

SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF HUMOR AS SOCIAL CRITICISM IN INDONESIAN X DISCOURSE

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Abstract

This study investigates how humor functions as a medium for social criticism on Indonesian X by examining the types of humor employed, the semantic strategies embedded in humorous tweets, and the social issues they address. Through qualitative analysis, the research identifies irony, satire, jokes, wordplay, and anecdotes as dominant humor types used by X users to express dissatisfaction with political leadership, economic inequality, and exploitative work culture. Semantically, these tweets rely on devices such as incongruity, metaphor, hyperbole, and implicit meanings to articulate critique in indirect yet impactful ways. These strategies enable users to engage with sensitive societal issues while avoiding overt confrontation, making humor a potent form of resistance and civic commentary. The study contributes to the field by bridging linguistic semantic analysis with socio-political discourse, demonstrating how everyday digital expressions—particularly humor—can serve as meaningful tools for public engagement. It also positions Twitter as more than a communication platform, framing it as a participatory space for civic expression and cultural resistance. However, the study is limited by its focus on textual content and the absence of multimodal data such as memes or videos. Furthermore, the anonymity of users restricts analysis of how factors like age, region, or sociolinguistic background affect humor production. Future research should include multimodal elements, cross-regional comparisons, and audience reception to deepen our understanding of humor as a dynamic form of social critique in digital spaces.

Keywords: humor; social criticism; Twitter; semantic analysis

Abstrak

Studi ini menyelidiki bagaimana humor berfungsi sebagai media kritik sosial di X Indonesia dengan mengkaji jenis-jenis humor yang digunakan, strategi semantik yang tertanam dalam tweet-tweet humor, dan isu-isu sosial yang diangkatnya. Melalui analisis kualitatif, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi ironi, satir, lelucon, permainan kata, dan anekdot sebagai jenis humor dominan yang digunakan oleh pengguna X untuk mengekspresikan ketidakpuasan terhadap kepemimpinan politik, ketimpangan ekonomi, dan budaya kerja yang eksploitatif. Secara semantik, tweet-tweet ini mengandalkan perangkat seperti inkongruensi, metafora, hiperbola, dan makna implisit untuk mengartikulasikan kritik secara tidak langsung namun berdampak. Strategi-strategi ini memungkinkan pengguna untuk terlibat dengan isu-isu sosial yang sensitif sambil menghindari konfrontasi terbuka, menjadikan humor sebagai bentuk perlawanan dan komentar sipil yang ampuh. Studi ini berkontribusi pada bidang ini dengan menjembatani analisis semantik linguistik dengan wacana sosial-politik, menunjukkan bagaimana ekspresi digital sehari-hari—terutama humor—dapat berfungsi sebagai alat yang bermakna untuk keterlibatan publik. Studi ini juga memosisikan Twitter lebih dari sekadar platform komunikasi, membingkainya sebagai ruang partisipatif untuk ekspresi sipil dan perlawanan budaya. Namun, penelitian ini terbatas karena fokusnya pada konten tekstual dan ketiadaan data multimoda seperti meme atau video. Lebih lanjut, anonimitas pengguna membatasi analisis tentang bagaimana faktor-faktor seperti usia, wilayah, atau latar belakang sosiolinguistik memengaruhi produksi humor. Penelitian selanjutnya sebaiknya mencakup elemen multimoda, perbandingan lintas wilayah, dan penerimaan audiens untuk memperdalam pemahaman kita tentang humor sebagai bentuk kritik sosial yang dinamis di ruang digital.

Kata Kunci: humor; kritik sosial; Twitter; analisis semantik

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INTRODUCTION

In the current digital era, social media has emerged as the primary medium for the expression of opinions, the construction of public narratives, and the transmission of social criticism, both explicitly and implicitly (Santuso & Sukarno, 2025). Among the various platforms available, Twitter has become a highly productive space for disseminating socio-political discourse through concise yet meaningful communication. Data from We Are Social (2024) shows that Indonesia is among the top five countries with the most active Twitter users in the world. These conditions indicate the widespread use of Twitter in Indonesia. Indonesia has a large number of Twitter users, making it a popular platform for arguments (Zakky et al., 2019).

One communicative strategy that is rapidly developing on this platform is the use of humor—in the form of irony, satire, sarcasm, and even wordplay—as a means of conveying social criticism in a subtle yet effective manner. Humor on X serves not only to entertain but also as a medium for protest, satire, and even symbolic resistance to power imbalances or social injustice. In Indonesia, this phenomenon is clearly visible in various viral hashtags and such as #PeringatanDarurat, #IndonesiaGelap and #KaburAjaDulu, which contain socio-political messages wrapped in lighthearted humor. According to Hewer et al., (2019) humor also functions as strengthening group solidarity and creating a safe and critical space for conversation. Therefore, it is important to understand not only the content of humor that appears on Twitter, but also how its structure and mechanisms operate as a form of social criticism in Indonesia's ever-evolving digital landscape.

