

Vol. 7 No. 2, March 2024

e-ISSN 2597-4718

p-ISSN 2597-470X



International Journal of Humanity Studies

IJHS

Published by
Institute for Research and Community Services
Sanata Dharma University
Yogyakarta, Indonesia

International Journal
of Humanity Studies

Vol. 7

No. 2

Pages 159-340

e-ISSN 2597-4718
p-ISSN 2597-470X

International Journal of Humanity Studies

IJHS

International Journal of Humanity Studies (IJHS) publishes scientific full papers written in English. IJHS is a biannual, published twice a year, namely in September and March.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIA LITERACY FOCUS IN INDONESIA: A LITERATURE STUDY 2016-2021

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<https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i2.5280>

receive 23 October 2023; accepted 20 February 2024

Abstract

The development of media literacy can be said as a certain indicator of understanding the current situation and development of a nation. It is understandable if a focus on a certain topic that is related or discussed together with media literacy is worth observing as a parameter to catch a glimpse of a country's citizens' level of knowledge. Questions about how the development of media literacy in Indonesia is based on related publications are important. This research examines using a literature study about the development of media literacy in Indonesia, by observing the keywords, terms, and focus on publications that correlated with media literacy in Indonesia that were recorded in Google Scholar from 2016 to 2021 and visualized by the Vos viewer program is used to visualize the data and provide a ground base for the findings. The result from this study indicates that media literacy in Indonesia is still not independent as it comes with a certain focus/trend that happens in the country. While the media literacy focus is synchronized with the real-time condition in Indonesia, it also shows that the level of knowledge from the Indonesian people is heavily driven by the media.

Keywords: Indonesia, literature study, media literacy, Vos viewer

Introduction

Nowadays, technology has developed rapidly. The development of this technology is what encourages access to information to be easier and faster regardless of age and time limits (Haleem et al., 2022). Children and adults can access various kinds of information through their gadgets. However, technological developments have risks that must be considered. This risk is closely related to the literacy crisis experienced by the community, especially the young generation (Murray, 2021). That being said, technological advancement holds many benefits that can be used for research and academic purposes. For example, we can use technology to access the development of media literacy in a country, as it can be



taken as a certain indicator to understand the current situation and development of a nation. For example, if the trend of focus/topic in a country in one year is related to politics and democracy, we can further analyze what happened in that particular country during the time of the trend, as it can indicate whether that certain country has a national or regional election, and so forth (Dame, n.d.). The keywords that are related to the discussion of media literacy in a certain country can also be used to roughly indicate the level of intellectuality of the people in that certain country. This is caused by the common sense of people who are considered “literate” and follow a certain topic in a country from the media available, which must have undergone a thinking process. This statement can be understood by considering the topics or issues that often appear in public through media that determine how people from that certain country think in a certain period (Silverblatt, 2014).

Indonesia, as a country with more than 270 million people (Worldometers, n.d.), cannot yet be considered a country with a good level of media literacy. A lot of programs have been done by the government of Indonesia to increase the level of media literacy of the people, especially to prevent the spread of fake news and hoaxes (KOMINFO, 2021). The existence of fake news and hoaxes in Indonesia can be perceived at a high level, as a lot of fake news and hoaxes can be found every day on various platforms of media. Many people are exposed to hoaxes. For example, according to the Katada Insight Center (KIC), at least 30% to nearly 60% of Indonesians are exposed to hoaxes when accessing and communicating through cyberspace (Cahyadi, 2020). Despite the existence of obstacles in the form of hoaxes and fake news, media literacy has somewhat become an important topic to be discussed in Indonesia (especially among academicians) since the 2010s. This has also become the reason for this study to be conducted, as it aims to understand the development of media literacy focus in Indonesia in the last five years (2016-2021) and also to determine whether the topics that most appeared and were discussed during those years truly represent the real-time condition in Indonesia.

The circulation of various kinds of fake news or hoaxes poses a threat that triggers polemics in the community (Asnaria et al., 2022). This is because not all people are proficient in sorting out which news is true and which is fake. The Ministry of Communication and Informatics found that 9,546 hoaxes had been spread across various social media platforms on the Internet. The data is summarized over three years from August 2018 to early 2022. The Director of Information Empowerment of the Ministry of Communications and Informatics, Bonifasius Wahyu Pudjianto, said that people are now digging more sources of information from social media with a portion of 73 percent. While sources of information from television are 59.7 percent and online news or online 26.7 percent (Widyastuti, 2022). The data shows the importance of media literacy. Media literacy can avoid various kinds of fake news or hoaxes (Setiawan & Rahmawati, 2020; Udhany & Sylvia, 2022).

The quest to overcome the existence of fake news and hoaxes is not easy though, as most of the fake news and hoaxes are also interconnected in topics that have a big impact on Indonesians as a whole, like politics and democracy. so we could be more selective in receiving and processing information obtained, prevent the emergence of hoaxes and hate speech circulating in the community, and instill cultural values and citizenship in the lifestyle in the millennial era (Pratiwi & Asyarotin, 2019). In the context of democracy, a Doctoral candidate at Northern

Illinois University, Firawati, argues that mass media has an important role in creating the conditions needed for civil society organizations to achieve inclusion and democracy (FNN, 2021). Here we can see the importance of valid, trustworthy news to society.

Media literacy has various definitions. Media literacy is the ability or skill to critically analyze the accuracy, credibility, or evidence of bias in content created and consumed in various media, including radio and television, the internet, and social media (Dictionary, n.d.). While other sources define media literacy based on the wording consisting of 'media' and 'literacy'. Media is a broad term and includes many forms. Media are all communication channels used to distribute information, entertainment, and data. Media is a method by which messages are distributed to audiences. Meanwhile, literacy is identifying, interpreting, understanding, and communicating (Montoya, 2018). Literacy skills include the ability to read, write, speak, and listen effectively. In other words, media literacy is the ability to understand the information presented to us and respond accordingly. We need to seek to understand how all forms of media are created and consumed (Fran, 2021).

Based on the situation above, this study attempts to review the literature in the last 5 years from 2016 to 2021 to answer the question of how the development of media literacy in Indonesia is based on publications related to the topic of media literacy itself. The results show that there are various problems associated with these three keywords. In addition, there are 6 clusters or categories that are often associated with these keywords which are discussed in full in the discussion section.

Method

A qualitative method is used in this study, with emphasis on literature review using some programs, including *Publish or Perish* and *Vos Viewer* for data visualization. The data for the research is based on the publications from Google Scholar in the span of 5 years (2016-2021) to get the current trend, with the keywords “media literacy”, “media literacy”, and “Indonesia”. The results from the most suitable 1000 publications are processed in *Vos Viewer* to create a data visualization that can elaborate the development (and the dynamics) of the focus of research on media literacy focus in Indonesia each year from 2016 to 2021. Some keywords that represent the trend/focus of the research in that year have appeared such as “demokrasi”, “Pancasila”, “hoak”, “politik”, “Islam”, “partai”, “pilkada”, “sistem”, and of course, “covid”. From the result of data visualization by *Vos Viewer*, we can deduct the development of media literacy focus in Indonesia, which is still not great. This argument is based on the indication that the research related to media literacy (as well as the focus represented by the keywords on it) is mostly tied to the current issues that happened in Indonesia. While it is significantly coherent and can represent the events that happen in a certain year in Indonesia, it also indicates that the media literacy focus in Indonesia is still heavily influenced by the current situation/real-time events. This can halt the development of media literacy in Indonesia, as the research is based on popular events.

From the 1000 publications, the setting in the *VosViewer* program can be adjusted to refine the data that is visualized. In this step, the minimum occurrences of a term contained within are determined to be 5, meaning that it needs 5 times of occurrence for a word in an article to be included as a term that is used in this study.

There are 5823 terms with certain repetition found among the publications, but only 92 meet the threshold.

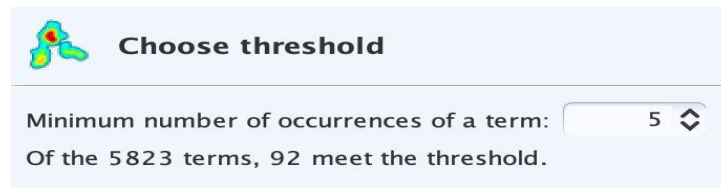


Figure 1. Threshold of occurrences of terms used

The next step is to determine the terms/keywords that are used, by setting the percentage of the most relevant words. In this study, the default setting is used, applying 60% of the most relevant terms to be included.

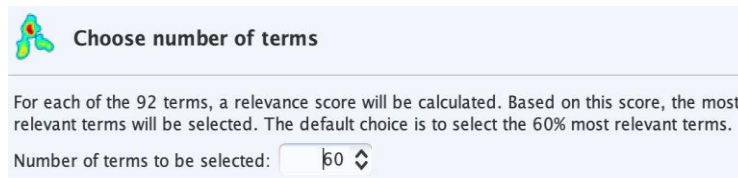


Figure 2. The number of terms to be selected in the study

From 60 terms/keywords, there are some words like the conjunction, irrelevant, or non-impactful words (for example: “and”, “this”, or “yesterday”). These words are removed from the selection, providing the research with the most significant terms that are mapped.

Findings and Discussion

After processing the data, a visualization that shows the networking interconnection between the terms related to Media Literacy in Indonesia can be seen as follows:

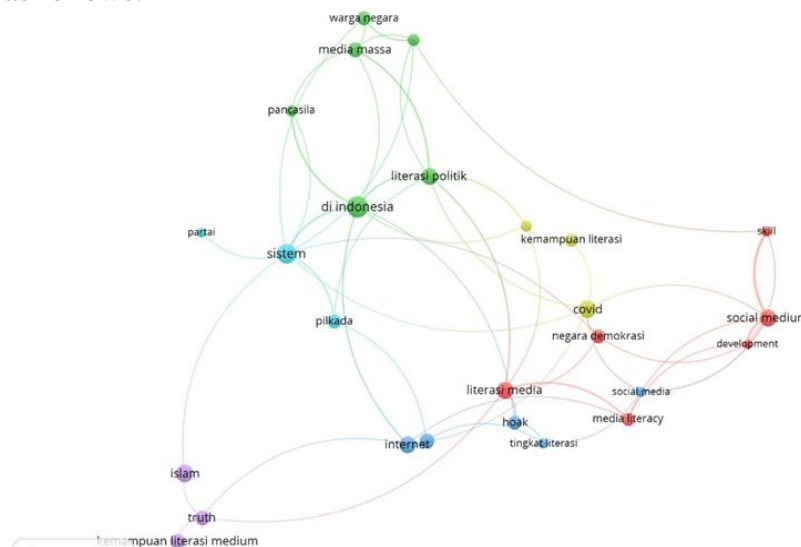


Figure 3. Network visualization of terms derived from publications related to the development of media literacy focus in Indonesia from 2016 to 2021

Komunikasi dan Informatika (Ministry for Communication and Informatics) to increase the digital (and media) literacy of Indonesian citizen by ensuring four pillars of digital literacy (digital ethics, digital culture, digital skills, and digital safety) to be taught and understood by Indonesians (Direktorat Jenderal Aplikasi Informatika Kominfo RI., 2021).

Last but not least, a density map based on the data is also available to show the relevance based on how often a specific keyword occurs in the publication related to the topic of media literacy in Indonesia. The density map can also be used to analyze what kind of factors affected the development of media literacy in Indonesia throughout the years, the density map can be observed as follows:

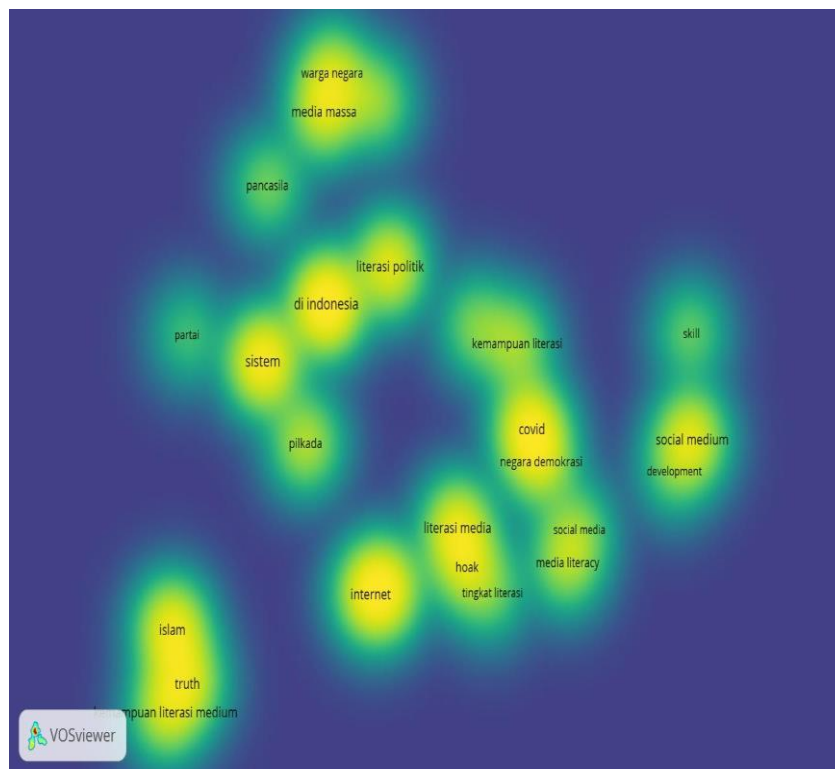


Figure 5. Density visualization of terms derived from publications related to media literacy in Indonesia 2016-2021

It can be observed from the maps, it can be observed that there are several keywords that are related/connected more compared to the other. These groups of keywords can be identified as clusters of terms that represent the findings and also can be used to generate conclusions in this research. The terms are grouped into 6 clusters:

Table 1. Clusters of most relevant terms from publications related with Media Literacy in Indonesia 2016-2021

No	Clusters	Keywords
1	Cluster 1	Development, literacy media, media literacy, negara demokrasi, skill, social medium
2	Cluster 2	Di Indonesia, literasi politik, media massa, Pancasila, partisipasi, warga negara

No	Clusters	Keywords
3	Cluster 3	Hoak, internet, media baru, social media, tingkat literasi
4	Cluster 4	Covid, era digital, kemampuan literasi
5	Cluster 5	Islam, kemampuan literasi, truth
6	Cluster 6	Partai, pilkada, sistem

From the clusters generated by VosViewer, it can be understood that Cluster 1 consists of terms that discuss the need for media literacy itself. Interestingly, in this cluster, the term “negara demokrasi” also appears. This can be indicated as a sign that the needs for media literacy correspond directly to the status of a country that applies democracy to run the government. It is also should be noted that the term “skill” and “social medium” also appears, meaning that media literacy is not only a mere object of study, but can be treated as a human-based capability that can be taught and trained so that the quality of human resources itself whilst interconnecting with each other, can be improved (Luthfia et al., n.d.). Cluster 2 consists of terms that have a strong connection with politics, ideology, and also the significance of mass media towards the political participation of the citizens in Indonesia (Austin et al., 2021). Cluster 3, meanwhile, focuses on terms that are related to New Media, hoaxes, the use of Internet social media, and how it can affect the literacy level of the citizens in Indonesia (Luo et al., 2022; McNulty, 2021). Cluster 4 contains COVID and how being in the digital era helped citizens of Indonesia resist it (Mona & Kawilarang, 2022). Cluster 5 consists of terms that may also indicate the existence of identity issues related to media literacy in Indonesia, as it contains “Islam”, and interestingly it also shows “truth” and the literacy capability of the society. Last but not least, Cluster 6 mainly shows terms that have a correlation with the election, as the keywords that appear are “partai”, “pilkada”, and “sistem”, which also prove that somehow the level of media literacy in Indonesia is heavily driven by the ongoing event in a certain period (Ashley et al., 2017).

It should also become a certain attention from the network maps that some of the words are interconnected more compared to others. From the result, it can be observed that “literasi politik”, “literasi media”, “di Indonesia”, “covid”, “social medium”, and “sistem” are the most highlighted terms, especially on the network and the density map. “literasi politik”, “literasi media”, “di Indonesia”, “covid”, “social medium”, and “sistem” appear to hold more significance in the network map. This condition also means those words are mentioned and referred to more than the other words in the study. Here, some explanations can be generated based on each term to provide a better understanding of the factors that affect media literacy in Indonesia during 2016-2021. Starting from the term ‘literasi politik’, ‘literasi media’, and ‘sistem’, represents the situation during the campaign for the presidential election of Indonesia in 2019. All parties tried to build an image that makes citizens choose them in the election by spreading the campaign in all media such as TV, newspaper, social media, etc. A direct election system is a form of democracy where people can directly choose their respective choices, starting from members of the DPRD, DPR to the president. Through massive publications in

various media, it is hoped that the public is able to recognize the candidate who is favored and increase the possibility of being elected by the community.

Meanwhile, 'di Indonesia' and 'COVID' show the situation of Indonesia during the pandemic and how to support the national economy while saving the people from the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Indonesia trying to strive to the virus by vaccine and for the economic side by stimuli such as Tax Incentives, stimulus Kredit Usaha Rakyat (KUR), and stimulus for Usaha Mikro Kecil Menengah (UMKM) (Finaka, 2021). And the next 'social medium' shows that technology in Indonesia rises rapidly, especially for social media Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tiktok, Whatsapp, and Telegram has changed the lifestyle of people in Indonesia. During the pandemic, social media is very powerful to spread information and the best way to speak louder about the opinion and aspirations of the public. The relationship between these words shows how media literacy in Indonesia is heavily driven by the ongoing events in a certain period of time.

Conclusion

Based on the literature study about Media Literacy in Indonesia 2016-2021, there are conclusions that can be deduced, especially based on the question of "how is the development of media literacy in Indonesia based on publications related to the topic of media literacy?". The most observable conclusion from this study is that media literacy in Indonesia is still not independent as it comes with a certain focus/trend that happens in the country. Such development of media literacy in Indonesia is also determined by the development of a certain event/situation that is happening. While the media literacy focus is synchronized with the real-time condition in Indonesia, it also shows that the level of knowledge from the Indonesian people is heavily driven by the media, and indicates room for growth for the people themselves to learn and understand better about media literacy despite the current issues. It is worth the wait for the day to come when the level of media literacy of Indonesian people is high, and people can think more critically for the sake of the development of the nation. However, as this study is mainly a literature study, the conclusion still needs to be tested and proven by more specific and concentrated research on the desired topic. The results from this study can become a preliminary discussion of more complex research or a supporting element towards the prior knowledge for the researchers before indulging in deeper research about media literacy in Indonesia.

