SATIRE MESSAGES IN NARASI TV’S MATA NAJWA MENANTI TERAWAN

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# Abstract

*The existence of new media provides a dynamic process of delivering messages and opinions made by the community and mass media. The present study discusses the meaning of the satire messages in the one of episodes of Narasi TV which titled Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan. The present study uses Barthes’ semiotic approach related to the concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth. The video is analyzed by taking several scenes on the video by selecting scenes that refer to non-verbal communication. The results of the present study indicate that Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan’s episode can be considered a planned direct satire to the then Minister of Health, Terawan Aguas Putranto to encourage him to appear in public more and be more open in handling Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. The satire given in the episode suggests a doubt about how Putranto perfoming his role as Minister of Health.*

**Keywords:** *Media, Satire Messages, Semiotics.*

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesian goverment has declared the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic as a National Disaster (Arifin, 2020). The Indonesian Ministry of Health is task to assist the President in carrying out some government affairs related to the health sector. They must carry out their functions such as the formulation of national policies, implementation policies and technical policies in the health sector. In addition, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia has several authorities including the management of epidemics and disasters on a national scale in the health sector and the establishment of national information system policies in the health sector (Ministry of Health, 2015). Related to the duties, functions, and authorities of the Indonesian Ministry of Health, the Indonesian Minister of Health should be one of the most aggressive parts in disseminating the health phenomena in Indonesia, especially Covid-19. However, then Indonesian Minister of Health, Terawan Agus Putranto rarely appeared in public to provide explanations related to Covid-19. There have been many criticisms from the public regarding the lack of presence of Putranto as minister of health. One of them is satire from a popular TV show and web-show called Mata Najwa. The last point will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Mata Najwa (Eyes of Najwa) is produced by Narasi TV, an entertainment company focused on providing educational and informational contents. Mata Najwa is a talk show broadcasted in a TV channel as well as YouTube. The format of each episode of Mata Najwa is usually an interview panel with several interviewees who are interviewed by Najwa Shihab. Mata Najwa usually covers sensational or viral news. However, their main concerns are political news. One of the most popular episodes of Mata Najwa is *‘Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan’* (Mata Najwa is waiting for Terawan). Instead of interviewing a panel of members, Najwa Shihab interviewed an empty chair as a symbolism of missing appearances of Putranto from public during the earliest months of Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia.

Related to the above paragraph, such symbolism can be categorized as a satire for people missing the presences of Putranto in public. Satire can be defined as a criticism or an innuendo toward a specific condition without providing a positive solution to the subject. In addition to be an alternative of conventional media delivery, satire in news content can be in the forms of main story but the content parodies the news (Ermida & Chovance, 2012). Nevertheless, a satire is different from parody despite being produced to entertain people. While satirical messages are exaggerated so that the audiences can interpret the messages as ironic (Fife, 2016), a parody attacks forms and ideology inside of it (Gray, 2006). The symbolization of an empty chair being interviewed in Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan is an irony of the absence of Putranto. Such phenomenon is interesting to be investigated because it is a form of satire made by a ‘serious’ TV show such as Mata Najwa. Therefore, the present study aims to analyze satire messages used in Mata Najwa’s Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan. Besides giving more insights toward the forms of satirical messages in political news, the present study may fill a lack of research toward satire in Indonesian TV or web-shows. Romanowski & Sheldon (2020) investigated satire and parody in new media in the United States of America. In addition, Boukes (2019) analyzed how a political satire can increase the visibility of a social problem. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of studies which specifically analyzes satirical messages in Indonesian TV or web-shows.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

* 1. *Non-verbal Communication*

Non-verbal communication is an external expression used to communicate without using spoken or written words using gestures, characteristics, appearances, voice characteristics, voice and the use of space and distance. Following are several types of non-verbal communication; kinesthetics, haptics, paralanguage, proxemics, artifacts, olfatics, cronemics (Rustan & Nurhakiki, 2017).