Various studies have examined humor as a form of social criticism in the context of Indonesian media. Luthfi, (2020) examined the comic strip Faktap in the context of criticism of the Indonesian House of Representatives using Barthes's semiotic approach. A study by Latief et al., (2024) showed that humor in SantoonTV animation is effective in conveying social injustice. Meanwhile, Sudjatmiko & Hariyanto, (2024) found that Mamat Alkatiri's stand-up comedy roasting style is able to convey social criticism through satirical rhetoric and sharp analogies. Furthermore, a study by Purwaningrum (2020) analyzed the Instagram meme account (@fakartun) as a representation of criticism and freedom of expression.

However, most of these studies tend to focus on visual or performative media and ignore the semantic aspects of humor itself—namely, how word choice, sentence structure, and linguistic strategies are used to construct satirical or subversive meanings. Furthermore, analysis of humor in a digital context, particularly on X, is still very limited, even though X has unique discursive characteristics: character limits, high virality, and dense linguistic context. Semantic studies, such as Raskin's use of Semantic Script Theory, are highly relevant to understanding how humor is formed and understood in this digital space. Furthermore, many studies treat humor as a single phenomenon without distinguishing between various types of humor, such as irony, sarcasm, satire, or parody, and fail to explore the linguistic strategies used to convey implicit criticism. Therefore, there remains a gap in the academic literature that explicitly and structuredly integrates semantic analysis with empirical data from Indonesian X to understand how humor operates as a tool for social criticism in a complex political and cultural landscape.

This paper seeks to fill this gap through a semantic analysis approach to humor as social criticism on X. This research focuses on the discourse of Indonesian X users, rather than media such as stand-up comedy or memes on other platforms. This study will reveal how humor, such as satire, irony, or sarcasm, is linguistically constructed to convey criticism of socio-political issues. The research's specific objectives include identifying the types of humor used in public social criticism (e.g., against corruption, public policy, social inequality), analyzing the semantic structure of each type of humor to understand the dynamics of meaning, and evaluating the X community's digital response to the humor. This approach aims not only to classify humor but also to uncover the semantic mechanisms that make it a popular and effective tool for social criticism in Indonesia.

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Humor is not only a form of personal expression, but also a rhetorical strategy that allows people to voice concerns about social inequality, corruption, legal injustice, or controversial government policies. To test this assumption, this study was designed to answer three main questions: (1) What types of humor (such as satire, irony, sarcasm, and parody, etc.) are used in tweets containing social criticism on Indonesian X? (2) What semantic features (such as ambiguity, incongruity, reversal, or metaphor) are used in these tweets, and how do these features work to shape the meaning of social criticism? (3) What social issues are most frequently targeted by humor on X? By answering these three questions, this study aims to build a deeper understanding of the role of humor in the practice of digital social criticism and how semantic aspects play a role in conveying these messages effectively in the online public sphere.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Semantics

Semantics is the branch of linguistics concerned with the study of meaning. It investigates how words, phrases, and sentences convey meaning, whether literal or implied (Nisaul Zahra et al., 2024). In digital communication—such as tweets—users often rely on implicit meanings, irony, or double entendre, making semantic analysis crucial for uncovering the intent and nuance behind humor. Contemporary studies have applied semantic frameworks to analyze humor, particularly to uncover the interplay between **literal meanings** and **contextual interpretations** (Ruch et al., 1993). This approach is especially relevant when studying **political satire** or **social commentary**, where humor often masks criticism under playful language. Semantic tools help identify features such as **ambiguity**, **incongruity**, and **irony**, which are frequently used to avoid censorship or to soften the delivery of critique.

In humorous discourse, several semantic mechanisms play a crucial role in meaning construction, including **ambiguity**, **incongruity**, **reversal**, and **metaphor**. *Ambiguity* allows a single expression to carry more than one interpretation, enabling humor to emerge from unexpected meanings (Najim & Al, 2023). *Incongruity* arises when there is a mismatch between expectation and reality, producing surprise that leads to humor (Martínez, 2023). *Reversal* operates by flipping established norms, hierarchies, or logical orders, allowing speakers to subtly highlight contradictions in social or political systems (Chakrabarty, 2020). Meanwhile, *metaphor* works by drawing implicit comparisons that creatively expose social issues. These semantic mechanisms are widely used in humorous criticism because they allow speakers to express sensitive or controversial opinions indirectly, avoiding confrontation or censorship (Droog et al., 2023). Thus, semantics provides a fundamental analytical lens for understanding how humor communicates layered meanings, particularly in political satire and social commentary on platforms like Twitter.