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**EVERYDAY STORIES AND UNTOLD TALES OF INFERTILITY:
A LITERARY EXAMINATION OF AYOBAMI ADEBAYO'S
*STAY WITH ME***

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<https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i2.6802>

received 9 July 2023; accepted 1 March 2024

Abstract

Matters concerning infertility mostly hinge on societal narratives. This has led to a lot of misconceptions which have had great influence in the lives of people and society at large. Several literary works have given space to issues of infertility and have highlighted pertinent issues that have received too much or little attention from society. In this paper, using a qualitative methodological approach, disturbing discoveries concerning how the issue of infertility is handled in African societies have been made from Ayobami Adebayo's *Stay With Me*, highlighting the fact that all accusing eyes turn to the woman when the home is void of a child and the position men assume in such instances. Leaning on the theories of feminism and masculinity, this study seeks to expose the neglected aspect of infertility by highlighting the gaps in the ways infertility issues are handled in African societies and contributing to the knowledge bank of academia.

Keywords: African societies, feminism, infertility, masculinity

Introduction

Infertility is a topic that is mostly explored and interrogated in African literary works yet begs for a conversation in African society. Yeboah, Otoo, Gyimah Manu and Freitas (2022) assert that novelists “write to reflect the socio-politico cultural conditions of their societies” (p. 206) hence “the need for corrective measures” (Yeboah et al., 2023, p. 8) on issues that are mostly glossed over. There have been many misconceptions about infertility which have led to the oppression of the female gender in African societies and our literary works bear testament to this fact. Received view has it that in ancient mythology, the colour green represents fertility of the earth and women. The earth is addressed with the pronoun, “she/her” because it is believed that she mothers mankind and all living things. From this, a conclusion can be drawn that society, since time immemorial, has made childbirth and fertility a women's issue without paying attention to other factors. For instance, when a piece of land does not produce vegetation, it is assumed to be barren. Environmental



factors and, in some cases, conditions of the seeds planted on them are ignored. The same applies to women after they have been married for a year or more and are unable to give birth. Their partners rarely suffer any blame because it has become women's duty to carry all of it since childbirth is considered the primary responsibility of women. Thus, all issues of fertility—especially, the negative ones—are traced back to them. Harrison (1991) in *The Libation Bearers* opines that “Yea, summon Earth, who brings all things to life and rears, and takes again into her womb” (p. 45). Just as Earth has been addressed with its responsibility of reproducing, it would have to bear the consequence of its reverse outcome. The same thing happens to every woman. Clearly, what the world thinks is that the one who carries the womb automatically deals with all issues of infertility. Barnes (2014), a medical practitioner, in her article about why women bear the brunt of childbirth, opines that men are blurred out of the picture when infertility crises arise. She states:

As I discovered during the research for my book, *Conceiving Masculinity: Male Infertility, Medicine, and Identity*, men are rendered invisible in our collective imagination when it comes to reproduction. When a woman can't get pregnant, she assumes something is wrong with her. How could she not when so many books and websites about conceiving are geared toward women? (p. 1).

From Barnes' perspective, women are made to feel inadequate for not being able to conceive and this truth has been well established. No one considers the men—not the women, not society. Male infertility sounds so strange to the African community whenever it is mentioned. It always almost appears to seem impossible to them. Barnes (2014) further discusses how society plays a role in making it seem unheard of to associate a man with infertility, “as other scholars have pointed out, when a woman gets pregnant, the man gets the credit. When a woman can't get pregnant, it's her fault. We live in a culture dedicated to celebrating male virility and protecting masculinity.” (p. 1). Here, Barnes explicitly states the inarguable truth about infertility and the extent to which it has been ingrained in the minds of people making it possible to be deemed as a “culture”. This gives credence to the assertion that “in Africa, childbirth is recognized as a woman's number one duty” and not particularly the man's. (Yeboah, 2012, p. 24).

After pointing this out, Barnes reveals that women and men alike can have infertility problems. In the medical world, she considers this ailment common in both genders. However, she indicates that women are always in the spotlight because society has made it so. She posits that:

Cultural assumptions about women's reproductive responsibilities have shaped medical science and the medical system. Although male infertility is as common as female infertility, we live in a world where there are more practitioners and technologies focused on treating women than assessing and treating men. (p. 1).

Hence, Barnes gives further proof of the pressure that women are subjected to, directly or indirectly when childbirth is concerned. The injustice meted out to women when they are unable to conceive is heartbreaking. More so, the fact that

science, the only body that could have served as their place of refuge and a haven to free them of society's bondage, has taken comfort in the dictates and expectations of society makes it a losing battle.

In addition, Greil et al. (2010) posit that in developing countries, a category in which most African countries fit in, “biomedical interpretations of infertility coexist...with traditional interpretations”. (p. 152). Much thought is not given to women: whether their bodies are strong enough to house a baby or not, whether their living conditions permit that they reproduce, and whether giving birth is something they are passionate about or not. All that is expected is for them to have a baby pushed out of their womb and since men are not naturally known to possess this ability, women have to shoulder this task all by themselves. After all, the notable duty of a woman as required by society was stated by Justice Bradley in *Bradwell v. Illinois* (1873) that the “paramount destiny and mission of woman are to fulfill the noble and benign offices of wife and mother.” Society, mostly women, does not see beyond the act of bringing forth a child from one's womb. They do not consider any other factor that contributes to childbearing. They are mostly concerned about getting a baby to grow inside their womb because that is what society expects of them as partial fulfillment of their rights to being women. This false notion has succeeded in leaving innocent women depressed and stigmatized because they are considered to be a “waste” and a disgrace to their families and society. The men's role in childbirth often goes unnoticed. It is sometimes assumed that in a marriage where couples deal with the delay in having children, the men are blameless and the fault is somehow the women's doing. In some extreme situations, the existence of the woman is seen to impede the man's life and she is sacked or treated as a disease, an omen even. The possibility that men can also be infertile is mostly overlooked as has been addressed in Adebayo's *Stay with Me*. This recent study, therefore, seeks to examine how issues of infertility and their setbacks are laid at the doors of only women without any recourse to men.

Theoretical framework ***Feminism and masculinity***

Gamble (2001) posits that over the years feminism has been an evolving concept with different approaches. This explains the many misconceptions that have arisen as a result of the movement. Aside from the uneasiness associated with these misconceptions, in an interview with *Bust Magazine*, Bell Hooks on *The State of Feminism And How To Move Forward Under Trump* acknowledges that the society we find ourselves in does not favor feminism because patriarchy is what society knows, what society is used to and they are not ready to embrace the change that feminism advocates for, thus, the need to be interrogated.

It can, therefore, be seen that feminists endeavor to break what society considers to be the norm in patriarchal societies, focusing on the marginalized and subjugated women by becoming a voice for them. Patu and Antje Shrupp (2017) posit that “depending on the region of the world, the prevailing ideology, and the era: women may have, for example, fewer rights, less money, minimal experience of public life, and limited access to positions of power. Or—in emancipated societies—if they are considered to be ‘equals,’ they are still measured against a male norm.” (p. 35). Hence, feminism is targeted at breaking or dismantling the patriarchy. The aim of the “feminist voice” is to break down the patriarchal instincts

in society and free women from being continually subjected to being second fiddle to the man. Thus, literary works that have been written—mostly by female writers—in line with the feminist ideology give attention to women and address issues that concern women. Nasta (1991) confirms the importance of these female writings:

The postcolonial woman writer is not only involved in making herself heard, in changing the architecture of male-centered ideologies and language, or in discovering new forms of language to express experience, but she has also to subvert and demythologize indigenous male writings and traditions that seek to label her. (p. 15)

The postcolonial woman writer also elevates women by placing them shoulder to shoulder with the male gender, who is mostly presented as society's prized possession. Female African writers therefore create a world where the female gender is not governed by prejudiced dogmas made by men to favour men. They create a world where the female gender is given the liberty to make rules and live by those rules without being influenced by any societal inclinations.

Semenya (2001) on *Joys of Motherhood*, asserts that “Emecheta strives to sensitize the readers to the exploitation of mothers. With increased mastery of structure and irony, she describes the humiliation and small joys of a poor, unappreciated Ibo mother. Emecheta analyses the state of mind of women valued for biology rather than their individuality.” (p. 6). Also, Yongue (1996) writes a review of Emecheta's works concerning this:

Like the staple of the Nigerian diet, the yam, which females of a household spend many hours of their lives pounding vigorously into meals for the families, the woman is pounded by the culture into a distortion of her womanly and differentiated self and, like the yam. Ironically, becomes an inadequate source of nourishment for herself and her family. In the ordinary Nigerian household, it is, of course, the mother who teaches the skill of yam pounding to her daughters; so in Emecheta's continuing irony, it is the mother who grooms daughters for this other substantive truth. She instructs her daughters how to pound themselves into a smooth pap, their bodies—the feminine principle embodied—served up to and devoured by patriarchy. (p. 76)

From Yongue's review, it is evident that female writers, particularly Emecheta, write to accurately portray the happenings around them. Female writers show how subjugated women are and provide them ways of escapism since unlike the male writers, they can relate to the issues that affect these women. Adebayo heavily relies on feminism and masculinity to educate the patriarchal African societies about the inhumane acts meted out to women.

However, we simply cannot deny the effect that these strong patriarchal sentiments in society have on men themselves. For some time now, viewing patriarchy from the feminist lens has almost presented it as an advantageous means for men to dominate and glorify themselves on a pedestal reserved for them as a birthright—a prerogative Moril (1985) describes as “men's unearned privileges” (p. 11). A keen observation and interrogation into the received perspective of the

widely accepted standard for men has revealed horrendous consequences that the elevated perception of men's excellence and state have had them. This has birthed an emerging concept, masculinity, which seeks to question the power, the rules, and the ideas that seem to be the embodiment of manliness.

Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). This suggests that society plays a crucial role in defining what must or must not be considered as the makeup of a man. These definitions are mostly culture-centered and not biologically oriented. Because of these rigid categories and expectations that society has directly or indirectly stipulated for the male gender, individuals who do not fit or meet certain criteria find it hard to embrace their deficits and accept themselves as they are. This is reaffirmed by (Clatterbaugh, 1997; Whitehead & Barrett, 2001) that masculinity and male behaviors are not the simple product of genetic coding or biological predispositions. All societies have cultural accounts of gender. In African societies, males are burdened with the task of being breadwinners, sterile, strong, and assertive to have the befitting masculine qualities to assume their positions as the "heads" of the female gender. Hence any trait that cannot be found in the ideal traditional masculine view forces men in African society to exhibit traits that are mostly toxic to the wellbeing of women and even detrimental to themselves as a means of defending their manliness and letting go of their frustration. Evidence of troubles men are made to face due to societal principles governing their masculinity will be examined in Adebayo's *Stay With Me* and how they contribute to the instability at home and infertility as a woman's issue would be revealed.

Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach. Babbie (2005) as quoted by Yeboah et al. (2022) defines this approach as one that allows researchers to critically observe and examine data and offer a detailed description of it. Also, the paper focused on finding the "why" rather than the "what" of the social phenomenon that motivates the study. The novel, *Stay with Me* (2017) by Ayobami Adebayo was the primary source of data for this paper. Other significant information was gathered from the internet, academic journals, and articles that relate to the focus of the study. In the analysis of the concept of infertility, feminism, and masculinity theories have been employed to further situate the soundness of the arguments.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Synopsis of "Stay with Me"

Goyal (2017) succinctly describes the novel, *Stay With Me* (2017) as "a mother's plea for her dying children, and a husband's plea for a dying marriage." (p. 1). The two main characters, Yejide and Akin, experience a sense of longing as both of them plead with their loved ones to remain by their sides despite the many complications in their lives. The beautiful marriage of a middle-class couple with reputable occupations ends in shambles after enduring four years of childlessness.

After being forced to take extreme measures to bring forth children, Yejide and Akin get separated after the intrusion of the seemingly well-meaning women, societal pressure, and norms. Akin is indifferent about their childless situation but society forces him to make tough decisions just to make sure his family's lineage is preserved.

Discussion

Infertility and patriarchy in the family and society

In *Stay With Me*, Adebayo remarkably tackles the issue of fertility and patriarchy by leaving no stone unturned in her quest to bring the attention of society to a very crucial factor that is rarely considered when the question of infertility is raised in childless homes. Adebayo breaks the status quo by presenting a male character, Akin as infertile in her novel, *Stay With Me*. She brilliantly exposes how biased society is about fertility and condemns the unjust treatment women are subjected to. This twist in the everyday stories about childlessness is revealed in the latter part of the novel. Before readers dive deeper into the story to find out the root cause of the dilemma that destroys the undiluted love between Akin and Yejide, Adebayo skilfully exposes the ignorance of society with the use of plot in her novel. She arranges the sequence of events in a way that takes us from the known to the unknown or better put, the overlooked aspect of fertility.

Right from the first chapter, Adebayo introduces Yejide as a barren woman and mentions how unperturbed Yejide's audience is when she tells them about the unjust aspect of her story. No one is interested in the life of a woman who has been neglected by her husband because she is unable to conceive after some years of marriage. Society finds it normal for a childless woman to be ignored so Yejide's account of her story gets accepted without questioning or any show of concern, "I only tell a slice of the story: I was barren and my husband took another wife. No one has ever probed further, so I've never told them about my children." (p. 10). Unlike the stories of infertile men, stories of infertile women are so familiar that they do not arouse any kind of curiosity. This is so because society finds it strange to hear of a man who cannot reproduce and mainly men who have complications with reproduction are barely talked about and made known. If Yejide had told her audience about how she had left her marriage after finding out about her husband's inability to reproduce, a lot of questions would have been asked. Just like how Yejide's children are hidden from her audience, Adebayo reserves the startling twist of her story in the latter part of the novel. Akin's infertility only gets discovered when one reads further and does not conclude with the knowledge they gain from the first part of the novel. With this, Adebayo appears to send across a message that women always get tagged as infertile because no one makes an effort to dig deeper to find the source of childlessness in many homes. When Yejide finally sets off to find answers, she says, "The road stretches before us, shrouded in a darkness transitioning into dawn..." (p. 12). Adebayo employs such a figurative expression to show how bittersweet the quest to know and find out more about a situation can be. Though the path of discovery is not promising, "shrouded in a darkness..." its result can be enlightening and positive just like the beginning of "dawn". This is a reflection of the journey Adebayo's plot in her novel, *Stay With Me* takes readers.

Adebayo explicitly illustrates how easily women voluntarily take up the blame for childlessness. When Yejide's stepmother and Akin's uncle come to their

home without notice of Yejide, she admits that she expects a conversation that will direct all the blame for their childless state to her, she says, “I had expected them to talk about my childlessness.”(p. 16). Her acceptance of bearing the fault for a problem that involved Akin shows how women are socialized to think of themselves as culprits in a home without children, victimizing their husbands by putting their virility in doubt. The careful use of the personal pronoun “my” completely exonerates Akin of any blame and puts all of it on Yejide. She recounts how keen she was in being at the receiving end of the blame every time they visited, she narrates, “I was ready to listen to them to tell me I must do something about my situation.”(p. 17). Their childless state is regarded as a situation that belonged to her, with her husband's role comfortably neglected since society directly or indirectly protects men to keep their superiority on the pedestal that has been reserved for them. This is seen in the different treatments given to Yejide and Akin. When discussions about their condition are held, their in-laws’ anger is seen to be one-sided. This is seen when Yejide recounts, “A discussion consisted of them talking and me listening while on my knees. At those times, Akin pretended to listen and jot notes while doing his to-do list for the next day.”(p. 14). Although it takes two to bear children, Yejide has to kneel as a form of punishment for not giving birth while Akin enjoys the luxury of writing “his to-do list”. Yejide always has to be the one to bear all the pain while Akin escapes from the ordeal unscathed. She laments, “My husband often planned his entire week during such visits, while I got terrible cramps in my legs.”(p. 15). The distinction in the treatment given to them is because one is seen as the source of the problem and the other, as the victim. This is why Yeboah (2012) asserts that “patriarchy cheats women and reduces them to second-fiddle status.” (p. 42). Here, the role of the man in childbirth is completely ignored.

After Yejide comes to terms with the fact that she will always be the one to be accused, she fully equips herself to face the harsh treatment she suffers. She does not fight it since society does not provide her with an option, she only makes sure it is bearable enough to condone. She recounts:

I was armed with millions of smiles. Apologetic smiles, pity-me smiles, I-look-unto-God smiles – name all the fake smiles needed to get through an afternoon with a group of people who claim to want the best for you while poking at your open sore with a stick – and I had them ready. I was ready to hear them tell me I must do something about my situation. I expected to hear about a new pastor I could visit; a new mountain where I could go to pray; or an old herbalist in a remote village or town whom I could consult. I was armed with smiles for my lips, an appropriate sheen of tears for my eyes, and sniffles for my nose. I was prepared to lock up my hairdressing salon throughout the coming week and go in search of a miracle with my mother-in-law in tow (p. 15).

From the excerpt above, it can be seen that Adebayo uses the singular pronoun, “I” whenever she writes about the discomfort Yejide bears for being childless. There is no mention of Akin in this context. This is a clear indication that the issue of infertility is never associated with the male gender. It is always the woman whose fertility is questioned in such situations. Therefore, Yejide devises

several coping mechanisms to soothe her pain. Adebayo uses the hyperbolic statement, “millions of smiles” to convey the numerous strategies Yejide relies on to help her deal with her pain: I was armed with millions of smiles. Apologetic smiles, pity-me smiles, I-look unto-God smiles...” These strategies are well accentuated to throw light on the plight of such women since they are always the ones who bear the blame and are tasked to seek healing. By comparing Yejide’s dilemma to an “open sore”, Yejide makes glaring the vulnerability and helplessness of women in her situation. It also shows how society seems unconcerned about the plight of such women. She is the one who has to give everything up including her dignity to try all sorts of alternatives, which in Yejide's case are visits to “a new pastor”, a “new mountain” or “an old herbalist”, just to make sure that she gets pregnant. Also, she showed no anger, hurt, or pain when questioned and advised on her childless state, she rather adopted a defense mechanism of smiling through it all. The use of the word “armed” reveals how Yejide weaponized smiles to fight and hide her despair in the face of unkind interrogations.

