have consequences for social cohesion in society, kill solidarism, and will further build individualism or even separatism. Moreover, the prohibition of crowding even though to worship in congregation in places of worship of any religion, there are times when it is considered an attempt to divide. The jokes above do not indicate the direction of this assumption, but instead point towards altruistic nationalism.

### **3.4. Critical Discourse of Resistance Humor to Compulsory Use Programs Facemask**

The use of masks, when forced to leave the home, is also one of the simple programs that have various impacts, both regarding economic values, politeness, aesthetics of makeup, availability, and style, and lifestyle. Like the following humor, giving criticism about the mandatory mask program with pictures from the children's film Monster Inc being changed to *Masker, in!*



**Figure 10** A criticism about the mandatory mask program

Image of Mike and Sulley, two names of characters in the movie *Monsters Inc.* wearing a mask above shows the more material wearing a mask. *Plesedan* *Monster Inc.* being a mask means questioning the use of masks. Ridicule in the form of posters for the mandatory mask-wearing program also occurs with the bramask model, as shown below.



**Figure 11** A ridicule poster about mandatory mask-wearing program

The critical humorous discourse of resistance to the mandatory mask-wearing program above does not show disagreement with state authoritarianism in overcoming Covid-19 and wants egalitarianism, but regrets the hyper-realism that is being raised. There is no open clash, but the humorous discourse that emerges indicates against this hyper-realistic.

### 3.5. Critical Discourse Humor Resistance to the Mandatory Frequent Washing Hands with Soap Program

Humor against the obligatory frequent washing of hands with soap as a Covid-19 prevention program also often appears on social media, because it involves the main problem of lifestyle both individuals and socially everywhere. Although PHBS (Clean and Healthy Lifestyle) has long been a public health program in our country, the special behavior of washing hands with soap is considered more than normal. Therefore, criticism emerged through humor.



**Figure 12** A humor about washing hands with soap



**Figure 13** A humor about washing hands with soap



**Figure 14** A humor about washing hands with soap

The posters above laugh at the frequent hand washing with soap program. Washing hands with soap is ordinary, washing hands with shampoo is great, washing hands with extraordinary oil, washing hands without daring soap, wiping hands on crazy clothes, and washing hands with ice condensed water are special. Everyone views that washing hands with soap is a common thing, why should it be considered special and heralded. The critical humorous discourse of resistance to the frequent hand washing with soap program above also does not show disagreement with state authoritarianism in overcoming Covid-19 and wants egalitarianism to be an individual solution. The humorous discourse that has emerged has provided indications of rejecting hyper-realism in this social and historical context.

### 3.6. Critical Discourse on Resistance Humor to the Work from Home Program

Work habits in offices, factories, warehouses, shops, roads (for drivers, machinists, pilots, or skippers), and other locations, when it has to be changed, having to work from home certainly creates new problems. However, all are powerless to reject the government program on work from home. Among young people, the net citizens of WFH are parodically interpreted as Waiting For Him and also We Fall in Love with People we can't have. The shorthand parody is also a criticism of the WFH program. WFH is also not often as expected, because there are various affairs at home, such as experienced by the man on the poster who couldn't work, and ended up cooking.



The screenshot shows a news article from **Suara.com**. The header includes the website logo, a search bar, and navigation links for 'Pilihan', 'Terpopuler', 'News', 'Bisnis', and 'Bola'. Below the header, the date 'Minggu, 30 Agustus 2020' is displayed. The main title of the article is 'Bikin Galau, Warganet Bikin Kepanjang WFH: Waiting For Him?'. The text below the title reads: 'Semakin panjang kok semakin galau?' followed by the author's name 'Silfa Humairah Utami | Rima Sulastini' and the publication date 'Sabtu, 04 April 2020 | 14:41 WIB'. The article content discusses the concept of 'galau' (confused) and how it relates to the long duration of working from home. It quotes a tweet from @lavivirie and provides a link to Dewiku.com for more information. The Dewiku.com link includes a note about the illustration being a betel nut (nyusur) with tobacco (nyuwel) on a grandmother's lips.

**Figure 15** A humor about WFH



**Figure 16** Another humor about WFH

The critical discourse of humor against the work from home program above shows disagreement with state authoritarianism in tackling Covid-19 and wants egalitarianism to be an individual solution.

### 3.7. Discourse Critical Humor Resistance to New Normal Condition

When the new normal condition was proclaimed by the government, the term 'new normal' was laughed at by various parties, both those who agreed with and those who rejected the condition. The laughter is not based on existing conditions, but because of the term itself. Therefore, a series of terms that use the word 'new' or Javanese, pronounced 'nyu', are humorously raised to fight against the statement. The poster depicting the grandmother below is betel nut (in Javanese *nyusur*) with tobacco on her lips so that it is sticking in her mouth (in Javanese *nyuwel*). Besides, the poster in the middle is equipped with Javanese words starting with the syllable 'nyu'. In the third poster, the new normal condition received criticism through the satay which only contains 2 meat sticks, because you have to keep your distance.



**Figure 17** A critical humor about the new normal



**Figure 18** A critical humor about the new normal in a chat service



**Figure 19** A critical humor about the new normal

The critical humorous discourse of resistance to the new normal conditions program above does not show disagreement with state authoritarianism in tackling Covid-19, but rather pays more attention to revising the country's authoritarianism. Critical discourse of humor on the response to covid-19 based on the seven social and historical contexts above can be briefly examined in the following list.

**Table 1** The list of critical discourse of humor on the response to covid-19 based on the seven social and historical contexts

No.	Social Context and Historical	Ideological Battles
1.	Program PSBB	Otoritarisme > < Egalitarisme
2.	Stay at home	Patriotisme > < Repatriotisme
3.	Must keep distance	Nasionalisme > < Nasionalisme Altruistik
4.	Must wear a mask	Hiperrealisme > < Realisme
5.	Wash your hands frequently with soap	Hiperrealisme > < Realisme
6.	Work from home	Otoritarisme > < Egalitarisme
7.	New normal	Otoritarisme > < Reotoritarisme

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that critical humorous discourse on the response to covid-19 is differentiated based on its social and historical context. Based on this, the critical discourse of humor against covid-19 countermeasures is divided into 7, namely critical discourse of resistance humor (1) the PSBB program, (2) staying at home alone, (3) obliging to keep your distance, (4) obliging to wear a mask, (5) washing hands frequently with soap, (6) working from home, and (7) newnormal conditions. Critical discourse of humor against the PSBB program against the ideology of authoritarianism with the ideology of egalitarianism; critical discourse humor resistance program stay at home against the ideology of patriotism with the ideology of repatriotism; critical discourse, humor, resistance, program, must keep a distance from the ideology of nationalism with the ideology of nationalism altruism; critical discourse, humor, resistance, the mandatory program to wear masks against the ideology of hyperrealism and the ideology of realism; critical discourse humor, resistance program, often wash hands

with soap, also fight hyperrealism ideology with realism ideology; critical discourse humor resistance work from home program also against the ideology of authoritarianism with the ideology of egalitarianism; and critical discourse humor resistance program of the new normal conditions (new normal) against the ideology of authoritarianism with the ideology of rheumatism.

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