The Concept of Humor

Humor is a complex and culturally embedded phenomenon involving cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions (Ibraheem & Abbas, 2015). It can serve as entertainment, a coping mechanism, or a means of indirect expression. Linguistically, humor involves mechanisms such as **incongruity**, **exaggeration**, **ambiguity**, and **contrast** between expectation and outcome (Wardah et al., 2023). In online spaces, humor thrives due to brevity, informality, and creativity in language use. X, as a microblogging platform, facilitates the rapid circulation of humorous content, especially in the form of jokes, memes, and sarcasm. According to (Wardah et al., 2023), humor on Indonesian X is often deeply contextual, drawing on shared cultural and political knowledge to deliver meaning-packed messages within the character limit. Additionally, Damanik & Mulyadi, (2020) emphasize that humor serves not only as a form of psychological relief but also as a medium for social criticism, particularly in response to inequality and injustice in society.

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Types of Humor (Shade, 1996)

Shade (1996) proposed a classification of four categories of humor: verbal, visual, figural, and aural comedy. However, this study mainly focused on vocal humor. Shade identified 12 varieties of verbal humor:

- a. Joke
 Something said or done to make people laugh. It also discovers ambiguity, idiom, and metaphor.
 Example: "I'm in love with my bed, but my alarm clock won't let us be together".
 From this sentence, we can see that she's in love with her bed. But the phrase "but my alarm clock won't let us be together". This interpretation of phrase produces ambiguity. This statement invites the reader to laugh.
- b. Irony
 Statements where the intended meaning contrasts with the literal meaning, often highlighting discrepancies between appearance and reality.
 Example: "It's such a beautiful day," he said, as the rain poured down in torrents.
 The statement contrasts with the actual situation, highlighting the irony of claiming a beautiful day while it's clearly stormy.
- c. Sarcasm
 A form of verbal irony that employs mock praise to convey contempt or disdain.
 Example: "Oh great, another Monday morning! I can't wait to work all week!"
 The speaker is mocking the idea of being excited about work.
- d. Satire
 Humor that uses exaggeration, ridicule, or absurdity to criticize and expose flaws in individuals, institutions, or society.
 Example: Teacher: "You failed your exam."
 Student : "You failed to teach me"
 From the conversation above shows that a teacher tells student that he failed a test, but the student replied that his teacher failed to teach him. The student gives criticism to teacher.
- e. Parody
 Imitative humor that exaggerates the characteristics of a particular genre, work, or individual to create a comedic effect.
 Example: "To boldly go where no one has gone before... unless you count the last five movies, the TV show, and the countless spin-offs."
 This is a parody of the "Star Trek" slogan, exaggerating the number of similar works to mock the overuse of a popular phrase.
- f. Word Play/Pun
 A pun is a type of word play that takes advantage of a term's various meanings, sometimes a pun plays on words with the same or similar sound but different meaning.
 Example: "I used to be a baker, but I couldn't make enough dough."
 This pun plays on the double meaning of "dough" as both a baker's product and slang for money.
- g. Anecdote
 A brief and often humorous story about a real event or personal experience.
 Example: "Once, I was so tired I poured orange juice into my cereal. I didn't realize until I took a bite. Worst breakfast ever."
 This is funny because it's a relatable mistake told in a light, humorous way.
- h. Farce
 A type of exaggerated, absurd comedy full of ridiculous situations and over-the-top actions.
 Example: A politician tries to give a serious speech, but every time he opens his mouth, a chicken walks by squawking louder than him.
 The humor comes from the chaotic, exaggerated interference — classic farce.

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i. Tall Tale

A highly exaggerated and unbelievable story, told as if it were true. Example: "My grandpa said he once ran so fast, he arrived at school yesterday." Clearly impossible, and that's what makes it funny—it stretches the truth ridiculously.

Humor as a Form of Social Criticism

Humor serves as a powerful tool for social criticism, allowing individuals to address societal issues in a manner that is both engaging and thought-provoking. Forms such as puns, satire, sarcasm, and jokes can effectively express dissatisfaction, while visual formats like political cartoons help to highlight injustice (T Hart, 2016). Humor is not merely a form of entertainment; it also functions as an indirect mode of resistance and critique (Rosmaria, 2025). Political humor, in particular, provides individuals with a means to express dissent or frustration toward authorities without resorting to overt confrontation. In authoritarian or semi-democratic contexts, it may even act as a "safe" outlet for public criticism (Rosmaria, 2025).