More often than not, women who find out that their husbands are responsible for their many years of childlessness tend to protect the man. They do not subject them to the mockery and rebuke of society as a way of paying them in their coin. They do not feel the need to prove their innocence to society. Most of such women keep quiet about the man's weakness and treat their knowledge about it as though it is a precious treasure. Adebayo uses Yejide and Funmi to suggest some of the reasons for women's choice in making the hard decision not to spread the news that may end them being acquitted of the charge of being responsible for childlessness in their homes. After finding out about Akin's situation, Yejide silently battles the anger boiling in her and chooses to channel her energy into taking care of Sesan. She recounts, “His deception was cutting me open, but I did not have time to deal with it or confront him. Susan needed me, needed everything in me that could keep him alive. Fighting Akin over Dotun's revelations would have been an unnecessary waste of energy.”(p. 196). Here, Adebayo depicts how women view the fight to expose the unfair treatment meted on them: a “waste of energy”. Even though the pain Yejide feels is extremely intense like the use of a sharp object on her skin, “cutting me open”, she decides to silently endure it. Also, Adebayo’s use of the expression “deception was cutting me open” paints a gory image that makes readers get a clear picture of Yejide’s pain and the emotional damage women suffer in cases like this.

Also, Adebayo implies the reluctance of women to reveal the flaws of their partners as a personal decision using Funmi's point of view. Funmi, the second wife of Akin, keeps quiet about Akin's condition although he fails in deceiving her as he did to Yejide. She confronts Akin, “Do you think I’m a fool? Your lies and the fake nonsense you’ve been doing in bed, you think I don’t know? Is it because I’ve not decided to expose you?”(p. 260). She rightly detects the lies Akin says to cover up his impotence, but she plays along with it till she cannot take it any longer when Yejide gets pregnant and gives birth to Olamide. The successive use of rhetorical questions does not only interrogate Akin or depict Funmi's absolute knowledge of Akin's problems and her personal decision to keep them private but also, interrogate society at large—a society that seems to shelve the inadequacies of men but oppresses women with its many discriminatory prescriptions. However, Funmi dies shortly after her confrontation with Akin. Akin narrates her death as an accident,

“Besides, I’d never intended to kill Funmi.”(p. 260). However, Funmi meets her untimely death because Akin tries to stop her from talking about his flaws. He recollects the manner of her death:

I’ve never been sure if Funmi whispered those words or shouted them. But that night it sounded as though the words were being bellowed, it felt although they were echoing through every room in the house. She’d already let go of my trousers when I turned around to cover her mouth with my hand. And my palm did touch her face, cover her mouth for a fleeting moment before she staggered, fell backward, and tumbled down the stairs (pp. 206-207).

Adebayo presents Funmi's death as metaphoric by using it to establish another reason for women's fear of exposing the truth about their childless state. The patriarchal system is designed by men and for men so it finds a way to repress or prevent the progress of any entity that becomes a threat to its firmly established rules. Akin, an instrument of patriarchy, covers Funmi's mouth to discourage her from speaking about his impotence. This indicates the conscious effort put in place to make the woman voiceless in order not to make known the rot in the system, “...she staggered, fell backward, and tumbled down the stairs.” Adebayo's use of picturesque words with double syllables like “staggered”, “backwards” and “tumbled” forces the reader’s attention to be drawn to various actions that happen before Funmi's death. Her deliberate choice of words corresponds to the calculated steps of society to kill the fighting spirit of the female gender from voicing the truth that impedes their freedom. Even when the system does not directly thwart the efforts of the woman, it indirectly crashes her no matter how hard she tries to get a voice that publicizes her grievances, “And my palm did touch her face, cover her mouth for a fleeting moment”. It only takes “a fleeting moment” for the woman to be knocked down and eliminated by the patriarchal system. The man will do almost anything to keep the secret of his impotence from outsiders.

With the use of dialogue, Adebayo also portrays the kind of attitude shown towards women who are unable to conceive. The spoken lines of Moomi and Yejide add context to the narrative by establishing the tone used when issues of infertility are under discussion. When Yejide visits Moomi, how Moomi speaks to her makes it obvious who Moomi thinks is delaying the birth of her grandchildren. She gives Yejide cold shoulders because, to her, her son does not have a child due to Yejide's delay in conceiving one. When Yejide greets her, she replies, “Are you pregnant now?” (p. 53). Moomi’s attitude towards Yejide is indicative of how sometimes women in society perpetuate patriarchal ideals. Consequently, they frustrate the efforts of women who try to break free from this chain of oppression. Yejide does not complain about Moomi's crass behavior. She only scratches her head—an act that reflects her vulnerability and defeat. She accepts to once again carry the yoke of shame that society forces on her. Aware of Yejide's vulnerability, Moomi goes on to add more salt to injury, “Are you barren and deaf too? I say, are you pregnant? The answer is either, yes, I am pregnant or no, I still haven’t been pregnant for a single day in my life.”(p. 53). Adebayo reveals Moomi's frustration by following a rhetorical question with another in addition to the expected answers Yejide must choose from. This plainly shows how the patriarchal society channels all its

sentiments to the woman, leaving her with no escape route. Like Yejide, women are forced to admit that they are the cause of the lack of children in their homes, more painfully by their shared gender who are expected to empathize and share in their grief. They are not given a chance to think of any other justification that may factor in the man's involvement in their childless state therefore with their hands tied, they follow the dictates of society.

Yejide is blinded by her trust in society's assumption that issues of infertility concern only the woman. Hence, she does not question her husband's actions but works herself out to clear his doubts and have him accept that she is indeed pregnant. Akin's reply to the news of Yejide's false pregnancy is, "How could you cheat on me, Yejide?" (p. 66). This shows that the only conviction that Akin has to make him believe in Yejide's pregnancy is the possibility that she might have slept with another man. When he realizes that this is not so, unlike the naive Yejide, he does not consider their sexual encounters as an option. He constantly persuades Yejide to seek treatment and talks her out of her belief in being pregnant. Despite Akin's strange protests against Yejide's false pregnancy, it never occurs to her that he is so much against it because he knows he is incapable of impregnating her. Unable to see through this facade, Yejide makes up excuses for him instead of seeing the truth beneath his lies clearly showing that Akin has an underlying reason for his unwavering doubts. Even before Yejide's false pregnancy, she still burdens herself with so much to the extent of hoping for a problem when she was not finding faults with herself, "I had hoped at one point that doctors would find something wrong, anything to explain why my period still showed up every month, years after my marriage. I wished they would find something they could treat or cut. They found nothing." (p. 52). Adebayo, adequately expresses how desperate Yejide is with words like "hoped", "anything", "wished" and "nothing" which inarguably show how frustrated Yejide is about her situation. Not being able to find anything substantial to blame, she hopes for something, just anything, to go wrong. So, she could simply be at peace with her conscience and have a tangible reason for her infertility. Her desire is so strong that she "wished" for misfortune to happen to her. A misfortune that will serve as a gap that needs to be filled to rid herself of her infertility.

Through characterization, Adebayo demonstrates how the topic of infertility in the male and female gender is addressed in African societies. She delivers the everyday outcome and untold stories of infertility from the angle of both genders. Adebayo subtly touches on the deceitful nature of Akin, right from the onset of the novel. Since a very significant conflict in the story is built on this weakness, Adebayo does a good job of informing readers about how questionable and unreliable Akin's character is. Because society has made infertility a problem that belongs to only the woman, Akin—knowing very well of his inability to produce children—does not only look on as his wife takes charge of all the burden that comes with their childlessness, but he also encourages all the wrong acts done against her and the ones she allows herself to undergo. Akin's reluctance to reveal his impotence to Yejide is captured in Cowards' (1999) list of the crisis that masculinity causes in men. Unlike women, they become adamant about accepting physical and psychological flaws. Akin does not share Yejide's shock at the introduction of a new wife to their home. He agrees to the decision to take in a second wife to affirm the implied cause of childlessness in their marriage—a fault

of his wife's. When Yejide visits her mother-in-law, Moomi explicitly states the reason for getting Akin married to Funmi. She explains, "If you cannot have children, allow my son to have some with Funmi." (p. 53). This reinforces Oduyoye's (2004) assertion that in African communities, "the most important factor governing and ensuring the survival of marriages is procreation." (p. 141). Here, it can be seen that Moomi believes that Yejide is the cause of their childlessness. Akin uses Yejide's helplessness to his advantage and makes his inadequacy her problem. When Yejide asks him for support, Adebayo reveals how weak men in such situations are by depicting how societal standards rendered Akin speechless, "I turned to look at Akin in the eyes, hoping that somehow he was not part of the ambush. His gaze held mine in silent plea" (p. 19). Here, Adebayo presents the man as a helpless instrument in the hands of society who can only bend to its will in order not to incur its wrath or make him the victim of its prejudiced practices. This puts the woman in no better position other than swallowing up all the condemnation directed at her while the man goes scot-free. Uwakweh (1995) notes that indeed silence has a crippling effect on women since it incapacitates them and breaks the wings on which they can soar and search for freedom. He explains:

Silencing comprises all imposed restrictions on women's social beings, thinking, and expressions that are religiously or culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control, it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or muted female structure (p. 75).

Uwakweh's observation buttresses Opokuya's remark in *Ama Ata Aidoo's Changes: A Love Story*: "No matter what anybody says, we can't have it all. Not if you are a woman. Not yet." (p. 50). Here, Opokuya states a bitter truth to show that women are indeed defined by certain terms in society and even though there has always been a call for liberation, total liberation is yet to be attained.

Additionally, Adebayo exemplifies the habit of men keeping silent about their flaws and when Akin spends the night outside, he tells Yejide that he spent the night at the sports club. Yejide's outburst of accusatory remarks makes it difficult to have total trust in Akin. His sincerity becomes uncertain and readers' trust in him gets shaky. Yejide asks him, "You are deceiving me, *abi*?" (p. 48). This question goes unanswered. Adebayo's decision to make Akin ignore the question intensifies the doubt readers have about him. Yejide does not back down in getting the answer that would satisfy her curiosity and that of readers. She tells him, "Akin, God will deceive you, I promise you. God will deceive you the way you are deceiving me." (p. 48), but even with the extra effort to make Akin prove his innocence, Akin remains tight-lipped. Adebayo reveals his guilt in his gestures as observed by Yejide:

He shut the door and I watched him through the glass panes. He was all wrong. Instead of holding his briefcase in his hand, he gripped it to his side with his left arm so that his body tilted a little to the left, and he looked as though he was about to double over. His jacket was not slung over a shoulder but clutched in his right hand; the edge of a sleeve touched the ground and slid down the porch steps and through the grass as he walked towards his black Peugeot (p. 48)

From Yejide's observation, there is vivid evidence of Akin's guilt in his actions. The unusual attitudes he showcases, "...his body tilted to the left", "looked as though he was about to double over", and "the edge of a sleeve touched the ground" expose his faults. Again, this adds to the belief of Coward (1999) that the crises that masculinity brings to men may even lead to depression. Akin's disoriented behavior confirms Coward's assertion since the constant portrayal of his pattern could affect his mental health. Akin's masculine instincts push him to run away from his problem instead of owning up to his actions. By this, Adebayo foreshadows how Akin deals with his impotence by making him exhibit the same traits: lack of communication and cowardice whenever he faces a challenge that threatens to expose his shortcomings. He could have been bold enough to discuss his condition with his wife after both of them tested at the hospital but "Akin...came back saying the doctors had found nothing wrong with him."(p. 52). Here, Akin denies himself the possible cure of his impotence and once again, allows society to saddle the blame on Yejide because he knows as a patriarch, he will never be made a victim or considered weak.

Furthermore, Adebayo shows a vast difference in how the male and female gender is approached with issues about childbirth and fertility. Whereas Yejide's situation is freely talked about to the extent of being a topic for discussion, "Several in-laws had been in our home previously to discuss the same issue."(p. 14), Akin does not have a lot of people to discuss his impotence with. Dotun is the only person aware of his condition. When things get tough, Akin admits his helplessness and frustration, "Dotun, you are the only person I can come to. You are the only brother I have. Do you want me to call a stranger?"(p. 193). The many well-wishers who had been present in their home to discuss Yejide's infertility surprisingly become absent when Akin battles with his impotence. He tells his brother that he is the only confidante he has, "Dotun, you are the only person I can come to." Adebayo uses the words, "only" and "can" to show that Akin's options are limited. When Dotun is hesitant to be an ally to Akin's plan, he blackmails him emotionally by asking if he should seek the help of a third person. Indirectly Adebayo suggests that society does not allow the male gender to make known their shortcomings so Akin resorting to doing so means stripping himself of the respect entitled to him, especially as the elderly male child. Dotun's violent reaction to this suggestion shows how trapped he felt by that simple question, "He hit several surfaces – his thigh, the wall, the blank television screen. His burst of conscience surprised me. I hadn't expected him to jump at the idea, but somehow I'd never thought he'd be so torn, so afraid."(p. 193). Dotun, likewise Akin, becomes prey to societal expectations and principles. Although Dotun seems tough on the outside, he could not muster the courage to accept the truth. Besides being "so torn" and "so afraid", society expects that he gets himself together and "be a man"(p. 191) just as Dr. Bello kept reminding Akin to compose himself so that he does not act in a way that does not meet the societal standards of his gender. This brings into focus societal disapproval of non-hegemonic masculinity that does not adhere to the strict tenets of masculinity. Also, Adebayo uses the adverb, "so" to modify "torn" and "afraid" to show the extent of Dotun's frustration and fear which are further highlighted in his violent actions. Again, Adebayo vividly portrays the difference in society's attitude toward handling male infertility with the lone struggle of Akin in dealing with his impotence. Comparing the number of people involved in Yejide's struggle, Akin can relatively

be termed as a loner in his battle against infertility. Akin hides his health condition from everyone including his wife and mother although he is aware of the efforts both women are making to make sure a child is born in his home. Here, Adebayo showcases the concept of masculinity in Akin's character—“a loathing for anything weak” as a repressive ideology. When Dr Bello discovers that Sesan is not Akin's child, he does not admit his knowledge of the truth. He decides to put up a show in front of the doctor to escape the shame of acknowledging his flaw—even to the doctor who is supposed to be a trusted person as far as issues concerning one's health are concerned: “I made sure I seemed angry enough to Dr Bello. Behaved the way I imagined a man would when discovering that a child wasn't his. I punched a wall, yelled and slammed the door as I left the office.” (p. 191). Through the use of Akin's diction, Adebayo shows that Akin did not express his true emotions upon hearing the news. Expressions like, “seemed angry enough” and “behaved the way I imagined” show that all the actions Akin took: “punched a wall”, “yelled” and “slammed a door” were merely to impress the doctor and validate his manliness. Akin makes a conscious effort to protect his “dignity” and manliness.

Since society leaves no room for the virility of a man to be questioned, it silences him and prevents him from admitting his shortcomings. When Funmi tries to get the truth out of Akin, he does not see the need to confide in his second wife. Akin narrates, “Whether I was too drunk to respond or I trusted that my silence would be interpreted in a way that favored me, I can no longer tell for sure.”(p. 260). Adebayo implies that either the power drunkenness of men—due to the position society bestows on them as a birthright—makes them determined not to reveal their scars or they trust that their “silence would be interpreted in a way” that favors them is the reason for keeping mute about their struggles. She shows her ineptitude in taking a stance through Akin's confusion, “I can no longer tell for sure.” The male gender is treated with the greatest respect in society, so for fear of being regarded as less of a man and treated with impunity, most men turn into cowards when it becomes necessary to solicit society's help at their lowest points in life. Whether this is the reason for men's failure to acknowledge their faults or beneath everything lies an ego that cannot be broken, Adebayo leaves the answer to readers to decide. However, a hint of the underlying cause for such behaviors in men can be traced to an instance in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, where Okonkwo kills Ikemefuna in order not to appear weak in the patriarchal society he finds himself. Achebe explicitly states men's refusal to admit any sort of weakness when he writes about the events leading to Ikemefuna's death: “Okonkwo looked away. He heard a blow...Dazed with fear, Okonkwo drew his machete and cut him down. He was afraid of being thought weak.”(p. 49). This attests to the conviction that men are forced to act in a particular way for their manliness to be endorsed by society. For fear of being seen as less of a man, they are willing to exhibit all sorts of toxic traits to be in the good books of society.

Meanwhile, throughout Yejide's narration, it is evident that the struggles of the female gender to procreate is not a hidden agenda. Rather, it is supported and endorsed by society because of its expectations of women. Moomi takes her daughter-in-law to all sorts of places and offers her encouragement for her to triumph over her fight against barrenness. Moomi acts as Yejide's pillar of strength throughout the drastic steps she takes to get a child. When all efforts to help Yejide go down the drain, Moomi chides Yejide by comparing her stomach to the side of

a wall. She lifts Yejide's blouse and says "flat as the side of a wall...you have had my son between your legs for two more months and still your stomach is flat." (p. 54). Moomi's comparison of Yejide's stomach to "the side of a wall" is to taunt her with the fruitless nature of her womb. Moomi freely makes such an insulting remark about Yejide's body to her face without flowery or sugar-coated words because society allows infertile women to face the consequences of their inability to reproduce. This is a typical example of women actively involved in promoting the institute of patriarchy. Akin's words of consolation to Yejide, when he accepts to take a second wife, show that the woman is always tortured when married couples delay giving birth. He tells her, "Trust me, it's for the best. My mother won't pressure you for children anymore." (p. 24). This stems from the fact that when a woman appears to be infertile, her situation no longer becomes personal. It becomes the talk of her family, that of her husband, and society at large. The man, on the contrary, does not have to deal with such circumstances since he is protected by society. When Akin first tells his brother that he has never had an erection, his reaction shows his denial of the truth: "At first he laughed, but realizing I was serious he scratched the back of his head and told me not to worry because it would happen when I met the right girl." (p. 279). Dotun's first reaction was to laugh because he doubted that Akin could have such a condition. After realizing that it is indeed true, he ends up comforting Akin by giving him hope to expect a change in his situation. Dotun does not make Akin feel less of a man or even bother about his condition. This is what society does for the man; however, an entirely different scenario is played out when it is the woman. This confirms the assertion made by Siguake (2015) that "an infertile woman is treated shamefully, like someone with leprosy." (p. 1).

In *Stay With Me*, everyday stories versus untold tales of infertility are fully addressed by Ayobami Adebayo, a renowned African female writer, who passionately handles the issues that society ignores or pays too much attention to, thereby resulting in a lot of problems in the lives of people, particularly women. This justifies Ogundipe-Leslie's (1994) assertion that "the woman writer has two responsibilities: first to tell about being a woman; secondly, to describe reality from a woman's view, a woman's perspective." (p. 205).