* 1. Code of Journalism Ethics

Despite ensuring the freedom of speech, Indonesian journalists realize there are several factors such as national interests, social responsibility, and religious norms that need to be taken into consideration. Thus, Indonesian journalists know that they need a moral and professional ethical foundation as operational guidelines in maintaining public trust and upholding integrity and professionalism. Such moral foundation is called code of journalism ethics which was established by Indonesian Press Council (Dewan Pers, 2020). These guidelines are also used by talkshows such as Mata Najwa to cover their episodes.

* 1. Messages

Messages are the most important thing in communication because if it is delivered through the right media, using understandable and simple words and in accordance with the intent and purpose, the messages will be conveyed and easily digested by the communicant. The statement material submitted by the communicator to the communicant can be oral or written forms. Tt can also be in the form of symbols, images, colors, or other signs. It is usually referred to as verbal language and non-verbal language on condition that it can be understood by both parties, both the sender (communicator) and the recipient of the message (communicant) (Abdullah, 2015).

* 1. Satire in Mass Media

The are several definitions of satire. Nevertheless, they have much less similar notions by defining satire as a genre which interpret or evaluate a social problem in order to criticize or entertain (Declrecq, 2018). Satire has some moral functions, despite some scholars regard it as amoral, as Quintero (2007) remarks that satire is written with a moral vocation and a concern for public. Some examples of satire in mass media are The Daily Show, Last Week Tonight with Jon Oliver or else. These shows criticize current socio-political conditions through satire news programs. As satire is made based on the personal critiques, the forms depend on the personal views to make moral statements (Fife, 2016). Satire can be divided into direct and indirect satire. Both are ironic in nature, used humor to show problems or criticized attitudes, and implicit as satire is not a direct statement but exaggerated absurd messages that go out of context (Yulianti, 2019). In addition, satire needs to be deconstructed on ideas rather than particular actions in order to develop communities that may ‘get’ the joke (Day, 2011). Furthermore, the presence of satire in mass media is used to fight against the authority through innuendos or parodies (Yulianti, 2019). Besides that, satire news also does not have to comply with news and programming conventions and it is free to provide alternative perspectives and criticisms. Thus, the content of this satire is free to write as long as it still includes the rules of news writing in accordance with existing journalistic ethics (Basu, 2008). Those points suggest the broader definition of satire.

* 1. Semiotics

The subjects of present study will be analyzed using semiotics approach. In this sense, semiotics refer to a study of signs or epistemologies toward the existence or signs in social lives (Yakin & Totu, 2014). One of prominent researchers of semiotics is Saussure who divided the sign system into three types; denotation, connotation and myth (Brantakesuma et al, 2017). The understanding of the meaning of denotation and connotation also shows up in the study of Barthes refers to the existence of a relationship of signs, markers and markers intertwined in a series of meaning symbol needs. Barthes further elaborated the study of signs into their relationships with sign, signifiers, and signified which intertwined in a series of symbolic meaning. The first significant stage is the relationship between the signifier and the signified in a sign to external reality. In other words, denotation is what a sign is described to

an object while connotation is how to describe it. The significance of the second stage relates to the contents, the stage of working through myth which is how culture explains or understands some aspects of reality or natural phenomena. Myth is also a product of dominant class of social group. Primitive myths, for example are about life and death, humans and gods, and else while current myths are related to femininity, masculinity, science and success.

# RESEARCH METHODS/METHODOLOGY

The present study applies a qualitative descriptive approach using semiotics analysis of Barthes. In regards to this, the present study will use several clips of Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan which specifically show satire messages. In addition, the present study uses a key informant, Hendri Wijayanto as an executive producer of Mata Najwa.

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mata Najwa usually invites a panel of interviewees that consist of sources, state officials, consultants, or highly credible people discussing current problems especially in Indonesia. However, Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan only consists of monologues with empty chairs but the talk show is still continued. The purpose of Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan is to be a message that the media wants to convey to the Indonesian government, especially then Ministry of Health, Putranto to be open in handling Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Following is a comment from the key informant:

"What we expect is that the government would speak up [and] be open [regarding] this [pandemic], convey their policies, evaluate what is wrong, provide a complete understanding to the public regarding the pandemic situation. The criticism and satire [in Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan aimed] to encourage the government, in this case the Ministry of Health to take charge of the situation and control in a pandemic situation [by speaking] more firmly [to the public],“ (Wijayanto, 2021).