Sihombing (2022) argues that satirical humor has become a medium through which comedians articulate political concerns, aspirations, and social commentary. Humor in online spaces enables users to "laugh at power," while also signaling shared discontent and solidarity among like-minded individuals. Recent studies highlight X as a fertile ground for humor-based socio-political discourse, largely due to its participatory and viral nature. Davis et al., (2018) analyzed tweets targeting public figures during election periods and found that humor enhanced the critique's acceptability, relatability, and shareability. Similarly, another recent study indicates that humorous tweets often embed serious socio-political messages, especially resonating with younger, digitally active audiences.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, X was chosen as the primary platform for study due to its distinctive discursive characteristics: character limits for each tweet, high speed of information dissemination, and a predominance of text-based content that allows for in-depth linguistic exploration. The focus of the study was on tweets containing elements of humor and social criticism that emerged between 2020 and 2025, particularly those addressing public issues such as corruption, government policy, politics, and economics. Viral cases involving hashtags such as #KaburAjaDulu, #PeringatanDarurat, and #IndonesiaGelap served as the primary material because they illustrate the dynamics of humor as a response to socio-political tensions. The unit of analysis in this study was a text unit, specifically an individual tweet, that contained explicit or implicit humorous elements and indications of social criticism. Each tweet was analyzed semantically to identify the type of humor and its semantic function as a form of criticism.

The type of research used was qualitative-descriptive with a semantic discourse analysis approach. This study aimed to explain the phenomenon in depth through interpretive description, rather than quantitative generalization. The data used is primary data, a collection of tweets curated and classified based on their theme and type of humor. To strengthen semantic interpretation, secondary data were also used, including linguistic theories, previous studies on humor and social criticism, media reports, and related literature that support a contextual reading of the primary data. The primary data source came from public X accounts frequently involved in socio-political discourse and producing recurring humorous content. The tweets were collected using keyword-based sampling techniques, using keywords such as "economy", "satire", "irony", "sarcasm", and "politics". and then filtered using semantic context and engagement levels (retweets/likes). Data collection was carried out through digital observation and documentation. Observations were conducted by exploring X using advanced search features and popular hashtags related to social issues. Relevant tweets were saved as screenshots and raw text, then categorized according to theme

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and type of humor. To ensure data validity, the tweet content was cross-checked with the underlying social context (e.g., current political events).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Humor Type are Used in Tweets that Contain Social Criticism

Based on an analysis of 20 tweets, this study employs Shade's (1996) taxonomy of verbal humor as an analytical framework to enhance our understanding of how X users convey social criticism through humor.

- a) @il*min*tibot: *"Politicians are like baby diapers. They need to be changed frequently and for the same reason."*

Humor Type: Satire

Semantic Analysis: This sentence uses a metaphor to critique that politicians, like diapers, need to be changed regularly because they are considered ineffective or "dirty." It expresses dissatisfaction with politicians and suggests that they need to be replaced for the system to remain clean and efficient. Satire is employed here to highlight perceived corruption or ineffectiveness in public

- b) @caud*lloxi*: *"Idolizing a politician is like believing a prostitute really loves you"*

Humor Type: Sarcasm

Semantic Analysis: This sentence uses a simile to illustrate that idolizing a politician is similar to believing that a prostitute really loves you. The simile also implies that both politicians and prostitutes often operate within a framework of insincere relationships, where their actions are more influenced by personal or material goals than by genuine feelings or commitment. In this case, the sentence critiques unrealistic idealism, both in politics and personal relationships, which often ignores the realities of the situation.

- c) @s*awnt*fying: *"look at the economy, this is not the time for romance"*

Humor Type: Irony

Semantic Analysis: This statement contains irony by comparing the seriousness of economic problems and the joys of romance, implying that focusing on romance in times of economic hardship is inappropriate. Irony occurs when the intended meaning contradicts the literal meaning, often highlighting the contradiction. This sentence conveys that the current economic situation is more important to pay attention to than romantic relationships. In this context, the economy is seen as a pressing issue, while romance is seen as an inappropriate priority during financially difficult times. Semantically, economic conditions influence the decision not to engage in emotional matters such as romance.