Using literature as a vehicle to transport pertinent issues, Ayobami Adebayo adequately discusses the issues of infertility, paying attention especially to how women are at the receiving end of all unfortunate instances as buttressed by an assertion made by Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) that "It seems that the woman is seen as subordinated in her very essence to the man, in quality and specifically in marriage, which is a major site of women's subordination; her status and roles being multifaceted and varied outside marriage" (p. 209).

Conclusion

Misconceptions about fertility are prevalent to the extent that a lot of literary discourse regarding this topic has been had, yet there is so much to say that this concept cannot be ruled off as an overworked area in the academic field. Consequently, this paper has examined some of the truths and delusions of infertility. Infertility is not only a woman's problem and should never be considered as such. The various beliefs underlying the misconception that a woman is the sole reason for the delay in childbirth or vice versa have been assessed and concluded

to be flawed. Also, although women are mostly at the receiving end of harsh treatments caused by infertility, men suffer silent battles in their bid to escape from societal pressure to fit into the conventional definition of manliness. In Yejide's case, Akin is discovered to be infertile and can therefore not impregnate a woman.

Based on this, it can be said that Adebayo tries to make literature a medium for women and society to know that it is very necessary for the fertility and compatibility status of couples to be checked before they are pronounced husband and wife. Furthermore, Adebayo encourages that the test should be done in the presence of both partners to be completely sure and not leave chances for the truth to be manipulated. No matter how much a couple loves each other just as Yejide and Akin shared an enviable first-love bond, if these measures are ignored, it can lead to the forfeiture of their future peace and joy, and in unfortunate cases, the collapse of their bond and love as evident in the case of Yejide and Akin. Because the issues of infertility militate mostly against women, Adebayo uses this medium to teach and instruct society to do better by women and so does this study. Adebayo proves that literature is a social institution that uses language as a medium to highlight and address societal problems.

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International Journal of Humanity Studies
<http://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/IJHS>
Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

J.E. JASPER'S LITERARY WORK ON EDUCATING THE MASSES OVERSEAS: INDO-EUROPEAN LITERATURE FROM COLONIAL JAVA IN THE NETHERLANDS 1904-1910

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<https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i2.7398>

received 23 October 2023; accepted 15 March 2024

Abstract

This paper aims to analyze with the historical method how literature from the Dutch East Indies written by an Indo-European, a person from mixed Asian and European ancestors, attempted to educate the Dutch overseas in Europe. The early 20th century saw several technological developments which raised interest in Asia in the Netherlands and caused a spike in immigrants in the Indies. The Dutch were interested in reading about life in their colonial holdings overseas, especially those who were contemplating making a trip to the Indies. Many writings emerged to teach, warn, or push potential immigrants who wished to go to the Indies. However, those were mainly written by Dutch people who had lived or were living in the Indies temporarily. Indo-European writers had different concerns and interests from the Dutch, which pushed them to also write literary works that were partly aimed at the Dutch overseas. They hoped their writings would help them understand life in Java and to prepare properly. J.E. Jasper, an Indo-European colonial official, was the most outspoken critic of his literature. His work, heavily influenced by the Ethical Policy while developing his thoughts reminded and taught the Dutch about what was important about life in the Indies.

Keywords: ethical policy, Indo-European literature, J.E. Jasper

Introduction

The end of the 19th century marked the beginning of a spur of changes outside and inside of the colonial society in the Dutch East Indies. Various technological developments, such as the widespread use of steamboats, trains, and the telegraph, caused the distance between the colonized land and the homeland to be reduced dramatically. For the first time, the Dutch could reach the Dutch East Indies within a month by boat, and even quicker through the use of the telegraph. This spiked a new interest in the East Indies, which culminated in a rise of migration, primarily Dutch people with strong cultural principles.

The spike of interest in the Dutch East Indies also echoed into literature. The stream of books about life in the East was huge. The most famous work of colonial Dutch literature after *Multatuli* was also written during this time, *De Stille Kracht* (The Hidden Force) by Louis Couperus in 1900. Several books, many of



questionable nature about the writer's knowledge, were brought into the world during this time. Some praised the Indies, while others mocked it. Those who were born and raised in the Indies frowned upon the majority of those books, which were deemed a danger since most writers were rich Dutch who only came to travel and write a book about it. They did not understand the true nature of life in the Indies (Borel, 1913).

During this same period, because of the aforementioned developments, a new political thought called the *Ethische Politiek* (Ethical Policy) became popular. The Ethical Policy criticized the former Dutch policy of pure capitalistic exploitation (Deventer, 1899; Brooshooft, 1901). The needs of the colonial society were fully ignored. Infrastructure and education were falling far behind. The Indies had not developed, but become more backward than before. Thus, it was the Dutch moral obligation to right those wrongs, especially since the Dutch had profited so much from the Indies. However, fears of rebellion as what happened in the Philippines also drove the Dutch to invest in the Indies to prevent losing it (Deventer, 1899). The *eereschuld* (debt of honour) would be repaid through education reforms, infrastructure investments, and fulfilling any other needs of the indigenous people, however still combined with continued colonial exploitation (Deventer, 1899).

The Indo-Europeans, descendants of mixed Asian and European heritage, were one of many ethnic groups in the colonial society. They were not the focus of the Ethical Policy, even though many of them lived in poverty due to social and racial discrimination (Rooyackers, 2023; Stoler, 2010). The Indo-Europeans, who lived between and descended from the Javanese and the Dutch, understood both cultures and thought. They witnessed first-hand the discrimination from the Dutch towards themselves and the Javanese. For the Indo-Europeans, the main way to prevent further discrimination and to voice their opinion on society's development was through literature until the rise of the *Indische Partij* (Indies Party) in 1912. Since they were born in the Indies, they were not that much concerned with colonial profit but wished for equal development for all of society's various groups (Rooyackers, 2023).

J.E. Jasper was one such Indo-European. In the early 20th century, he had just been appointed as a low official in the city of Surabaya. His background as an official, who was also involved in projects in the field, and as an Indo-European gave him a deep understanding of the lives of the Dutch, Indo-European, and Javanese. He was raised with the ideals of the Ethical Policy, which he incorporated into his work. Jasper had a passion for literature, which drove him to write various books, which were also intended for the Dutch overseas who wished to travel to the Indies. Jasper used his knowledge and books to teach the Dutch about the lives of Indo-Europeans and Javanese, through their perspectives. This was special since Dutch writers would never use those perspectives. Jasper's work involves themes, perspectives, and topics that differentiated from the Dutch. Yet through these differences, he aimed to teach the Dutch about their mistakes in the East, to protest, to show how they should behave and what they should know before coming to the Indies.

Jasper's work challenges long-held views about colonial literature in the Dutch East Indies. For example, his work shows significant changes in themes, character, motives, and goals, although he adhered to the traditional realistic and naturalistic styles. Also, with the frequent use of Javanese main characters in most

of his work, he contests the claim that literature from the colonial period would rarely use them (Nieuwenhuys, 1978; Subagio, 1983). That claim holds for Dutch colonial writers, but not for Indo-Europeans like Victor Ido, Jasper, E.F.E. Douwes Dekker, and others.

Only a few studies have analyzed Jasper and his work since he is somewhat forgotten in studies about colonial literature. Nieuwenhuys in his *magnum opus* about literature from the Indies brings him up shortly, yet only to criticize his writing style which he deemed annoying (1978). Another study about the portrayal of Indo-Europeans in colonial literature highlights a few of Jasper's short stories from his work *Van Deugden en Dwalingen* (Boudewijn, 2011). This postcolonial analysis fails to grasp the true intentions of Jasper and generalizes his view as typical Dutch because of how he portrayed Indo-European characters. Yet while it is true that they are not portrayed positively, the goal of the book is to serve as a reminder to not become like those negatively portrayed characters, which seems to be forgotten.

Well-known author and literary critic Alfred Birney discussed a few works of Jasper in his critical essay *De Dubieuzen*. Birney mentions various more major themes from the works and does not discuss all of Jasper's work nor his work as a means of education about the Javanese. Lastly, there is a bachelor thesis about Indo-European colonial literature and its relation to colonial society (Rooyackers, 2023). This thesis employs a similar method and topic, including Jasper, yet does not focus on how Indies literature attempted to influence Dutch society. Thus the topic of what for and how Jasper wished to educate the Dutch overseas remains an interesting question.

Method

This research used a qualitative approach with the five steps of historical research according to Kuntowijoyo (2005). The first step was defining the topic, which resulted in the focus of this research. The next step was the collection of historical sources, which was done mainly through digital archives like Delpher. The focus was on sources that were written during the early 20th century and which mainly discussed life in the Indies, the Ethical Policy, colonial literature, Jasper's personal life, and his work. The next two steps comprised authentication and interpretation, which were done through the comparison and re-reading of the collected sources. The last step was historiography, which resulted in the writing of this paper.

The used qualitative approach was document analysis, which focused on Jasper's literary work and the collection of other sources connected to his work. The analysis focuses on skimming, reading, and interpretation of Jasper's work (Bowen, 2009). The main focus is placed on the themes, perspectives, and characters used by Jasper to convey his message to his Dutch readers overseas (Altheide, 2000).

The main works analyzed were *Van Java's Wegen* (1904), *Stille Invloeden* (1906), *Het Leven van Ardja en Lasmi* (1908), *De Dieppe Stroomingen* (1910), and *Van Deugden en Dwalingen* (1910). These are all the novels and collections of short stories written by Jasper which were printed in book form by Dutch publishers. Other historical documents used in this research support the argumentation and findings from the in-depth reading of Jasper's work.

Findings and Discussion

J.E. Jasper: Shaping views on literature and early work

Jasper was born into an Indo-European family from Surabaya. He finished the prestigious *Gymnasium Willem III* in Batavia in 1892 before graduating from the *Groot Ambtenaars Examen* in 1894. Afterward, he enrolled as a young man in the civil colonial service. His ambitions and thoughts were very much shaped by his ethnic background and the Ethical Policy thought. The Ethical Policy was just proclaimed and received with big ambitions and enthusiasm by most Dutch, both in Asia and Europe. Jasper was no exception and became a strong proponent of its movement, pleading its case through newspapers, magazines, and eventually literature.

His affection for literature stood out from early on. He became the literature critic for the main local newspaper, the *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, in 1900. There he reviewed many contemporary works written by authors from the Indies and the Netherlands. The turn of the century saw many new works about the Indies, mainly written by Dutch people who had visited the Indies briefly. Many described life in the Indies as either being a good or bad thing, often quoting Javanese culture and language in their descriptions.

The more he read, the more Jasper became disappointed by the literature about the Indies. Jasper expressed this feeling in the newspaper *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad* (1900). He highlighted many writers and works about the Indies, which did not represent the Indies, its people, and culture, truthfully. He criticized the simplicity and errors that plagued many of those works. It was 'time to face the literary nonsense', which had very little literary and ethnographic value in Jasper's eyes. The Dutch readers, who knew almost nothing about the Dutch East Indies, would get the wrong expression through these kinds of works.

The three main works that described life in the Indies were included in Jasper's review of modern Indies literature. Justus van Maurik's work *Indrukken van een totok* was dismissed quickly since the work contained very little true knowledge about the Indies. Indeed, many critics had pointed out that Justus van Maurik had spent very little time in the Indies. Intentionally or not, his work had spread many misunderstandings about life in the Indies, including the lives of the Javanese.

A more controversial work by Bas Veth called *Het leven in Nederlandsch-Indië* was dismissed by Jasper, as he felt just naming it was more than enough. Bas Veth heavily criticized life in the Indies as deteriorating and degenerating European culture. He made a huge rant with many over-exaggerations about how bad everything was. Of course, since Bas Veth also had only remained a short time in the Indies, and since he broke down ruthlessly the colonial society, many Indies-born resented him, including Jasper. Both of those works were aimed at Dutch readers to learn about life in the Indies, but Jasper felt both did a terrible job at portraying how life in the Indies truly was (Jasper, 1900).

Lastly, the work of Augusta de Wit was received better by Jasper. She would write short stories about the Indies and a short guide in English titled *Facts and Fancies about Java*. Jasper praised her work as having the most literary value. Augusta de Wit was also one of the first writers who would incorporate Ethical Policy thought into her work, like Jasper a few years later. However, Jasper still criticized her work for containing some inaccuracies. Even though her work came

close to telling the truth about the Indies, it could be done better. These works would shape his idea of the need to convey ‘truthful messages’ to the Dutch readers so that they would not misunderstand the reality of life in the Indies.

The development of the colonial society, comprising all ethnic groups, was equally disappointing to Jasper. According to the Ethical Policy thought, their needs had to be fulfilled and their welfare expanded. Yet in East Java, poverty continued to play a big role in the daily lives of the Javanese and Indo-Europeans. Jasper was involved in many projects and commissions that attempted to research and uplift the lowest strata of society. He also held important positions in the surveys about Indo-European and Javanese poverty in Surabaya. Jasper, being an Indo-European himself, would frequently come in contact with both of those groups. Especially as a lower civil servant, he would often visit the Javanese and Indo-European districts, where he happily mingled with both groups to learn about their lives, thoughts, and needs.

The ideal civil servant had to understand the situation of their assigned area. It was necessary since it was an important factor that enabled the civil servant to truly develop the welfare of all the locals. The Javanese were an important group with many needs that were still left unanswered. The civil servants often lacked this important knowledge, which Jasper criticized (Nieuwenhuys, 1972). Even worse, they would often be involved in the exploitation of the locals. The Javanese had rights, including the right of protection from exploitation, while the Dutch and civil servants especially had the duty to uphold those rights. Jasper would often write about those miseries and problems for magazines and newspapers before 1904 and continued to do so afterward.

During those early years, Jasper would also start to write his work. His first major published work was in *De Gids*, a Dutch literature magazine, with a short story called *Van een Indisch Woud* (About an Indies Forest). The story is about the travels of Jasper and a small company through the woods in the area of Lumajang. In-depth descriptions of Javanese nature are switched with conversations between Jasper and his Javanese companions, mainly the guide Pak Soekiejem. It was received well by the Dutch public, as would be his next short story which was also published in the magazine *De Gids* in 1904.

Jasper also published very short stories in newspapers. Some of those held political nuances, like a short story in *De Java Bode* about two Javanese brothers with different educations. Jasper criticized the negative influences of European education on the Javanese since it opposed the old *adat* (customs). The Javanese brother with the Dutch education became distanced from his own culture and people, which was wrong (E.O.H., 1902). Besides such stories, Jasper would also publish short stories about the people he had met during his travels, like one about the life of an old Indo-European lady in the city of Makassar which was published in the magazine *Eigen Haard* in 1902.

Much of Jasper’s work was written during assignments in the interior of Java. He would write about his experiences and disappointments with the colonial civil service and the European communities. For example, the short story *Laatste Tocht* (The Last Journey) which was published in 1904, was written in Jombang (Jasper, 1904b). His first novel, *Stille Invloeden* (Hidden Influences), was written during his time in Bondowoso (Jasper, 1906). Long, poetic descriptions about Javanese nature

became one of his returning characteristics, along with criticism of colonial society and the display of Indo-European and Javanese culture and lives.

Javanese lives, thoughts, and perspectives in Jasper's work

The short stories Jasper wrote in his early years were first published in 1904 in his bundle titled *Van Java's Wegen* (About Java's Roads). The book was published in the Netherlands by the Dutch publisher P.N. van Kampen & Zn., as would almost all of Jasper's other work. The stories *Van een Indisch woud* and *Laatste Tocht* were republished, although the last one was a longer edited version, along with the short story *Van Java's Wegen* which also served as the title of the work. The stories *Laatste tocht* and *Van Java's Wegen* were written from a full Javanese perspective about their suffering caused directly and indirectly by the Dutch. The story *Van een Indisch woud* also have Javanese main characters but was written from Jasper's perspective.

Jasper's work was received well and it was noticed how he laid bare the thoughts and feelings of the Javanese throughout the stories (De Sumatra Post, 1905). He was praised for his modern style without mystical intrigues, something which was very popular among Indies literature at the time. Jasper succeeded in evoking sympathy and understanding for the lives of Javanese villagers (Lohman, 1905). These short stories established Jasper's name as a writer in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies.

This approach was chosen because Jasper wanted to lay out the lives and thoughts of the Javanese. In the short story *Van Java's Wegen* this is shown clearly. Every page is filled with the thoughts and observations of Pak Madin, who owns a small rice field near a sugar factory. The readers closely follow his inner struggles, conflicts, feelings, and personal goals. The main conflict is Pak Madin's betting addiction, to which he gives in and he almost loses all his money. Pak Madin is a man scared of change and lazy because of the monotonous life in the village. He has a lack of incentive to make something better of his life. He feels that he should not bet, and his wife begs him not to, but he continues to bet anyway at a party at the sugar factory. In the end, he almost loses all of his money and his rice field, only to miraculously win the ultimate bet.

The short story *Laatste Tocht* does not share such a happy ending. Simin, who worked at a coffee plantation in Padangan. He was evicted from the plantation because of false accusations by his Javanese *manner*, which the Dutch administrator believed naively. Simin loses his way and goes through various stages of shock and grief while he struggles to figure out what to do next. He holds a grudge against the *mandoer*, the cold, rude Dutch administrator, and other colonial civil servants he meets along the way. Simin falls ill, and while literally and mentally losing his way, he succumbs to disease at the end of the story.

While Jasper criticizes the colonial civil service indirectly, he focuses more on explaining the thoughts and feelings of Simin. As a Javanese *koelie* (worker) he is a simple man who has simple needs. But without a home, money, and goal in his life, he feels helpless. The Dutch and the civil service have failed him. They had cast him out, without considering what that fate would hold for him. It is the struggle of a human being against the cold colonial civil service. Jasper shows clearly the way of life of the Javanese through the eyes of Simin, who visits several villages and *warnings* (roadside stalls) where he interacts with other Javanese.

Jasper's first novel was published in 1906 titled *Stille Invloeden* (Hidden Influences). It was published in two parts consisting of a total of 435 pages and was written from the perspective of a colonial civil servant. The book contained heavy criticism towards the colonial servants and European communities in the interior of Java (Rooyackers, 2023). Thus, it was not aimed at the Dutch overseas like his other work. It did not focus on the lives of the Javanese, nor did Jasper attempt to explain it, but he reiterated the importance of developing the Javanese communities. The main message Jasper conveyed to readers unfamiliar with life in the Indies was about the negative influence of Javanese nature, especially the mountains, on European life. Only the Javanese could withstand it, while the Europeans would sooner or later be corrupted by it (Jasper, 1906). The book was received with mixed reviews, criticizing its weak plot while praising its realistic value (Lohman, 1908).