It can be said that the episode aimed to a social critique in the form of satire in order to encourage concerned parties, especially government to talk openly to the public regarding their Covid-19 management. Following paragraphs will analyze the clips of Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan.

# Figure 1. An empty Seat Source : Mata Najwa

The above picture shows an empty chair which was designed to be used by Putranto as the main guest speaker. However, the connotation meaning of a vacant seat in the show can be interpreted as a symbol of the absence of people who had been waited by the public, Putranto to be responsible for handling Covid-19 in Indonesia by providing explanations, appeals, clarifications or notifications during the handling of Covid-19. Below is a comment from the key informant:

"So the vacant seat can symbolically be interpreted as the absence of the person who is eagerly awaited by the public, so it's not just not [about] being present at Mata Najwa, but being present in front of the public or something like that. So the picture [means the] absence of a role that should be taken by the Minister of Health in [handling] the complicated pandemic situation at that time. Didn't many people ask where the Minister was? What's [his] program [to handle the pandemic]? Now, it is symbolically depicted through [a vacant seat],” (Wijayanto, 2021).

On the other hand, the myth sign from the existence of empty seat in a talk show is that the empty seats are more interpreted as vacant in a role or position in the cabinet, especially in the position of the Minister of Health. Similar symbol of vacant seat is also seen by the absence of position during the fall of Soeharto’s (second president of Indonesia) regime (Saeno, 2020). The above point show the interpretations of empty seat.



# Figure 2. Hand Gestures with Smiling Face Source: Mata Najwa

Figure 2 shows Shihab makes a V gesture while smiling. The denotation meaning of the above figure shows how Shihab smiling and asking questions. In addition, the connotation meaning from the figure can be interpreted as a subtle hint for her high curiosity to ask the where abouts of Putranto who rarely appeared in public to handle the beginning phase of Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia while Shihab's smiling expression can be interpreted as a desire for openness from Putranto. Regarding the figure, the key informant commented as follows,

"Because that's the reality, so actually it's not just Mata Najwa, it's a public voice, a lot of people are waiting for Terawan, waiting for him to speak, [and] convey the real situation, [for him to] convey plan, so that's a picture of us waiting for Terawan, but we can't act on behalf all of a sudden. suddenly the community, so in that case, it was Najwa Shihab who interviewed and in the Mata Najwa program, so the hashtag and title #MataNajwaMenantiTerawan, yes it represents what the public has been waiting for, something like that”, (Wijayanto, 2021)

# Figure 3. Shihab talks to an empty seat Source: Mata Najwa

The above figure shows Shihab talks to an empty seat. This action can be considered as a monologue. Denotation meaning of this figure illustrates Shihab talking to a vacant seat and running her show like usual while connotation meaning of this figure can be interpreted as a debate or an interview to an absent figure. This action can be done as a form of satire for public figures, state officials, or credible consultants.

"This is also not a new treatment, actually people from other countries have used satire to make fun of public officials who don't want to appear in front of the public, or want to insinuate public officials, who don't want to hear people's voices. It has been done in other countries but only in Indonesia that it is considered a new thing, right” (Wijayanto, 2021).

The myth related to the above figure has been analyzed by Dewi (2020). Interviewing a vacant seat has been used several times by media. Similar interview was conducted by Kay Burlet in @Breakfast which was broadcasted by Sky News TV show. The host found that her guest, James Cleverly from Labour Party of the United Kingdom, was absent from her show. Despite the absence of her guest, Burley kept asking questions to the seat that would be seated by Cleverly.



# Figure 4. Hashtag #MataNajwaMenantiTerawan Source: Mata Najwa

The denotation meaning of the above figure refers to the hashtag symbol (#) in the hashtag #MataNajwaMenantiTerawan shown on the bottom left of the frame and the hashtag is displayed during the show. On the other hand, the connotation sign is Mata Najwa, a talk show that was waiting for Putranto as then Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia to provide an explanation regarding the conditions of Covid-19 handling in Indonesia. Mata Najwa, similar to Indonesian public, wanted to know bureaucratic apparatus, Covid-19 budget and other things related to the health sector. The use of the existing hashtag (#) is in accordance with the current situation as well as the themes and discussions in Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan’s episode.