- d) @sa*cas*so: *"Studying is my drug. But thank god I say no to drugs"*

Humor Type: Wordplay/Pun

Semantic Analysis: The sentence "Studying is my drug" uses a metaphor to describe that studying is like a "drug" that makes the writer addicted. This sentence shows that studying is something that is done continuously, as if it is a need or habit. However, the word "drug" also has negative connotations, especially when associated with drug abuse. In the second sentence, "But thank god I say no to drugs," the writer clarifies that he rejects things that are considered negative, including "drugs." If interpreted as irony or sarcasm, the real meaning is that studying feels like a burden or something tiring, similar to the bad effects of drug addiction. With this wordplay, the author wants to convey that he does not like to study, but conveys *it creatively to give the impression of humor or satire.*

- e) @sho*onum*onu: *"If @CocaCola had an honest slogan, it would be like: 'Selling sugar water since 1886'"*

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Humor Type: Parody

Semantic Analysis: The sentence "Selling sugar water since 1886" is semantically a direct dig at Coca-Cola, suggesting that their product is essentially just sugar water with added flavorings. This message highlights the simplicity of the product which is actually contrary to their branding which portrays Coca-Cola as a symbol of happiness, freshness, and modern lifestyle. In a sarcastic tone, this sentence criticizes the negative health effects of the high sugar content in the drink, such as obesity, diabetes, and dental problems, while exposing the marketing strategy that masks the reality of the product with emotional appeals.

- f) @t*asd*ity: *"I wish Chi*ese people did taxes!!! Yo tac be ready in tenmini"*

Humor Type: Joke

Semantic Analysis: This sentence contains an implicit social critique. It criticizes the inefficiency of the tax system by juxtaposing it with the stereotype of the highly efficient Chinese. The humor relies on hyperbole ("Yo tac be ready in tenmini") to exaggerate the speed of tax preparation and the inconsistency by linking the tax system to the stereotype of cultural efficiency. These elements highlight the frustration that many people feel about the bureaucratic inefficiency of the tax system, suggesting an underlying criticism of its delays. While the joke is lighthearted and relatable, it underscores the public's dissatisfaction with the bureaucratic system.

- g) @d*dm*nn_wa*lking: *"can't wait to pretend work again tomorrow"*

Humor Type: Irony

Semantic Analysis: This sentence superficially expresses eagerness (can't wait), but semantically it communicates disillusionment and sarcasm. The phrase "pretend work" reveals a deeper dissatisfaction with the nature of the speaker's job, implying that their daily tasks lack real purpose or productivity. The humor lies in the contradiction between the enthusiastic tone and the underlying reality of pointless labor. It critiques the performative aspect of modern work culture—especially in corporate environments—where employees often "look busy" rather than accomplish meaningful tasks. The ironic structure invites readers to reflect on the emptiness of routine labor under capitalist expectations.

- h) @mar*ndav*nnoy: *"Politics has left me feeling emotionally exhausted."*

Humor Type: Anecdote

Semantic Analysis: This is a personal and sincere statement delivered with a subtle touch of dark humor. The humor emerges not from exaggeration or punchlines, but from relatability and emotional truth. The exhaustion caused by politics speaks to the widespread disillusionment and fatigue many individuals feel in response to ongoing political drama and dysfunction. As an anecdote, it functions as a micro-narrative encapsulating a larger social sentiment: that political engagement in the current era can be draining rather than empowering. The tweet uses emotional honesty as a vehicle for indirect criticism.

- i) @a*sale*m: *"Everyday I see a reason to stay away from politics."*

Humor Type: Irony

Semantic Analysis: While the sentence seems to express avoidance, semantically it implies consistent disappointment with political affairs. The phrase "everyday I see a reason" suggests that politics consistently presents new failures or scandals, reinforcing public distrust. The ironic tone reflects a broader social commentary: despite the necessity of political involvement for change, the visible dysfunction repels citizens. The contradiction between civic duty and personal preservation is framed humorously to critique systemic political decay.

- j) @re*ghanh*nt: *"Why is being alive so expensive. I'm not even having a good time."*

Humor Type: Joke

Semantic Analysis: This tweet expresses existential frustration through humor. It combines a rhetorical question with a punchline, suggesting life's costs are not matched by its quality. Semantically, this sentence uses hyperbole and incongruity—two central humor mechanisms. The phrase "I'm not even having a good time" highlights a mismatch between investment

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(money spent to live) and reward (joy or satisfaction). It critiques economic hardship while maintaining a light, comedic tone, embodying modern “dark humor.”