Jasper's second novel was published in 1908 under the title *Het Leven van Ardja en Lasmi* (The Lives of Ardja and Lasmi). Jasper had written an earlier version of a short story called *In Dagen van Kommer* for the literature magazine *De Gids* in 1907. This short story spanning 26 pages became the first chapter of a novel spanning 218 pages. The perspectives are Javanese, but different from the characters in *Van Java's Wegen* because they are of nobility, yet have fallen on hard times. Just like those short stories and like the title of the work implies, it follows very closely the lives, feelings, and thoughts of Raden Ardjawinata and his wife Lasmi.

Both are described as modern Javanese. Ardja had received lower education, but could not continue his studies even though he wished to. Broke and without perspective in the countryside, they move to the big city of Branggal by train. The train in the Dutch East Indies is a prime example of modernity and civilization, something which was rarely available or associated with the Javanese. Ardja manages to get a job, yet is forced to live apart from his wife.

A great part of the story closely follows the perspective of Lasmi. Her youth and early marriage are explained in-depth by her. Fate, or *takdir*, plays a major role in driving the plot and haunts both Ardja and Lasmi. They hope to improve their lives in the city and escape their bad fates so far. Lasmi especially is shocked when she explores the city, where she sees Chinese riding bicycles and Javanese going to school, all signs of modernity and civilization. At first, Lasmi feels lost and strange, and she never manages to get accustomed to life in the city.

The city provides financial welfare, but it slowly corrupts the health and minds of both Ardja and Lasmi. Ardja becomes selfish and cheats on his wife, while Lasmi falls sick and is taken to the hospital, another place of modernity. Lasmi's loyalty to Ardja drives her to him since she fears he has taken in another woman, which is confirmed in the end. They meet again, even though the sickness takes its toll on Lasmi and she almost dies. In the end, they both move together to the city again, broke again but happy together.

The story focuses heavily on various traditional Javanese beliefs about love and fate in modern places with modern people. Jasper describes the feelings and thoughts of the Javanese when facing modern inventions and the Dutch. Small themes like the importance of education also play a role. But what Jasper tries throughout the book is showing the full lives and thoughts of its Javanese main characters, from both male and female perspectives. The goal of this was clear, to educate the Dutch overseas and in the colony about the Javanese so that they could

understand them better. Since if the Dutch could understand the Javanese, then they could help the Javanese to improve their lives, according to Ethical Policy principles.

The last two works of Jasper were published in 1910. The first one was the novel *De Dieppe Stroomingen* (The Deep Currents), which is often seen as the pinnacle of Jasper's work. The other one is a bundle with twelve short stories spanning 226 pages, mainly written from Indo-European and sometimes Javanese perspectives. It is Jasper's only work to be published by another publisher, H.J.W. Brecht. Its title *Van Deugden en Dwalingen* (About Virtues and Errors) reflects the main goal of the bundle, which is to provide lessons to its readers to develop themselves. The bundle was mainly written for Indo-European readers since their lives and mistakes were the most highlighted (Rooyackers, 2023). However, some stories were fully or partially written for Dutch newcomers in the Indies.

The short stories from *Van Deugden en Dwalingen* that are worth mentioning are *De Bedelaar* (The Beggar), *Oostersch Mysteries* (Eastern Mystery), *Wanhoopsdaad* (Act of Despair), and *Het Kind* (The Child). Those four out of the twelve total stories are aimed at Dutch readers, by either explaining Javanese thought and culture or by showing errors made by the Dutch in interacting with Javanese. The stories differ from Jasper's earliest work, mainly in the way that the descriptions are less vivid and in-depth. Jasper mainly uses his perspective as a civil servant who once dealt with the characters in real life (Rooyackers, 2023).

These later short stories are quite different from the earlier ones, mainly in terms of perspective and themes. Jasper stresses more the importance of understanding the Javanese way of life and thinking, but this time not so much with showing this directly from a Javanese perspective. Jasper shows how he slowly came to understand it more and more by interacting without prejudice. Tolerance and understanding of different cultures is an important part of becoming a good citizen in the Indies society. The stories are thus less practical in the sense that Jasper shows directly Javanese culture, yet focuses more on the importance of learning about Javanese culture.

The novel *De Diepe Stroomingen* can be seen as the pinnacle of Jasper's literary work. It was published in 1910 in two parts, consisting of 230 and 224 pages. Jasper combines all the main themes and perspectives, both Javanese and Indo-European, from all his former works into this one. The story, which often changes perspectives between Javanese and Indo-European characters, tells about the making of a religious rebellion. This was one of the main fears for the Dutch, as had happened for example in the Banten region in 1888 (Sartono, 1966). It is however interesting to note that Jasper held no Islamophobic views in this book and blamed the developing rebellion on failures of Dutch civil servants. Javanese culture played a role in embracing the rebellious religious thought, yet was impossible to blame.

The main perspectives are from the Javanese regent, the religious teacher Oemar, and the Indo-European civil servant George Westkamp. Other perspectives that are used in the book are from Timah, a Javanese woman, Theo Westkamp, and other Javanese villagers. The use of those different perspectives is among others to explain the differences between ethnic groups like the Javanese and Indo-Europeans. Racial and ethnic stereotypes were often used by the Dutch when dealing with other groups in the Indies (Doorninck, 1915; Jasper, 1910a). This was

something Jasper strongly disagreed with, something he showed clearly through the use of varied characters with different personalities, needs, and goals.

The message for Jasper's Dutch readers was abundantly clear. The Dutch had a moral obligation to further the lives of the Javanese. Various Dutch characters play a role in the book, but never Jasper uses their perspective. Instead, the Dutch characters mainly embody the bad apples of colonial society. The Dutch administrators at the factories and plantations beat the Javanese, while the Dutch civil servants ignored any problems. They do not view the Javanese as human beings like themselves, and they do not at all consider even trying to understand them. This led to a catastrophic rebellion in the end, which was stopped by an Indo-European civil servant who understood Javanese life and thought.

The Indo-Europeans and the Javanese characters in the book are the ones who put in the work to stop or further the rebellion. The perspective of the regent is also very interesting, as Jasper rarely shows nobility perspectives. The regent, who initially supported the Dutch, slowly converts to the rebels in the story after being let down by the Dutch. He felt *malu* or shame together with anger when he was not treated according to Javanese customs. The Indo-European civil servant George Westkamp has close relations with the Javanese and understands that the regent is switching sides, while the Dutch are fully oblivious to the regent's involvement.

Javanese perspectives are dominant in the book and show the various ways of thinking, from the Islamic preacher Oemar to the Javanese regent to the villagers. Jasper embraces diversity and places it on a pedestal for all to see. When understanding the Javanese, one has to also understand the diversity among the Javanese themselves. The first was rarely practiced at the start of the 20th century, thus even rarer the second. But it was essential for anyone who came to the Indies to know. Preparation and education were important so that the Dutch who wanted to come to the Indies would become good, humane, and beneficial colonial citizens for all.

Education and developing political thought

The messages Jasper wanted to convey through his work played a big role in his literature. A dual focus on education, for readers both in the Netherlands and the Indies, and social critiques on colonial society drives Jasper's pen. Social critiques will not be highlighted here, since that has already been done in-depth in another work (Rooyackers, 2023). Thus, this part will shine a light on Jasper's focus on education and developing the Ethical Policy school of thought through literature. Those two are inherently connected in Jasper's work and influence one another. Jasper was educated with Ethical Policy ideals and principles while furthering Ethical Policy thought with education.

Social injustice and indifference caused by the acts of the Dutch or inaction of the colonial civil service is a main theme in every work of Jasper. As a colonial civil servant himself who dealt with every layer of society, he witnessed many Dutch civil servants who were cold and not understanding of others. They lacked any initiative or interest in the lives of the Javanese for example. For Jasper, who had Dutch, Javanese, and Indo-European ancestors, that was disappointing. Even more so when the Ethical Policy was proclaimed formally in 1901. The powerful, the Dutch, and civil servants had a moral obligation to help the weak, the Javanese among others.

The Javanese perspectives used in the works mainly belong to the lower strata, including peasants and poor rural nobility. The only exception is Jasper's novel *De Diepe Stroomingen*, where he also uses the perspective of a Javanese regent. However, he combines this with many other perspectives belonging to Javanese villagers and a religious preacher. According to the Ethical Policy, the Javanese and other indigenous people needed to be prepared for self-rule. The Ethical policy was mainly focused on the lower-class Javanese, who were suffering the most. Because of this, Jasper favors peasants as his main characters, to show the lives of those who need help the most. The perspectives of both lower- and higher-class characters are different, with the first being rougher with more struggles, while the latter is more refined, closed, and intellectual.

Jasper was a fiery proponent of the Ethical Policy until the end of his time as a civil servant, when he was more or less forced to retire in 1929 when colonial politics abandoned the Ethical Policy. Cold and rude attitudes from the Dutch towards the Javanese were blamed on a lack of education by Jasper. Education, which was also an important part of the Ethical Policy, was what Jasper tried to give with his literature (Rooyackers, 2023). Not only for inhabitants of the colony but also for the Dutch overseas. They needed to be prepared and educated if they wanted to live in the Indies.

The foundations of the Ethical Policy, mainly education, infrastructure, and migration of the overpopulated areas, are all supported by Jasper. However, Jasper views awareness among the Dutch and colonial servants about the need to understand the Javanese before developing these Ethical Policy foundations as critical. Many seemed not to be aware, or actively choosing to do so about the lives of the Javanese. Education and infrastructure are two points that are sometimes mentioned in Jasper's work, for example in *Stille Invloeden* and *Het Leven van Ardja en Lasmi*. However, education for the Dutch to make them actively pursue those principles was the main concern for Jasper.

Literature was the most accessible tool for Jasper, who had a high interest in art. Novels about the Indies were very popular at the start of the 20th century. Those novels were always printed in the Netherlands before being shipped to the Indies, thus it would naturally be spread among the Dutch population interested in the Indies. Anyone able to write could pick up a pen since books were being printed and distributed at a fast speed. There is not a clear reason why Jasper stopped, but his later work tended to be received with more mixed reviews, while Jasper himself became more occupied with other research and government assignments after 1910.

Jasper aimed his words at the more intellectual parts of Dutch society. His readers were not informed about the most basic things of life in the Indies like others (Wit, 1898). Plenty of such books were already in circulation. Instead, Jasper chose to focus on another aspect, understanding the Javanese and Indo-Europeans, framed in a correct mirror of colonial life. For those who wished to become a morally good person and help the Javanese, Jasper's books were a treasure of knowledge. He was often praised for his writings and knowledge. Jasper's critical tone was tolerated during the Ethical Policy period, however at the end of the 1920 when active repression and European pragmatism became more dominant, he was discarded from the civil service and retired.

Conclusion

Jasper's work during the early 20th century aimed to fulfill a need by the Dutch, according to Jasper himself. He, as an Indo-European member of colonial society and as a civil servant, experienced directly how the promising and humanistic principles of the newly proclaimed Ethical Policy were not always upheld by the Dutch. Jasper wished to change that, through educating these Dutch before coming to the Dutch East Indies by writing literature. His work focuses heavily on the minds and lives of the Javanese and Indo-Europeans in the Indies. Thus, an interesting pure Javanese perspective can be found in almost all of Jasper's work, which is seldom found in the work of Dutch colonial writers. This sets apart Jasper's literary work.

Jasper intended to include 'ethnological' and 'psychological' values in writing literature. The Ethical Policy thought was heavily used in these works, and this was developed according to Jasper's thoughts. It was clear he agreed with the main principles, but he saw other problems at the root which had to be addressed before proceeding with other objectives. It was the only to truly benefit the Javanese, the end goal of the Ethical Policy if one would truly understand Javanese. This was the message Jasper pressed to convey in every single literary work he wrote.

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TRANSLATIONAL CONSTRUCTION OF ISLAND IDENTITY IN AMERICAN NRMS' TEXTS: POSTSTRUCTURALIST STUDY OF MALTA NARRATIVE IN AMERICAN ENGLISH AND KIRUNDI NWTs

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<https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i2.7900>

received 2 January 2024; accepted 15 March 2024

Abstract

The study investigated the construction of Island Identity through translation in American New Religious Movements' texts (NRMs). The research used the descriptive qualitative method that is based on the American studies interdisciplinary method and Kristeva's theory of intertextuality and notions of identity, abjection, and revolt. Moreover, Kovecses' theory of Conceptual Metaphor (CM) in American Studies and Schmidt's CM translation typology were used. Primary data were collected from the Kirundi New World Translation (NWT), American English NWT, and New American Standard Bible (NASB). Secondary data were obtained from books and articles about American NRMs, island, and CM translation. It was found out that in the conceptualization of alterity about island identity the source text (ST) is in abjection to the mainstream NASB. Moreover, the findings proved that, despite the subversion tints of the ascetic virtues from the center of the church, the target text (TT) is a nihilation of all island identity forms. Furthermore, it was discovered that the Burundi JW Bible imitates the ST to revolt against colonial and nationalist conceptualization and ipso facto to construct an island identity that supports the church's propensity for the postnational and global discourse of American society and culture.

Keywords: American NRM, CM translation, island identity, NWT

Introduction

Concerning a community's culture and tradition, identity is viewed as the group's self-image, "its perception of what people from other groups think of it", and its "image of another group and its notion of what that group believes that image to be" (Clements, 2011, p. 426). In his investigation of the representation of the self and the community in world literature, Barthes uses Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* to discuss the trope of the island and its entanglement with the concepts of "self" and "other" (Stene-Johansen, Refsum & Schimanski, 2018, p. 13). For



Barthes, the metaphor of island has been used in literature and mythology to signify “isolation, individuality, and forsakenness, but also independence, new life, and creativity based on reduced circumstances”. In addition, Barthes contends that the island represents “a closed unity”, and “an exotic fantasy world, a utopia or dystopia”. Following the emergence of postcolonialism and globalization, the concept of the island has been extended to metaphorically represent migration and immigration (p. 15). These new island identities have been signified by Homi K. Bhabha (1994) as “unmappable spaces” or “the in-betweens and liminalities”.

From a religious perspective, Eliassen posits that the island in *Robinson Crusoe* connotes the biblical metaphors of transformation from wilderness to a place of retreat to reconcile with God (Stene-Johansen, Refsum & Schimanski, 2018, p. 35). It is also a place of domestication whereby the civilized domesticates the natural through a process of transformation from egalitarian to hierarchical relationships. In a similar vein, Carpi (2022) contends that “in literature, the island often has biblical overtones, thus becoming the metaphor for creation/de-creation, for sin and redemption, for the loss of Eden” (p. 22). Moreover, the island's identity sometimes goes with the issue of colonization. Meedom asserts that the Robinsonian island represents “mastery and cultivation of nature” (p. 46). He admits that “in the Western tradition, language circumscribes the human island uninhabitable by barbarians and nonhuman animals possessing only an innate and natural language” (p. 47). Furthermore, postcolonialism and transnationalism are also suggested in the construction of island identities. Battisti et Al. (2022) mention that “the geographical features of islands foster the exploration of the self, according to multiple perspectives, both in connection with and/or separation from, the society of origin” (p. 7). Speaking of the global *Crusoe*, Fallon states that *Crusoe*'s “movement from myth to metaphor” signifies “dislocations and unease inherent to inhabiting” a world that is dominated by American globalization (Fallon, 2011, p. 12). Fallon reiterates that “the path of *Crusoe*” represents a space where the local and the global are made to cohabit (p. 15). The result of this postcolonial and transnational island identity is a “metaphor of learning” including “seeing, observing and, finally, knowing” or in other words “encounter and discovery” (Loxley, 1990, p. 159).

In the present paper island identity refers to a set of cultural traits that islanders and non-islanders manifest in making sense of belonging to the insular territory and that distinguish them from foreigners or mainlanders and vice versa. They include colonial identity, spiritual identity, and multicultural identity. All these three forms of identity are examined in Paul's narrative in Malta. In the study, the three identity construction types serve as issues underlying specific-level conceptual metaphors and mappings that are linked to the general concept island. In the light of the conceptual metaphor theory, in Icelandic narratives and discourses, individual and collective identities constitute a target domain (B) that is projected into the alterity language of the island or source domain (A). Before the American English translation of the Bible, the island's individual and communal identities were constructed through the language of alterity by drawing on Judeo-Christian mythology and Western thought. These identities are manipulated by American NRMs in their texts to meet their conception of American national character and their orientation to it.

The term NRM has been used to refer to “religious groups that have developed, or at least come to the attention of the general public and political authorities in recent decades in the United States” (Richardson, 2006, p. 65). In the American context, an NRM has been viewed as an “alternative religion”, “cult”, or simply “new religious movement” that envisages “to establish, reinforce, and defend certain kinds of individual and group identities, even as they threaten, compromise, or erode other kinds of individual or group identities” (Gallagher & Ashcraft, 2006, p. xiv). This perception of NRMs shows to what extent American culture and religion are entangled. NRMs strive to define themselves and their members through the national culture. Actually, “in their sectarian forms, these movements attempt to recapture the lost purity of an idealized past” and “aim to return to the pristine origins of the tradition and reestablish its foundations” (Gallagher & Ashcraft, 2006, p. xii). In this attempt to “define themselves both about the broader world and relation to their specific tradition” that they perceive as threatening “their purity of belief and practice”, NRM inscribe themselves in the logic of national social and cultural systems and cultural globalization. From their artifacts, texts, or organization, NRMs are significant tools to better “understand the cultural mainstream of any society and, of even greater import” because “they often anticipate impending religiocultural changes that are as yet undreamed of in the cultural center” (Kaplan, 2006, p. 84). In the United States, for instance, NRMs belonging to the Adventist tradition, have related to the manifest destiny and Americanism through “substantial missionary efforts” to such an extent that “many of them now count more members outside of the United States than within”. In addition, they have reacted to the millennial national narrative by “exhorting their members to be prepared for the coming end”. Due to its connection with such sociocultural identities as ethnicity, nation, and migration, the translation of the concept of island in biblical texts is susceptible to provide insight into the way American-based NRMs construct identity in and outside the United States.