"That was part of the mission since the beginning, the goal is to ask Putranto to appear in public. We often see a lot of special hashtags which then go viral on social media at that time. So the public's voice and it becomes a movement, so the hashtag waiting for Putranto is expected to be an encouragement so that the Ministry of Health at that time can appear in front of the public”, (Wijayanto, 2021).

The myth arose from the above picture has also been analyzed by Pratama (2020) as several moments and events had been popular in social media. Several hashtags had been widely used during 2020, especially in Twitter. One of the most popular hashtags is #gagalkanomnibuslaw to speak against the signing the Omnibus Law on the Job Creation Bill, which was drafted by the Indonesian House of Representatives in July, 2020. This hashtag was an indirect protest from Twitter users who did not have the opportunity to take part in street rallies due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

# Figure 5. The Smile on the Host’s Face

**Source: Mata Najwa**

The above figure shows Shihab smiling to the vacant seat while announcing a list of ministers from several countries who resigned from their positions due to the inability to handle Covid-19 pandemic. The sign of connotation that emerged from the scene was a question containing innuendo that previously contained information related to several countries whose health ministers resigned because they felt they could not cope with Covid-19 pandemic. However, after the resignation, those countries began to improve their policies

related to Covid-19. At that time, Indonesia’s Covid-19 numbers were increasingly out of control. In addition, other problems such as political disturbance, economic problem or else which arose due to Covid-19. Such condition was similar to one happened in those countries before their health ministers resigned. The host alluded that the resignation may happen in Indonesia.

On the other hand, the myth emerged from the resignation of those health ministers is an allusion that they were unable to cope with Covid-19 pandemic. One of examples is the Health Minister of New Zealand who resigned because he received a lot of criticism for violating the lockdown policy that he implemented himself. On the other hand, the Czech Minister of Health resigned because of numerous criticisms from the rapid increase of Covid- 19 cases in the Czech Republic while the Brazil Minister of Health resigned because his views often clashed with Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil’s president regarding the handling of Covid-19 (Shalihah, 2020).



# Figure 6. Low intonation in the words “Are you ready to resign, sir?”

**Source: Mata Najwa**

The above figure shows denotation meaning of host who gave a question related to Putranto’s possible resignation from his position as the Health Minister of Indonesia. Connotation sign emerged from the scene is a criticism given to Putranto as the Indonesian Minister of Health for rapid increase of Covid-19 cases in Indonesia. The sentence indicates that the presenter is giving a doubt about the suitability of Putranto to carry out his role as Minister of Health. This question alludes the inability of Putranto to handle Covid-19 conditions in Indonesia as the public at that time needed the reassurance which he failed to give. The myth from the above figure shows the doubt from public related to the capability of state officials to perform their duties.

# Satire Meaning

Mata Najwa Menanti Terawat is a product of mass media. The episode is unlike other episodes of Mata Najwa. The concept of the episode is a general form of satire to criticize the absence of then Minister of Health, Putranto in public. Following is a comment from the key informant:

"So actually we made the concept of satire in general so it's not specific to Mata Najwa, actually, so the void is a picture of the emptiness of the presence of the Minister or the Ministry of Health in front of the public, so it's not specific to the absence of the Minister to Mata Najwa", (Wijayanto, 2021).

Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan’s episode tried to deliver critical messages in the forms of satire in general to encourage Putranto to appear in front of the public. The satire messages are wrapped in jokes instead of serious tone so that the public would accept it easier. In this sense, the satire form shown in Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan can be considered as a direct satire because it is directly shown to the subject of satire.

# CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to analyze satire messages of Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan through Barthes’ semiotics approach. It can be concluded that the satire form in Mata Najwa Menanti Terawan can be categorized as a direct satire to Putranto. In addition, the episode aimed to be a critique to Indonesian health minister to be more open in handling Covid-19 pandemic. The present study is not without limitations. The present study was conducted in limited time and only involved a key informant. Further studies may be conducted longer to gain more comprehensive insights and involve a higher number of informants to provide deeper information related to the matter.

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