- k) @_kh*y*sss: *“Hide yall apartments and hide yall taxes!!! These niggas is poor.”*
 Humor Type: Farce
 Semantic Analysis: The over-the-top tone and absurd scenario—hiding apartments and taxes—indicate exaggerated theatricality typical of farce. Semantically, it satirizes both economic inequality and possibly governmental overreach. The phrase “These niggas is poor” juxtaposes humor with social critique: it acknowledges poverty but does so in a way that mocks the chaotic desperation some people feel. The sentence structure mimics a public safety announcement, adding to its comedic absurdity. It paints a ridiculous picture to amplify awareness of economic insecurity.
- l) @p*lis*tin: *“ASMR makan uang rakyat (ASMR eating taxpayers’ money)”*
 Humor Type: Satire
 Semantic Analysis: This tweet critiques corruption by framing it as ASMR—a genre associated with relaxation. The juxtaposition between “eating taxpayers’ money” and ASMR highlights the grotesque normalization of corruption. Semantically, it exploits contrast: the soothing tone of ASMR versus the moral outrage of embezzlement. It implies that corrupt officials enjoy public money so casually that it’s akin to entertainment. The satire here cleverly draws attention to political misconduct by disguising it in the format of internet culture.
- m) @unm*gn*tism: *“90 % masalah hidupku itu masalah ekonomi semua” (90% of my life problems are just economic problems)*
 Humor Type: Anecdote
 Semantic Analysis: This is a personal statement cloaked in humor. The use of a percentage adds a mock-scientific tone that exaggerates the impact of financial issues. The tweet functions as an anecdotal confession that transforms socioeconomic hardship into a joke, allowing readers to relate and laugh. The semantic power lies in its minimalism and truth: it encapsulates how deeply economic concerns affect everyday life. It critiques systemic failure not through anger, but through tired honesty and wry humor.
- n) @c*dle*ops: *“pengen punya muka yg pori porinya kecil sekecil umr jogja” (i wish my pores were as tiny as the minimum wage in Jogja)*
 Humor Type: Wordplay / Pun
 Semantic Analysis: This tweet uses punning and hyperbolic comparison to comment on wage inequality. The joke compares facial pores to the size of Jogja’s minimum wage (UMR), implying that the wage is abnormally small. Semantically, it fuses unrelated concepts (skin and salary) to produce comedic effect while embedding social critique. The humor relies on incongruity and creative metaphor, turning beauty aspirations into a biting commentary on labor exploitation and low wages.
- o) @buk*ki*y: *“lagi work from café password wifinya “gajiguruhonorer” kecil semua” (the wifi password is “gajiguruhonorer” — all lowercase, just like the salary of a contract teacher)*
 Humor Type: Satire
 Semantic Analysis: The tweet plays on the phrase “kecil semua” which refers both to lowercase letters in a password and to the meager salary of contract teachers. Semantically, this double meaning creates a pun that satirizes educational labor conditions. By embedding critique within a mundane scenario (wifi password), the tweet downplays the issue while making its absurdity more pronounced. The satire emerges from how casually the injustice is presented, as if poor teacher compensation is so normal it’s reduced to a joke.
- p) @asa*po*lapi*ir: *“naturalisasi itu olahragawan doang ya.. klo misal pejabat atau menteri gitu bisa ga?” (so, is naturalization only for athletes? what if it’s, like, government officials or ministers—can they get naturalized too?)*
 Humor Type: Irony

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Semantic Analysis: The tweet questions whether officials—who arguably fail to represent national interests—should be “naturalized” like foreign athletes. The humor lies in the rhetorical absurdity: suggesting that Indonesian officials are so detached they seem foreign. Semantically, it exposes dissatisfaction with leadership under the guise of innocent inquiry. The irony is sharpened by how the question seems naïve but actually delivers sharp political critique, challenging notions of loyalty and representation.

- q) @i*at*a: “*saranku, semua pejabat tinggi di indonesia raya ini harus di ruqyah deh. ga yakin konseling psikolog aja nolong*”. (*honestly, I think all high-ranking officials in this great Republic need to be exorcised. I doubt regular therapy would help anymore.*)

Humor Type: Satire

Semantic Analysis: This tweet humorously suggests that Indonesian officials require spiritual cleansing (ruqyah) rather than therapy, implying that their problems are beyond rational or psychological help. The phrase highlights a deep moral or spiritual failing. Semantically, it uses hyperbole and religious reference to criticize governance, framing it as so corrupt or absurd that divine intervention is needed. The satire lies in the blend of religious language with social commentary, amplifying its humorous critique.

- r) @_i*mr*bot: “*nyesel dulu sekolah masuk ipa, ternyata pas udah dewasa ujiannya ekonomi*” (*regret choosing science in school—turns out adult life is just one big economics exam.*)

Humor Type: Joke

Semantic Analysis: The humor stems from the dissonance between academic training (science stream in school) and the real-life challenges (economics) faced in adulthood. The joke works semantically by subverting expectations: the speaker prepared for one kind of test but faces an entirely different reality. It reflects societal disillusionment where formal education doesn't equip people for real-world financial struggles. The tweet uses personal reflection to critique the disconnect between education and economic literacy.

- s) @sa*cas*ic_us: “*when you realize tomorrow is Monday again*”

Humor Type: Irony

Semantic Analysis: This statement lacks explicit emotion but implies dread. The absence of an overt complaint creates subtle irony: the realization is enough to evoke universal frustration. The humor is understated, relying on shared cultural understanding of Monday as the symbol of unwanted routine. Semantically, it uses indirectness to magnify the emotional burden associated with returning to work, embedding critique in simplicity.