The present study focuses on the translation of the Bible by Jehovah’s Witnesses (JW). JW is an American NRM that belongs to the Adventist tradition. According to Gallagher Jehovah’s Witnesses have maintained that “only through membership in their group could one be saved” (2004, pp. 43-44). In addition, JW is characterized by “their practice of holding the Lord’s Supper only once a year on what they take to be the traditional date of the Jewish Passover”. Other practices that make them remarkable in American society and culture and elsewhere in other countries include their “refusal to serve in the military, refusal to pledge allegiance to the flag”, and “refusal to accept blood transfusions”. JW “have erected and maintained strong boundaries between their group and what they continue to see as a sinful and damned outside world”. It is this self-other definition that makes JW’s translation of the holy scripture a significant tool to apprehend how they manipulate the language of alterity through the characterization of island insiders and outsiders to represent individual and collective identities based on their orientation to American national mythology and identity.

Williams (2014) defines poststructuralism as “a movement in philosophy” that emerged in the 1960s (p. 1). He supports that the main proponents of this movement are five thinkers namely “Derrida, Deleuze, Lyotard, Foucault, and Kristeva”. The main concern of poststructuralism is according to him to “resist and

work against settled truths and oppositions” (p. 4). In addition, poststructuralism deals with resistance against discrimination based on gender, race, background, class, and wealth. Furthermore, it questions established moral, artistic, and legal values or frameworks.

In translation studies, poststructuralism is viewed by Venuti as an “incisive method of reading translations” (Venuti, 2018, p. 10). For Venuti, from the perspective of poststructuralism, “translation emerges as an active reconstitution of the foreign text mediated by the irreducible linguistic, discursive, and ideological differences of the target-language culture” (Venuti, 2018, p. 11). Furthermore, in poststructuralist analysis, “the translation is located in an intertextual and ideological configuration that may escape the translator’s consciousness to some extent and result in unanticipated consequences, like social reproduction or change”. From this apprehension, poststructuralism establishes a relationship between translation and intertextuality.

Kristeva treats intertextuality and translation as revolt forms. For Levine (2019) Kristeva likens intertextuality to “woman’s dissidence” or “feminine subversion”, which is the “process of becoming, of deferring rather than differing” (p. 80). It is a revolt for the individual to “discover the multiplicity” of one’s “possible identifications”. From this perspective, during the translation activity, the translator is engaged in producing pluralistic, open, and diffuse texts. For Kristeva (2014) revolt language as intertextuality stems from an individual’s “inner experience that is demanding, unique, and able to appropriate the complexity of the past to approach the present and the future” (p. 2). Thus, about poststructuralism, revolt is resistance against “certainties and beliefs” by the “questioning of the self, of everything and of nothingness” (p. 3). The absence of revolt is nihilism. Nihilism is a reconciliation with “the stability of new values” (p. 5). Kristeva’s apprehension of revolt and nihilism are connected with the phenomenon of cultural globalization. In this paper, revolt, and nihilism are used to account for the retention or subversion of conceptual metaphors about the island identity.

The conceptual metaphor theory was pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson in their book entitled *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). The innovation of Lakoff and Johnson was their apprehension of the notion of metaphor beyond the linguistic and stylistic levels by extending it to human thought and experience (Shuttleworth, 2017, p. 31). In American studies, the theory of conceptual metaphor (CM) was advocated by Kövecses (2005). In his view, a cognitive approach to American studies can resolve the problem of paradigms and methodologies. On the one hand it allows to achieve “a remarkable degree in the unification of American studies as a discipline” by focusing on “the study of the “old-new” notion of the “American mind.” On the other hand, through a cognitive approach “more unification can be achieved by the metaphor analysis of texts and discourses in American English—the fullest expression of the totality of the American experience” (p. 189). In fact, “most aspects of American culture are described in (metaphorical) language, and thus we can turn to this language for help in discovering how these aspects are metaphorically structured by the American mind”. Therefore, “American English often provides a reliable clue for discovering the conceptual metaphors Americans use to create and comprehend their experience” (p. 189). The CM theory is relevant to transnational American Studies and translation studies. Actually, from a

cognitive approach, particular attention is paid to “both the unique and the cross-culturally shared aspects of the American mind”.

Concerning the operation of conceptual metaphor vis-à-vis religious experience in American culture, Gallagher’s idea that some American NRMs used conceptual metaphors by taking “materials from the Hebrew Bible to describe the experience of African Americans” (p. 146) is fundamental. For these NRMs “Moses and the Exodus [...] were often put to powerful symbolic use in the interpretation of another group's experience of slavery”.

In his article “Applying Conceptual Metaphor Theory in Cross-Linguistic and Translation Research” (2015), Schmidt presents his CM translation procedure model. The model is a combination of the metaphor translation procedure typologies of Toury (2002) and that of Kövecses (2005). It comprises six procedures. The first procedure ($m \rightarrow m$) is a case where “a metaphorical expression is translated by a metaphorical expression of the same conceptual metaphor with the same mapping and the same meaning” (Schmidt, 2014, p. 832). Another case treated under the first procedure is the case ($m \rightarrow m'$) in which “a metaphorical expression is translated by a metaphorical expression of the same conceptual metaphor with a different mapping and a similar meaning”. The second procedure is represented by a case ($m \rightarrow m_1$) where “a metaphorical expression is translated by a metaphorical expression of a different conceptual metaphor with a different mapping and a similar meaning” (p. 833). The third procedure ($m \rightarrow \text{non-}m$) is when “a metaphorical expression is translated by a non-metaphorical expression with a similar meaning”. This procedure is also referred to as paraphrase. The fourth procedure ($m \rightarrow \varphi$) is referred to as deletion, omission, or zero-translation. This is when “a metaphorical expression is translated by a zero-element”. The fifth procedure ($\text{non-}m \rightarrow m$) corresponds to a case where “a non-metaphorical expression is translated by a metaphorical expression with a similar meaning”. The last procedure ($\varphi \rightarrow m$) is concerned with a case where “a zero-element is translated by a metaphorical expression”. In addition to these symbols, notations of implication ($m \rightarrow m-$) and explicitation ($m \rightarrow m+$) will be added to represent cases where a conceptual metaphor in the ST is maintained in the TT with similar mapping and similar but explicit or implicit meaning. The CM translation analytical model will be implemented by comparing Paul’s Malta narrative in Jehovah’s Witnesses’ American English New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT) and its Kirundi Translation. In addition, the CM translation procedures are used to compare the conceptualization of island identity in the Standard Bible (NASB) which is used by many Protestant denominations, and the American (original JW Bible) New World Translation of the Scripture (NWT). In other words, island identity is first studied by making a comparison between a bible translation used by mainstream Protestant denominations and one translation used by an NRM (JW bible or NWT) in the United States. Then the island identity is further scrutinized in the biblical translation made in the peripheral zone (Burundi) of the JW global evangelical movement.

A lot of studies have been conducted on island identity and religion. Recent studies include Bocci (2019), Keane (2021), Moore and Gibbon (2021), Papantoniou and Depalmas (2022), Stoddart (2022), and Vionis (2022). These studies used Archaeological, historiographical, and ethnographic approaches and

methods to study the construction of island identities including individual and communal differentiation from various insularities and coastal contexts. Concerning JW bible translation and identity construction, researchers have been interested in the way Jehovah's Witnesses relate to such issues as blood transfusion, civic and moral education policies, and gender and family issues in their interpretation of the holy scriptures. Most recent works on Jehovah's Witnesses identity and bible translation include Knox, Z. (2017), Melton, G. J. (2021), Ransom (2021), Vagramenko, T. (2021), and Ingersoll-Wood (2022). The researchers draw from religious, theological historiographical, and sociological approaches to discuss the attitudes of Jehovah's Witnesses towards the scriptures and their gospel environment and sociocultural institutions. To the best of my knowledge, no research has been carried out on American NRMs and their translation construction of Island identity by focusing on the Burundi JW bible.

This article aims to investigate in what ways JW's texts signify island identity based on their experience as a historically marginalized American NRM with a perception of American national identity and character that are different from the views of the mainstream American Protestant denominations. This aim is elaborated through three research questions: (1) To what extent is abjection manifested by American English NWT in resisting the dominant religious groups' construction of island identity? (2) In what ways does Burundi JW's Kirundi NWT subvert the construction of island identity that is made in the original American English NWT? (3) why is island alterity identity constructed through NWT in both the center and periphery of the JW global evangelical movement and related to American national identity discourses?

Method

In this research, an inductive descriptive qualitative method design is used. American studies interdisciplinary method is followed and implemented by first relating Kristeva's intertextuality to American NRMs' text (JW bible) and their translations. The texts are then situated in the sociocultural and historical dynamics of American society by applying Kristeva's notions of identity, abjection, and revolt.

The primary data consisted of words and sentences from Paul's Malta island narrative. These data were obtained from the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB 2020), the American English *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, and the Burundi New World Translation of the Scripture (2010). The NASB is a Bible translation within the Tyndale–King James Version tradition (Naudé and Miller-Naudé, 2022, p. 2). It is a retranslation of the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) which in turn is a revision of the *American Standard Version* which was produced “as the linear emergence of the Tyndale-King James Version tradition”. This Anglo-American scripture translation tradition developed independently of the Catholic, Jewish, and ecumenical bible traditions. The NASB was first published in 1971 under the auspices of the Lockman Foundation. It was revised successively in 1972, 1973, 1975, and 1977. Its publication aimed to produce an update of the *American Standard Version* (ASV) that was published in 1901. Like the American Standard Version, “the NASB is a translation from the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek incipient text”. The preface of the bible states that the translators had a fourfold brief, namely to be true to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, to be

grammatically correct, to be understandable, and that ‘no work will ever be personalized’ (p. 3). In fact, the translators envisaged “to produce a contemporary English Bible while maintaining a word-for-word translation style”.

The NASB was further revised into the *Updated New American Standard Bible* (1995). In this revision, the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and *Nestle’s Novum Testamentum Graece* (26th ed.) were used as incipient texts. The new version uses modern English without such Elizabethan English words as ‘thy’ and ‘thou’. In addition, verses with difficult word order were restructured (p. 3). The most recent edition is the *New American Standard Bible* (2020). This edition is a revision of UNAST (1995). It aimed at modernizing the language and improving readability.

This edition is pertinent in the study on American NRMs because it “was done by a committee sponsored by the Lockman Foundation, consisting of people from Christian institutions of higher learning and from evangelical Protestant, predominantly conservative, denominations”. Based on its incipient texts, its representation by American conservative protestant denominations, and its concern with sociocultural minority groups, the NASB is pertinent to the study of how national character influences biblical writing among Protestant denominations in the United States.

Based on information available on the Jehovah’s Witness website (Augustus 13th, 2023), the current *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (NWT) was published in 2013 by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. It is available in 240 languages. Up to the 2023 printing, including all editions, a total of 244,746,446 bible copies have been produced. The English NWT was first published in 1950 with the title *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*. It has been revised to adapt to the English language evolution and ipso facto produce a translation that is “faithful to the original texts” and easily readable. Among the principles followed in the translation were the premises that no two languages have the same grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure; that a word-for-word bible translation produces unclear texts with wrong meaning, and that words and expressions vary in meaning with the context of use.

In addition to these primary data sources, secondary data sources were also consulted. This was done to support approaches and theories and to make a strong argument on the results and discussion. The secondary data were collected from books and articles that are related to American studies, American NRMs, conceptual metaphor translation, and island identity.

Findings and Discussion

Island identity abjection in American NWT

The analysis of the translations object of the research showed that the island identity is construed differently by American mainstream Protestant denominations following the Tyndale-King James tradition and the Jehovah’s Witnesses, an NRM that emerged in the nineteenth-America century and grew into a global evangelical movement following its marginal biblical interpretation based upon another alternative of the American millennium narrative. The following table displays the

variation rate in island identity construction by NASB and NWT about Paul the Apostle’s Malta Narrative (Acts 28: 1-10).

Table 1. Comparison of island identity conceptualization in NASB and NWT

No.	Topoi	CM	NASB			Us English NWT		
			Tot. M	Occ.	%	Tot. M	Occ.	%
1	Colonial identity	THE ISLAND IS WILD		25	67.56	19	50	
2	Spiritual identity	RELIGION IS A CONDUIT OF HEALTH	37	10	27.02	38	11	26.3
3	migration and multicultural identity	RELATIONSHIP IS CARE		2	5.40		8	21.0

CM=conceptual metaphor; Tot. M=total number of metaphorical expressions; Occ.=occurrences; %=percentage

As the table shows three forms of identity were identified in Paul’s narrative on Malta island. They include colonial identity, spiritual identity, and multicultural identity. The analysis of the translation against the backdrop of Conceptual Metaphor Theory revealed that in the mainstream Protestant bible or the New American Standard Bible (NASB) the narrative develops through three specific-level conceptual metaphors (CM) that underlie the construction of island identity, namely THE ISLAND IS WILD (67.56%); RELIGION IS A CONDUIT OF HEALTH (27.02%); and RELATIONSHIP IS CARE (5.40%). These CMs are subverted by American English NWT and its Kirundi counterpart. In Kristeva’s term, the NRM’s text, that is the NWT is an abject that confronts the mainstream biblical translation of the island identity (Gieni, 2016, p. 40). The NWT construes island identity in a way that confronts NASB’s rendition.

By comparing the NASB and the American English NWT it is discovered that 27 metaphorical expressions manifest the underlying concept of THE ISLAND IS WILD (to be colonized or civilized) in the former whereas the latter retained 19 only. Regarding the conceptualization of the colonial identity in the Malta narrative, the differences between the two biblical translations are represented in Table 1 (see appendices). The cases that are resisted in the NWT are metaphorical expressions suggesting wilderness or indigeneity. This can be illustrated by the expression ‘the natives’ that is used in the NASB to refer to islanders. The use of this metaphor ensures that the translation agents think of islanders through the lenses of the traditional Western thought of civilization. This alterity metaphor is replaced by ‘foreign-speaking people’ in the American English NWT. The difference between ‘the natives’ and ‘foreign-speaking people’ is that the former suggests the idea of uncivilized people like the Crusoe’s Friday and his father, Indians in Christopher Columbus’s New World or ‘cannibals’ in Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness whereas the latter implies a degree of multicultural encounter and exchange. The conceptual mapping in the NASB projects islanders (target domain B) into the domain of physical objects (source domain A) including physical features. Thus the mapping is islanders → physical object. In this conceptualization, the islanders are

conceived through orientational metaphors as occupying the bottom of the civilization ladder. The narrative follows the metaphorical construal LIFE IS A JOURNEY, but from a colonial perspective, the island community is in the DOWN instance of the journey. On the contrary, in its abjection, the NWT maps islanders into movement and direction domains (islanders →location). The foreigners and islanders differ in communication due to geographical location rather than physical features, morality, human bodies, or skills. The two groups merely differ in language codification. There is therefore an implication of multicultural encounters rather than civilization in the NWT.

Another instance is a recurring fever and dysentery. The use of this metaphorical expression in the NASB is based on the mapping: islander →bad health or weak body. In the NWT, the present participle ‘recurring’ is omitted. The deletion of the metaphor generates the noun phrase ‘fever and dysentery’ which insinuates the usual health conditions of the islanders as susceptible to sicknesses like mainlanders or people in general.

Regarding their spiritual identity, the islanders and the sojourners undergo a spiritual transformation. On the one hand, in the perception of the islanders, Paul changes from criminal to god and deliverer. On the other hand, the crew traveling with Paul are made to observe his transfiguration from a shipwreck wretched to a preacher, deliverer, and healer. Contrary to the colonial identity, the rate of metaphorical expressions representing spiritual identity that are used in NASB is approximately equal to that of the NWT.

In the NASB 10 out of 37 metaphorical expressions manifest the concept of spirituality (27.02%). On the contrary, the NWT increased the metaphorical expressions manifesting the underlying concept RELIGION IS A CONDUIT OF HEALTH to 11. In other words, out of a total of 38 metaphorical expressions used in NWT, 11 (26.31%) support the conceptualization of the spiritual identity. Some of the metaphors used to represent the colonial identity by the mainstream Protestant bible are subverted in the JW bible to emphasize the spiritual transformation that takes place in the narrative. The difference is the metaphorical expression ‘justice’. The NWT uses ‘Justice’ with the capital letter ‘J’ whereas the NASB uses ‘justice’ with a lowercase ‘j’. Through the use of ‘Justice’ to signify the universal judge or jurist of the supreme court, NWT is here enacting its premillennial and Adventist orientation to American society and the world. From this perspective, the island and the world outside it depend on the Justice (deity). This derives from Jehovah's Witnesses’ pessimistic view of human justice and legal institutions. Domestically, JW has been in confrontation with the American government and judiciary system following their refusal to salute the national flag and to comply with blood transfusion medical laws. On the contrary in using ‘justice’ to signify inescapable judgment, the NASB in its colonial orientation is conceptualizing the island through the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY IN WHICH THE EVIL IS PUNISHED AND THE GOOD REWARDED. As an abject, the NWT construes Paul through the mapping: the religion →deity. So a servant of God is a deity or a god. The conceptualization in the NASB is relevant to the American Protestant optimistic view of the world that is nationally concretized through the discourses of the American dream and social mobility. From this perspective, all prosperity and welfare are possible in the United States if one observes the biblical

law, social law, and the work ethic. This optimism is denied by JW who view the possibility of achieving welfare in the Messianic New World only.

Last, there is a representation of multicultural and migration identity in the narrative of Paul the Apostle in Malta. The underlying concept of metaphorical expressions representing multicultural identity can be stated as RELATIONSHIP IS CARE (5.40%). The mainstream Protestant Bible used 2 (5.40%) metaphorical expressions whereas the NWT used 8 (21.05%). This difference points to what extent religious texts by Jehovah's Witnesses are embedded in the American postcolonial and global tradition. The two shared metaphorical expressions are 'and when we were about to set sail' (NASB) versus 'and when we were setting sail' (NWT) and 'they supplied us with everything we needed' versus 'they loaded us up with whatever we needed'. These metaphors point to the issue of migration and cultural exchange in the narrative. Using Kovecse's source and target domains, these metaphors are mapped as a nation (migrants) → travel; human relationship → travel (2010, p. 17). The point of discordance between NWT as an NRM's text and NASB can be illustrated by such instances as 'natives' (NASB) versus 'foreign-speaking people' (NWT) 'entertained us warmly' (NASB) versus 'entertained us hospitably'. The JW bible translation is grounded in the postnational, global, and transnational American discourse. Islanders' communication instrument is recognized as a foreign language.

Contrary to the NASB that perceives the islanders like Christopher Columbus's Arawak as savages using barbaric sounds to communicate, JW situates island identity in the multicultural universe whereby English or any other Western language ceases to be a measure of human communication (Zinn, 1980). In addition, in the expression 'entertained us warmly', the islanders are represented through the lenses of colonial discourse in the NASB. Their humble and benevolent ways are viewed as bare necessities. This is resisted in the NWT where a host-guest relationship is stressed to redress the subjecthood of the islanders. This is achieved by using mapping, and nation → movement, to highlight the island as a space of migration encounters and exchanges.

From this multicultural perspective the 'native' becomes the 'local' who responds to the transnational movements through the exchange of goods and ideas. Rather than a colonial encounter where the civilized or master exploits and enslaves the autochthonous, the island becomes a space for cultural exchanges where Paul preaches to the islanders and in turn benefits from their hospitality and cultural patterns. This translation is related to the postnational and transnational American discourses where gender, race, religion, ethnicity, class, and other forms of sociocultural marginal groups are integrated into the American national character.

Island Identity Revolt in Kirundi NWT

The translational construction of the trope of the island in the narrative of Paul the Apostle in Malta in Kirundi NWT conserves a high percentage of the metaphorical expressions (57.89%) used in the American English NWT. In other words, using Kristevan's concept, the Kirundi NWT is greatly a nihilism of the American English one. Nonetheless, a degree of revolt (42.36%) is remarkable. The distribution of occurrences for revolt culture and nihilist culture based on the CM metaphor translation procedures is displayed in the following table.

Table 2. Representation of the procedures used in the rendition of American English NWT into Kirundi

No.	Nihilism (conservation of CM)			Revolt (Subversion of CM)		
	Proc.	Occ.	%	Proc.	Occ.	%
1	m →m	22	57.89	m →m1	0	0
2				m →m'	6	15.78
3				m →non-m	6	15.78
4				non-m →m'	2	5.40
5				m →m+	1	2.70
6				m →m-	1	2.70
7				m →φ	0	0
8				φ →m	0	0

The metaphorical concepts used to conceptualize the three forms of island identity, that is, colonial identity, spiritual identity, and multicultural identity are conserved in the TT. The only exceptions are cases where a metaphorical expression is converted into non-metaphorical expressions and non-metaphorical that are transformed into metaphorical expressions. In addition, some techniques such as mapping change, paraphrasing, and implicitation are used to subvert the source meaning.

Firstly, the colonial identity in the translational conceptualization of the island is subverted through the use of the procedures m →m-, m →m', m →non-m, and non-m →m. For the procedure m →m-, that is an implication or a metaphorical expression that is translated into another metaphorical with similar mapping and meaning, yet with some modification. The expression 'and fastened itself on his hand' is translated into 'ica yibohera ku kuboko kwiwe'. Here the implication which makes a difference in the translation is based on the fact that the word 'hand' that is used in the ST is replaced by 'arm'. Both texts use the same mapping, death →movement, to suggest the death of Paul from the venom of a viper that immobilizes a part of his body to bite it. But the situation is more dramatic in the target language where the viper immobilizes the whole arm rather than a small part of it (the hand). On the one hand, it implies that the viper or venomous creature is long enough to do up itself along the arm of Paul. On the other hand, it is difficult for Paul to shake it, for all his arms are immobilized. The import of this dramatization augments the wilderness of the island and consequently, its untamed nature that calls for the colonization, civilization, and evangelization of the island.

The procedure m →non-m, which is a metaphorical expression that is translated into a non-metaphorical expression can be illustrated by the instance 'and laid it on the fire' that is translated to 'akawushira ku muriro'. The meaning of the original is conserved. But the ST metaphorical expression is paraphrased. Thus while the ST uses the mapping, action →direction, to capture the island as a hostile environment due to the cold weather, the creativity of the islanders, and the individuality of Paul; the TT simplifies it by using a non-metaphorical expression meaning 'putting a bundle of wood sticks on the fire'.

The CM translation procedure, non-m →m can be exemplified by 'he welcomed us' vs 'aratwakira'. While 'to be welcomed' suggests a friendly and generous acceptance into somebody's shelter or a group, 'aratwakira' (he received us) implies a sense of reciprocity. For this particular narrative, 'to be received or be

given back' insinuates that there is a reciprocal and asymmetrical relationship between the islanders and the travelers or mainlanders. Metaphorically, the hospitable action done by the principal man of the island is projected into a forward-backward direction that characterizes the interaction between the host and the guests. This deviation from the ST underlines the multicultural and postcolonial stance that marks the target community.

The TT is also in revolt for some instances of the conceptualization of the spiritual identity in Paul the Apostle's Malta narrative. In the analysis, three cases of revolt are recorded. These include $m \rightarrow m'$, $m \rightarrow m^+$, and $m \rightarrow \text{non-}m$. The procedure $m \rightarrow m'$ is represented by one instance: 'be cured'. Its rendition into 'barakizwa' (they were restored) applies a different mapping. In the English 'be cured' the life restoration of the islanders is projected into physical object (life \rightarrow physical object). Health is here connected with taking care or concern for the human body using medical remedies. In the TT, life is mapped into the container (life \rightarrow container). To be sick for islanders implies that the life in their bodies has been distorted. Paul intervenes to make it whole again. Concerning the procedure $m \rightarrow m^+$, the metaphorical expression 'Justice' was translated to 'ubutungane budaheranwa' (inescapable justice). Explication technique was used in the TT to imply that God's hand to punish wrong deeds is everywhere. In the TT the divine justice is not only supreme but also omnipresent that none can escape it. In American studies, a transnational view of sociocultural forces and migration is construed. Whether people travel or remain in their countries, they are subjects to natural and divine law. There is a view of legal culture that spans national borders. Last, the procedure $m \rightarrow \text{non-}m$ is represented by two instances, that is, 'and suffered no harm' translated to 'ariko, ntihagira ico aba' and 'the rest of the people on the island' translated to 'abandi bantu bo kuri iryo zinga'. In 'and suffered no harm' there is an implication of a deliberately inflicted injury upon Paul. The TT suggests the connection between the narrative and divine justice whose surveillance is everywhere to chastise and to redeem. However, the target text opted for using non-metaphorical expression and ipso facto undermining the legal and democratic layers of the ST. This may be justified by the difference in legal culture perception between the two groups of translation agencies. While Americans' legal thought is entrenched in the republicanism and liberalism (Paine) of the national character of the United States, Burundians are informed by their legal system which lacks a national mythology of systematized notions of democracy and individualism. Likewise, the rendition of 'the rest of the people on the island' into 'abandi bantu bo kuri iryo zinga' reduces the effect produced by the metaphor in the ST. The ST uses an ontological conceptual metaphor to ensure the number of islanders and in what ways Paul deals with it. The islandic nation is mapped into physical objects that are quantified. The expression 'abandi bantu bo kuri iryo zinga' means 'other people on that island'. So the TT lacks an ontological conceptualization to emphasize how people deal with all the islanders.

Last, the comparative analysis of the conceptualization of the multicultural identity in the translation of the biblical Malta island narrative shows differences in mapping. Almost all the ST metaphorical expressions are conserved in the TT. The difference in the conceptualization of multicultural identity in the translational construction of the island trope is realized through the use of the procedure m

→non-m (one case). The translation procedure, m →non-m, was used in the translation of ‘when we were setting sail’ to ‘kandi tugiye’. In the ST the action of starting the voyage is mapped into the propelling movement and force of the sail (action → movement). A nautical mental mapping underlies the metaphorical expression used in the ST. But in the TT the maritime dimension is omitted. A non-metaphorical expression is used to simply mean that the travelers were about to leave the island. The difference in the translation of the instance in the narrative may be due to the difference in the geographical location of translation agents. Contrary to the United States which is surrounded by oceans, in a landlocked country like Burundi people lack nautical intuition in their cognition. This proves that the translation construction of the trope of the island may vary depending on whether or not translators can intuit archipelagic and nautical concepts. Another procedure that is used to resist the biblical translation from the center of the JW global evangelical movement is m →m’. The expression ‘were lands belonging to [the principal]’ was rendered to “[umuntu mukuru] yari afise amatongo”. While the ST suggests territories or vast fields for settlement or plantations, the TT implies small portions of land or simply plots of land. This ensures a capitalist dimension that is linked with the American English translation. Likewise, the translation of ‘entertained us hospitably’ to ‘aduha indaro n’umtima mwiza’ subverts the idea of enjoyment and amusement that is insinuated in the original. This difference shows that Jehovah’s Witnesses in the central countries and those in the periphery do not conceptualize the ascetic values that the church professes in the same way. As Sprague (1946) admits Jehovah’s Witnesses feel that the government of the United States is “under the Devil’s control” (p. 120). Therefore, their biggest concern is the “rejection of the world” by “placing of great emphasis on ascetic virtues” (p. 132). But their religious sentiment and ascetic life cannot be separated from the American milieu that engendered the creation of their Church and whose sociocultural forces still influence it in many ways.

American identity in the translational construal of island

The altered beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses about American national narratives of the millennium and manifest destiny determine their translational construction of biblical alterity narratives. As the following table shows, in the translation of Paul’s Malta Island narrative, Jehovah’s Witnesses in both the center and peripheral zones of evangelization manifest abjection and revolt.

Table 3. A display of revolt and Abjection in NWT

No	Topoi	CM	NASB			Abj. in US English NWT			Rev. in Kirundi NWT		
			Tot .M	Oc c.	%	Tot .M	Oc c.	%	Tot .M	Occ.	%
1	Colonial Identity	ISLAN		25	67.56		19	50		8	21.05
		D IS WILD	37			38			38		
2	Spiritual Identity	RELIGI		10	27.02		11	26.3		4	10.42
		ON IS					1				

No	Topoi	CM	NASB			Abj. in US English NWT			Rev. in Kirundi NWT		
			Tot .M	Oc c.	%	Tot .M	Oc c.	%	Tot .M	Occ.	%
		A COND UIT OF HEALT H									
3	Mult. identity	RELAT IONSHI P IS CARE		2	5.40	8	21.0 5		4	10.42	

mult.: multicultural; abj.: abjection; rev.: revolt

The three conceptual metaphors underlying Apostle Paul's Malta island narrative are realized through 37 metaphorical expressions in the mainstream bible and 38 in the JW marginal bible. The 38 metaphorical are retained in the Kirundi translation. Nonetheless, 16 of them are modified in mapping or paraphrased (41.89%). Hence only 22 are reproduced (57.89%). These variations demonstrate to which extent the center and periphery in American NRMs respond differently to American identity and its relation to the issue of the island.

First, the label 'New World Translation' is an explicit reaction to the American mythic discourses of promised land and millennialism. In JW's thought, their biblical translation is intended to provide an authentic message concerning the New World and ipso facto alter the dominant national approach to Zion and New Jerusalem. Thus their translation of the bible reflects in many ways this marginal view of American society and culture. Actually, in their view "Jehovah God and Christ Jesus" are "shortly to destroy their enemies at Armageddon and establish peace and righteousness on the earth under the Theocracy" (Sprague, 1946, p. 210). This can be illustrated by the change of the expression "Natives" to "foreign-speaking people". This change also points out the deconstruction of American colonial and nationalist discourses in JW biblical translations. A nationalist view like the one that historically negated Indian subjecthood and possession of the American territory before Puritan immigrants settled in the United States is subverted through the translation of island identity in NWT. Actually, in NWT equal subjectivity between islanders and outsiders is redressed.

Secondly, the existence of a shift in mapping and metaphorization between the American English NWT and the Kirundi NWT highlights the existence of cultural ideals from the evangelization center in Jehovah's Witnesses implicit partaking in the American national mythic discourse of manifest destiny. The metaphorical expression "entertained us hospitably" which implies modern forms of reception and popular enjoyment are subverted in the Kirundi NWT. The expression was replaced by "aduha indaro n'umutima mwiza" which is a neutral noncapitalist phrasing suggesting a traditional way of traveling and resting in one's house before resuming his or her journey. Concerning Jehovah's Witnesses' view

of entertainment Sprague posits that the community is “urged to avoid stepping outside the Lord’s organization to seek the entertainment provided by the Devil’s world at motion picture houses and similar resorts; and it is urged, and some seem to feel, that one can have a pleasanter time with one’s brethren out in the field or meeting with them in their homes” (Sprague, 1946, p. 133). This is an indication that Jehovah Witnesses are not spared from the dynamics of popular culture and its connected consumerism and media saturation. This is an indication that in the opportunities of Jehovah’s Witnesses to distribute ‘New World’ message tracts and books all over the globe, American values in which the missionaries and their evangelical center are ingrained are made to travel to the peripheral zones of evangelization. In the same way, the translation and distribution of NWT in Burundi are in themselves acts of spreading of Americanness through its altered form by the minority groups.

Conclusion

The paper purposed to investigate to what extent abjection is manifested by the marginal American English NWT in resisting the mainstream Protestant groups’ construction of island identity. The translational construction of island identity in American NRMs’ texts in this paper focused on American English NWT and its Kirundi counterpart about Paul the Apostle’s narrative in Malta (Acts 28: 1-10). It was found that the American English NWT translation attempts to subvert the colonial dimension that is conveyed in the conceptualization of Malta island. In the NWT, 50% of all the metaphorical expressions used in the narrative represent the colonial identity. But in the NASB which is used mainly among conservative dominant American Protestant denominations, the metaphorical expressions representing colonial identity are 67.57%. Nevertheless, while the rate of metaphorical expressions that manifest the topos of spirituality is almost the same, that is 27.02% for the NASB and 26.31% for the NWT, the rate of migration identity expressions is higher in the American English NWT than in the NASB. In the American English NWT, the conceptualization of multicultural or migration identity is respectively 21.05% whereas it is equal to 5.40% only in the NASB. These results prove that in its construction of alterity in the Malta island narrative, the NWT tends to American postnational, postcolonial, and global thought and identity.

The paper also purposed to examine in what ways the Burundi JW bible or the Kirundi NWT is in revolt against the original American ST. It was found out that the translation agency adopted a nihilist culture that tends to creatively reproduce the original in a different language. There is, however, translatorial revolt, especially regarding metaphorical expressions related to individualism, capitalism, and nautical culture. There is in the TT cultural filtering that attempts to adapt the ascetic virtues from the center to the local gospel setting.

Finally, the results were interpreted to scrutinize the rationale of the resulting island identity about American national culture and identity. It was found that the variation in the translation of the metaphorical expressions of colonial identity and migration identity is in line with Jehovah’s Witnesses’ manipulation of the biblical narrative of Malta island due to its pertinence to the issue of alterity and its centrality to American national character and the way marginal religious groups

perceive it. In addition, the issue of the island and its connection with such notions as nation, land, and migration are crucial to Jehovah's Witnesses' orientation toward American national mythic narratives of the promised land, new world, and millennium. Hence a higher rate of migration identity metaphorical expressions in American English NWT and its Kirundi counterpart than in the NASB.

The issue of island identity and its translation by American NRMs is very heuristic. Since this research is not exhaustive, other studies should be carried out to investigate to what extent American NRMs relate to the national character of the United States in constructing alterity through the translation of other biblical island narratives such as that of Patmos, Samos, Seleucia, Lesbos, and Crete.

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ON SATIRICAL COMMENTS: POLITICAL HUMOR OF INDONESIANS DEPICTED IN INSTAGRAM POSTS

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<https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i2.6776>

received 4 July 2023; accepted 22 March 2024

Abstract

This study explores the phenomenon of political humor within Indonesian society, focusing specifically on the expression of satirical comments through Instagram posts. Employing critical discourse analysis as the methodological framework, the study examines how Indonesian users utilize humor to comment on political events, figures, and ideologies in the digital realm. By analyzing a selected sample of Instagram posts, the study aims to shed light on the linguistic and discursive strategies employed by users to construct satirical commentary and investigate the underlying socio-political implications of such discourse. The study findings highlight the significance of satirical comments in shaping public opinion and fostering political dialogue within Indonesian society. It uncovers Instagram users' diverse strategies to express their discontent, promote alternative perspectives, and foster critical thinking through humor. The study identifies recurring themes, targets, and stylistic patterns in satirical comments, offering valuable insights into contemporary Indonesia's political discourse and collective sentiment. This study contributes to the existing literature on critical discourse analysis. It provides an in-depth analysis of the unique ways Indonesians engage in political satire through Instagram, elucidating the intricate relationship between language, humor, and political critique.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, Indonesian society, Instagram posts, political humor, satirical comments

Introduction

Political humor and satire have long been recognized as effective forms of social commentary (cf. Attardo, 2001; Feldman, 2000; Tsakona, 2009; Young, 2017), allowing individuals to express their discontent, challenge power structures, and engage in critical dialogue. In the digital age, social media platforms have emerged as influential spaces for disseminating such humor, allowing users to share satirical comments and memes with a wide audience (cf. Dynel, 2013; Dynel & Chovanec, 2021). In the Indonesian context, Instagram has gained immense popularity as a platform for political expression, providing a creative outlet for users to engage in political humor and critique (cf. Harun et al., 2015; Nugraha, 2020). This study aims to investigate the phenomenon of satirical comments in Indonesian



society as depicted in Instagram posts, utilizing critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) as the primary methodology. By focusing on the linguistic and discursive strategies employed in these comments, the study seeks to uncover how Indonesian users utilize humor to comment on political events, figures, and ideologies. CDA offers a valuable framework for examining the relationship between language, power, and social change. By analyzing the language used within satirical comments, this study will delve into the content, structure, and rhetorical devices employed in satirical comments, exploring how users manipulate language, irony, sarcasm, and parody to construct political criticism and social commentary. Examining a selected sample of Instagram posts will identify recurring themes, targets, and stylistic patterns, shedding light on the prevalent issues and concerns within Indonesian society.

Furthermore, political humor and satire have long been recognized as powerful tools for social commentary, providing individuals with a means to express dissent, challenge authority, and engage in critical dialogue (Attardo, 1994; Balakrishnan et al., 2019; Boukes et al., 2015; Feldman, 1995). In recent years, the rise of social media platforms has transformed the landscape of political communication, offering new avenues for disseminating satirical content (Daniels, 2007; Lent, 2014; Ostrom, 2007; Sen & Hill, 2007). Scholars have highlighted the significance of political humor as a form of resistance and social critique. In the Indonesian context, political humor has a rich history, with traditions such as wayang (shadow puppetry) (cf. Cohen, 2007; Pandin, 2020; Pranowo et al., 2022) and ludruk (traditional comedy theater) (cf. Kholidah et al., 2020; Pandin et al., 2019; Pranowo et al., 2021) serving as platforms for satirical commentary. However, with the advent of digital media, particularly social media platforms like Instagram, individuals now have unprecedented opportunities to engage in political humor and satire, reaching a wider audience and shaping public discourse.