- t) @iatyelo: “*are you ok? no, i need money.*”

Humor Type: Wit

Semantic Analysis: This is a classic example of wit—sharp, brief, and intelligent humor. The unexpected shift from a question of emotional well-being to a financial complaint subverts conversational norms, catching the reader off guard. Semantically, it exposes the speaker's priorities and the broader reality where emotional distress is tightly linked to financial struggle. The humor comes from its clever pivot and minimalist delivery, making a serious statement through a fast, humorous punchline.

Based on the collected data, the most dominant type of humor in tweets containing social criticism is irony, with a total of 5 occurrences. The next most frequently used type of humor is satire (4), followed by joke (3), and pun/wordplay and anecdote, each appearing twice. Meanwhile, types of humor such as parody, farce, sarcasm and wit only appeared once each. This data shows that irony and satire are the most common humor strategies for conveying social criticism on Twitter, as they allow for the implicit and creative delivery of a sharp message.

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Semantic Features are Embedded in Tweets

Table 1. Semantic Features Identified

Semantic Feature	Definition	Examples (Tweet Snippets)
Ambiguity	More than one possible meaning	“Studying is my drug...” / “password wifinya ‘gajiguruhonorer’—kecil semua”
Incongruity	Clash between expectation and reality	“regret choosing science...” / “are you ok? no, I need money.”
Reversal	Inversion of usual logic or expected response	“can’t wait to pretend work again” / “naturalization for ministers?” / “I say no to drugs” (after calling studying a drug)
Metaphor/Simile	Comparison that reveals hidden criticism	“politicians are like diapers” / “idolizing a politician is like...”
Irony	Opposite of literal meaning	“can’t wait to pretend work...” / “everyday I see a reason...”
Hyperbole	Extreme exaggeration	“officials need to be exorcised” / “Chinese people doing taxes”
Cultural Reference	Based on shared social or political knowledge	“minimum wage Jogja” / “naturalization for ministers”
Emotional Truth	Humor grounded in genuine emotion or fatigue	“emotionally exhausted by politics” / “90% of problems are economic”
Juxtaposition	Placement of contrasting ideas to highlight contradiction	“not the time for romance—look at the economy” / “sugar water since 1886”

These semantic features show that Twitter humor with social criticism is not only funny but linguistically rich and socially aware. The use of ambiguity, incongruity, reversal, dan metaphor allows critique to be delivered in ways that are both engaging and subversive, making serious issues more palatable, shareable, and relatable, especially among younger audiences online.

Social Issues Most Frequently Targeted

The thematic classification of the tweets indicates these major categories:

Table 2. Most frequently targeted social issue classification

No	Social Issue	Example Tweet
1	Political Corruption and Distrust	“Politicians are like baby diapers...”
		“Idolizing a politician is like believing a prostitute really loves you.”
		“Politics has left me emotionally exhausted”
		“Everyday I see a reason to stay away from politics”
		“All high-ranking officials need to be exorcised”

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		“ASMR eating taxpayers’ money”
		“All high-ranking officials need to be exorcised.”
2	Economic Hardship	“Why is being alive so expensive...”
		“90% of my problems are economic.”
		“Regret choosing science... now the test is economics”
		“I wish my pores were as small as Jogja's minimum wage.”
		“Wifi password: gajiguruhonorer (all lowercase).”
		“Look at the economy, this is not the time for romance”
		“Are you okay? No, I need money.”
3	Labor Exploitation and Unfulfilling Work Culture	“Can’t wait to pretend work again tomorrow.”
		“When you realize tomorrow is Monday again”
4	Education vs. Real Life Expectations	“Regret choosing science in school...”
		“Studying is my drug. But thank God I say no to drugs”
5	Consumerism / Brand Critique	“Selling sugar water since 1886.”
6	Mental Health	“Politics has left me emotionally exhausted.”

Discussion

The analysis reveals that Indonesian X users actively employ humor as a tool for articulating socio-political criticism, navigating censorship, and engaging audiences in a light-hearted yet incisive manner. The results demonstrate that certain types of humor—particularly irony and satire—dominate the discourse, while semantic features such as incongruity, hyperbole, metaphor, and emotional truth function as the primary vehicles through which critique is linguistically constructed.

Dominance of Irony and Satire as Humor Strategies

Irony emerged as the most frequently used humor type, appearing in five out of the twenty analyzed tweets. This prevalence suggests that irony’s indirect and ambiguous nature is well-suited for expressing dissatisfaction in a politically sensitive environment. Satire closely follows, indicating that X users also favor overt social commentary disguised in humor to avoid confrontation. Both irony and satire allow speakers to criticize social and political institutions while retaining plausible deniability. This indirectness enables users to share grievances without appearing overtly subversive, which is particularly strategic in contexts where freedom of expression is limited or where open criticism may result in social backlash. For instance, the tweet “can’t wait to pretend work again tomorrow” employs irony to comment on the futility of modern

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work culture. Similarly, the tweet “ASMR makan uang rakyat” utilizes satire to ridicule corruption by contrasting the relaxing tone of ASMR content with the grotesque reality of embezzlement. These examples illustrate how humor can neutralize the sting of critique, making it more socially acceptable and shareable.

Semantic Mechanisms Behind Humor-Based Criticism

The semantic analysis reveals that humor on Indonesian X is rich in layered meaning. Incongruity—a clash between expectation and reality—was one of the most common mechanisms used, evident in tweets such as “regret choosing science in school—turns out adult life is just one big economics exam.” This humorous dissonance reflects deeper anxieties about education’s failure to prepare individuals for real-life struggles.

Metaphors and similes, such as “politicians are like baby diapers,” transform abstract criticism into vivid, relatable imagery. These figurative devices help crystallize complex social critiques into digestible statements. Furthermore, emotional truth—as seen in tweets like “Politics has left me emotionally exhausted”—adds a layer of authenticity and relatability, signaling that humor is not merely for entertainment but a coping mechanism and a form of affective resistance. By embedding hyperbole (e.g., “officials need to be exorcised”) and double entendre (e.g., “gajiguru honorer – all lowercase”), users employ linguistic creativity to expose the absurdities of social conditions while still engaging audiences emotionally and cognitively.

Thematic Concerns Reflect Public Discontent

The tweets analyzed reflect a wide spectrum of social concerns, with three major themes standing out: political corruption and distrust, economic hardship, and labor exploitation under modern work culture. Posts addressing political hypocrisy, inefficiency, and moral decline reveal a widespread disillusionment with governance. Through metaphoric, ironic, and sarcastic humor, users articulate their frustration while simultaneously asserting a sense of agency through mockery. In parallel, tweets focusing on the rising cost of living, wage inequality, and precarious employment illustrate public anxiety about economic instability. These concerns are often delivered through hyperbole or irony, suggesting humor is being used as a psychological buffer in the face of structural adversity. Furthermore, recurring references to “pretend work” or underappreciated labor reveal dissatisfaction with performative productivity and capitalist workplace expectations. These critiques, though wrapped in wit or jest, expose deep-rooted social frustrations. Ultimately, the humor expressed on Twitter functions as more than entertainment—it reflects the lived realities of users and serves as a subtle form of resistance against the systemic challenges they encounter daily.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This study set out to examine how humor operates as a form of social criticism on Indonesian X by analyzing the types of humor employed, the semantic features embedded in humorous tweets, and the social issues most frequently targeted. The analysis revealed that users commonly utilize humor types such as irony, satire, jokes, wordplay, and anecdotes to convey dissatisfaction with political leadership, economic inequality, and exploitative work culture. Semantically, these tweets rely heavily on incongruity, metaphor, hyperbole, and implicit meaning to articulate criticism while circumventing direct confrontation. These strategies allow users to engage with serious topics in a lighthearted but meaningful way, making humor an effective tool for indirect resistance and public discourse.

The primary contribution of this study lies in bridging linguistic semantic analysis with sociocultural critique, offering insight into how everyday digital expression—specifically humor—functions as a vehicle for voicing dissent in a constrained socio-political environment. It also

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highlights how Twitter serves not just as a communication tool but as a participatory space for civic engagement through creative discourse. However, this study is limited by its scope, focusing only on textual humor from a curated dataset of tweets, and does not account for multimodal forms (e.g., memes, videos) or broader demographic interpretations. Additionally, due to anonymity and lack of access to user profiles, it was not possible to assess the sociolinguistic background of tweet authors, which could influence humor perception and production.

Suggestions

To expand upon the findings of this study, several directions are recommended for future research. First, scholars should broaden the scope by including multimodal humor forms such as memes, GIFs, and short videos, as these visual and auditory elements often intensify the impact of social criticism online. Additionally, analyzing how different audience demographics—such as age, educational background, or political orientation—engage with and interpret humorous content would offer a more comprehensive understanding of humor's role in digital discourse. A comparative study across platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or Facebook could also reveal how different social media environments shape the expression and reception of humor-based criticism. Furthermore, conducting longitudinal research would allow scholars to observe how humor evolves in response to socio-political events, such as elections or economic crises. Finally, incorporating sociolinguistic context by examining user background (when ethically permissible) could enhance insights into the cultural and linguistic factors that influence the creation and interpretation of humor in the Indonesian digital sphere.

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