In the coming five years, several studies (e.g., Hasanah & Hidayat, 2020; Nugraha, 2022; Rahman, 2022) examined political satire in Indonesian online communities, focusing on social media platforms. These studies highlighted how political humor is crucial in constructing public opinion and challenging political narratives. However, this study primarily focused on textual analysis of memes and overlooked the specific linguistic strategies employed within satirical comments. Other relevant studies (e.g., Triputra & Sugita, 2016; Putri, 2018; Mahadian & Hashim, 2022) explored the role of political memes on Instagram in shaping political communication during the Indonesian presidential election. While the study shed light on the use of visual humor and memes, it did not specifically focus on satirical comments and the linguistic strategies employed within them.

Building upon these previous studies, this research aims to fill the gap in the literature by examining the linguistic and discursive strategies employed within satirical comments on Instagram in the Indonesian context. By employing CDA, this study seeks to highlight the unique ways in which individuals utilize humor to comment on political events, figures, and ideologies. Moreover, this research will draw upon linguistics and media studies theories to comprehensively understand the phenomenon. It will analyze the manipulation of language, irony, sarcasm, and parody as tools of political criticism and social commentary within satirical comments. By conducting an in-depth analysis of a selected sample of Instagram posts, this research aims to identify recurring themes, targets, and stylistic patterns

in satirical comments, offering valuable insights into contemporary Indonesia's political climate and collective sentiment.

Accordingly, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the political humor and satirical comments found within Indonesian Instagram posts. By examining the linguistic strategies employed and analyzing the social and political implications, this study seeks to contribute to understanding the relationship between humor, language, and politics in contemporary Indonesian society. Accordingly, the research questions are as follows: (1) what are the linguistic and discursive strategies employed in satirical comments within Indonesian Instagram posts that contribute to the construction of political humor; (2) how do satirical comments in Indonesian Instagram posts challenge prevailing power structures, critique political figures and policies, and engage in public discourse; and (3) what are the recurring themes, targets, and stylistic patterns found in satirical comments within Indonesian Instagram posts, and what do they reveal about the socio-political climate in contemporary Indonesia?

Method

This study employed CDA as the primary methodology to examine the phenomenon of satirical comments and political humor depicted in Indonesian Instagram posts. CDA offers a framework for analyzing the relationship between language, power, and social change, making it well-suited for investigating the linguistic and discursive strategies employed within satirical comments in a specific socio-political context (cf. Fairclough, 2013; Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Weiss & Wodak, 2007). Specifically, the study stages were as follows. First, Data Collection: A systematic approach was adopted to collect data for the analysis. A sample of Indonesian Instagram posts containing satirical comments was selected based on relevance to political events, figures, and ideologies. The sample encompassed various posts, capturing themes, targets, and stylistic patterns prevalent in satirical comments. The collection coverage was from 1st January 2022 up to 31st July 2023. The data were retrieved from the Instagram account @katakitaig.

Second, the data analysis involved a multi-stage process. Initially, a comprehensive reading of the selected Instagram posts was conducted to gain familiarity with the content and context. Then, the satirical comments within these posts were extracted and transcribed for detailed examination. Qualitative techniques identified and analyzed the linguistic and discursive strategies employed within the comments. The analysis focused on various aspects, including manipulating language, using irony, sarcasm, parody, and other rhetorical devices. The study focused on how these linguistic strategies contribute to constructing political humor, challenging power structures, critiquing political figures and policies, and engaging in public discourse. Furthermore, the analysis examined recurring themes and targets within the satirical comments to understand Indonesian society's prevalent issues and concerns. This examination provides insights into contemporary Indonesia's socio-political climate and collective sentiment.

Third, ethical considerations had been considered throughout the research process. The researcher adhered to ethical guidelines regarding publicly available data on social media platforms. Fourth, it is important to acknowledge certain

limitations of this research. The sample of Instagram posts might only represent part of the spectrum of satirical comments in Indonesian society, as it was limited to the available data within the selected timeframe. Additionally, the analysis was based on the researcher's interpretation and is subject to his biases and perspectives.

Findings and Discussion

The linguistic and discursive strategies

The analysis revealed a range of linguistic and discursive strategies utilized within satirical comments. These strategies included the manipulation of language through wordplay, puns, and clever linguistic constructions. Satirical comments often employ irony, sarcasm, and parody to convey political critique humorously. Users frequently employed intertextuality, drawing upon popular culture references and memes to enhance the satirical effect. Some samples of the data are presented as follows.

First, in the post published in mid-May 2023 (see Figure 1. a), wordplay and parody were the most prominent linguistic strategies used. Wordplay manifested in two figures from the cartoon. The first figure, a legislative candidate, is dressed in a formal shirt (symbolizing his social status and level of relationships). The figure is in a campaign billboard frame that reads “*Dul Semprul* (wordplay in Javanese),” which indicates the figure’s unprofessionalism. In the same billboard, the cartoon maker adds “*jujur, merakyat, anti korupsi* (transl. honest, populist, anti-corruption)” as a satire. As a series of parodies of the cartoon, the second figure, an ordinary citizen, sings cheerfully. The wordplay quoted from the song lyrics is the second figure singing. The verse “*tersenyum dianya padaku, manis, manis, manis* (transl. she smiled at me, so sweet, sweet, sweet)” is a mockery of the figure being campaigned for on the billboard.

Second, in another example post, a political cartoon published in mid-2022 (see Figure 1. b), the cartoonist used the linguistic strategies of puns and sarcasm. In the post, a teacher is teaching the subject “*pelajaran kata-kata* (transl. matter of words)” (the figure shown is satirizing a national politician known to be good at narrating). In the post, there are five phrases by the cartoonist. The five phrases are puns the politician often uses to deceive the public of his mistakes in handling the public problems in the nation’s capital. Sarcastically, the cartoonist wants to criticize the politician and convey that the public needs to be careful with the politician’s tendency to manipulate language, especially related to words.

Third, in the last data sample (see Figure 1. c), the last pattern of linguistic strategies used in the post is found: clever linguistic construction and irony. As shown by the cartoonist, the verb “*keruk* (dredge)” is used denotatively and connotatively in the political cartoon post. In its denotative context, the verb describes the real performance of local leaders in flood management efforts. The phrase “*keruk kali* (dredge the river)” is an expression used to refer to the real actions of the regional leader in question. In contrast, denotatively, “*keruk APBD* (dredge the APBD-government fund)” satirizes regional leaders who ironically spend government funds without good performance. The use of these verbs is claimed to be the linguistic intelligence possessed by the cartoonist to critique the political issues ironically.

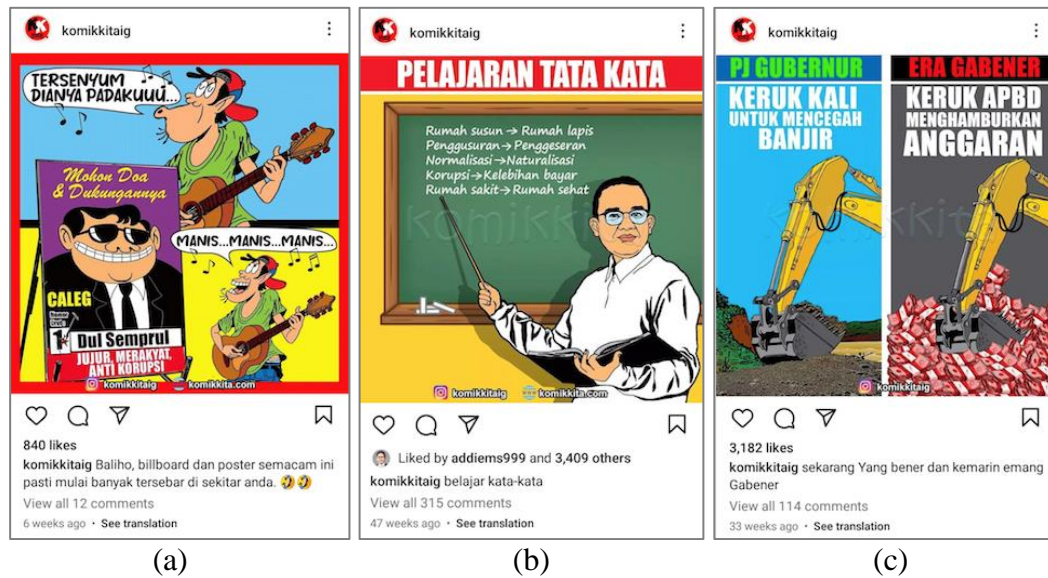


Figure 1. The linguistic and discursive strategies of political cartoons on Instagram posts

Accordingly, the linguistic and discursive strategies employed in satirical comments within Indonesian Instagram posts play a crucial role in constructing political humor. One of the key linguistic strategies observed in satirical comments is the manipulation of language. Satirists often use wordplay, puns, and clever linguistic constructions to make humorous comments. These linguistic devices add a layer of amusement and satire to the comments, capturing the audience's attention and evoking laughter (Asidiky et al., 2022). By playing with language, satirical comments draw attention to the absurdity or contradictions in political events, figures, or policies, thus contributing to the construction of political humor.

Furthermore, satirical comments frequently employ irony, sarcasm, and parody to convey political critique. Irony expresses the opposite of what is meant, often highlighting the gap between appearance and reality (Witek, 2022). Sarcasm, on the other hand, involves using cutting or mocking remarks to express disapproval or contempt (Meibauer, 2019). By employing irony and sarcasm, satirical comments challenge prevailing narratives, subvert power structures, and provide an alternative perspective on political issues. Parody, another commonly employed strategy, involves imitating or mimicking a particular style or manner of communication, often exaggerating it for comic effect. Through parody, satirical comments critique political figures or ideologies and provide a satirical reinterpretation of their actions, speeches, or behaviors.

Intertextuality is another linguistic strategy frequently observed in satirical comments (Landreville, 2015). Satirists often draw upon popular culture references, memes, or other media artifacts to enhance the satirical effect. By referencing well-known cultural symbols, events, or characters, satirical comments establish a sense of familiarity and relatability with the audience. This intertextuality adds humor and serves as a vehicle for conveying political critique in a manner that resonates with the target audience.

Moreover, the discursive strategies employed within satirical comments construct political humor. Satirical comments engage in playful and critical

discourse, challenging power structures and questioning dominant narratives (Fein et al., 2015). They often use exaggeration, hyperbole, or absurdity to highlight political events or figures' flaws, contradictions, or hypocrisies. By amplifying certain aspects or distorting reality, satirical comments expose the inconsistencies or injustices within the political sphere, drawing attention to societal issues and fostering critical reflection. Satirical comments also engage in social commentary, discussing and critiquing broader social, cultural, or moral issues. They provide a platform for users to express their discontent, voice alternative perspectives, and challenge the status quo. By raising awareness and initiating discussions on societal concerns, satirical comments construct political humor by stimulating critical thinking and encouraging active engagement with political issues.

In short, the linguistic and discursive strategies employed within satirical comments in Indonesian Instagram posts are integral to constructing political humor. The manipulation of language through wordplay, irony, sarcasm, and parody adds wit and satire to the comments. Intertextuality enhances relatability and cultural resonance. Discursive strategies such as exaggeration and social commentary challenge power structures and expose societal issues. By employing these strategies, satirical comments effectively convey political critique, engage the audience, and contribute to the vibrant political humor found in Indonesian Instagram posts.

Challenges to power structures

Satirical comments within Indonesian Instagram posts were found to challenge prevailing power structures. Political figures, institutions, and policies were subject to scathing criticism through humor. Satirical comments often expose hypocrisy, inconsistency, and corruption within the political realm, providing a platform for users to express their discontent and promote alternative perspectives. By subverting dominant narratives, satirical comments aimed to undermine the legitimacy and authority of those in power. Some samples of the data have been presented as follows.

First, in a post in May 2023 (see Figure 2. a), a political cartoon was found that challenged the power structure of the government, especially the executive board or DPR (The People's Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia). As shown in the cartoon, there are three figures who both have allergies. The first figure is a man who has an allergy to dust. The second figure is a man who has a food allergy. The last figure is a member of the board (DPR). The last figure has an allergy to "drafting asset forfeiture laws." The last figure satirizes the slow process of formulating laws for those convicted of corruption. As an allergic person, he always protects himself from any bacteria. In this case, the cartoonist satirizes the urgency of law issuance as an allergy. So, the board of DPR should take a distance and avoid the disease. This political cartoon challenges the executive council, which seems slow in discussing and formulating the draft law process. The political cartoon satirically criticizes these government institutions for their inconsistent performance in formulating laws.

Second, in another political cartoon post in May 2023 (see Figure 2. b), some illustrations challenge politicians and hypocrisy. As shown in the post, the figures caricatured by the cartoonist are a minister and three university students. Other figures that appear are ordinary people. In one scene, the minister seems to

comment on the House of Representatives. He complained about the slowness in formulating the Asset Forfeiture Law. Perhaps the law or regulation is planned to be applied to corruption suspects. In the other scene, the cartoonist uses the figure of the common people to underline the hypocrisy of the student group, who seem not to see the problem. Students are often critical and vocal about any signs of abuse of power by members and institutions of the DPR. However, those attributes disappear due to unclear reasons of the students. At its core, the cartoons challenge political figures and the nuances of hypocrisy that arise concerning the issues highlighted.

Meanwhile, in the political cartoon posted in June 2023 (*see* Figure 2. c), there is a challenge to the policies and corrupt attitudes of state officials. The cartoon shows a part of the illustration about a damaged road that has become national news in a province. The damage is in the public spotlight because it has occurred for years without any repair efforts from the governor and his staff. Another part of the illustration is a smiling figure of President Jokowi with the caption that he will visit the area. Meanwhile, the last part of the illustration is a picture of a road that looks smooth because it has been repaired in a short time. The cartoonist of the post wants to challenge illogical provincial government policies. The irregularity is a strong indication that there is a budget game for handling the damaged road. Visually and textually, the cartoon satirizes provincial officials for their manipulative and corrupt policies.



Figure 2. Challenges to power structures of political cartoons on Instagram posts

Admittedly, satirical comments in Indonesian Instagram posts significantly challenge prevailing power structures, critique political figures and policies, and engage in public discourse. Satirists use humor to expose politicians' flaws, inconsistencies, and questionable actions (Boukes et al., 2015). By highlighting their shortcomings or hypocrisies, satirical comments undermine the legitimacy and authority of those in power. These challenge the dominant narratives propagated by political elites and allow alternative perspectives to emerge.

Furthermore, satirical comments critique political policies and actions. They provide a platform for users to express their dissatisfaction or discontent with specific government decisions or initiatives. Through humor and irony, satirical comments draw attention to these policies' negative consequences, inconsistencies, or unfairness (Hill, 2013). By exposing the gaps between rhetoric and reality, satirical comments critically assess political decisions and policies, promoting accountability and transparency. Satirical comments also foster dialogue and encourage active participation in public discourse. They serve as a means for citizens to express their opinions, concerns, and alternative viewpoints on political issues. Satire catalyzes discussions as users respond, share, and engage with the comments, creating a virtual space for public deliberation. This engagement in public discourse contributes to democratizing political communication, empowering individuals to have a voice and participate in shaping public opinion.

Additionally, satirical comments provide a form of social critique that goes beyond traditional modes of political discourse. Satirical comments can address sensitive topics and challenge societal norms and conventions (Stewart, 2015). Satirists often use these comments to highlight societal inequalities, corruption, or censorship, highlighting issues that may be overlooked or downplayed in mainstream political discourse. Satirical comments thus serve as a form of social commentary, prompting reflection, raising awareness, and initiating discussions on broader societal concerns.

It is important to note that the effectiveness of satirical comments in challenging power structures, critiquing political figures and policies, and engaging in public discourse relies on their ability to resonate with the audience. Satirists tap into shared cultural references, use local languages or dialects, and draw upon popular culture to establish a connection with their intended audience (Nuriarta & Sujayanthi, 2020). Using familiar cultural symbols and references, satirical comments become relatable and accessible, maximizing their impact and reach.

In conclusion, satirical comments in Indonesian Instagram posts are a powerful tool for challenging prevailing power structures, critiquing political figures and policies, and engaging in public discourse. By targeting political elites, highlighting policy inconsistencies, and fostering public deliberation, satirical comments contribute to a more inclusive and participatory political landscape. They allow citizens to voice their concerns, express alternative perspectives, and collectively shape public opinion. Through humor and social critique, satirical comments significantly promote accountability, raise awareness, and foster critical engagement with political issues in Indonesian society.

Prevalent themes and targets

The analysis identified several recurring themes and targets within satirical comments. Politicians and government officials were frequent targets of satire, with their actions, speeches, and policies subjected to ridicule. Satirical comments also tackled societal issues, such as inequality, corruption, and censorship. Moreover, satirical comments often engage with current events and political scandals, providing commentary and critique promptly. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that satirical comments often touched upon sensitive topics and taboos, challenging societal norms and conventions. By addressing controversial issues through humor,

users sought to initiate discussions and provoke critical thinking among their audience. Some samples of the data are presented as follows.

First, in a post in 2023 (see Figure 3. a), the targets of satirical cartoons are Indonesian politicians. In the cartoon, there are three politicians from three different backgrounds. All three are appointed as targets of the cartoon because they are nominators of Indonesian presidential candidates in the upcoming 2024 elections. The first politician figure is underneath his grandfather's big name. The expression of his caricature does not seem to shine despite the formal dress that symbolizes his level of knowledge and social status. The second politician is not much different but cannot stand out from his father's influence. With similar fashion nuances to the previous figure, the second figure does not appear to be smiling in the caricature. A third figure is an average person not dressed in formal attire, just a regular shirt. He appears to be smiling broadly and proudly. On the third figure, the cartoonist adds a caption about his achievements as a politician increasingly trusted by the public. Thus, the political cartoon targets politicians as the target of its humorous criticism.

Second, in political cartoons posted in mid-2023 (see Figure 3. b), cartoonists target politicians' actions, speeches, and policies. The cartoon features two politicians the public recently criticized for their corrupt behavior. The cartoonist highlights two different event scenes in the cartoon. In the first scene, the first politician is presented who is satirized because he was not right in making policies during his term of office. The policy relates to the national information system, particularly the provision of fast internet networks. The politician said, "What is fast internet for?" In the second scene, the cartoonist highlights the figure of the first politician's colleague named a suspect in the fast internet policy process. Satirically, cartoonists target these politicians because of their actions, speeches, and policies. Implicitly, the cartoonist also invites the public to realize that the two politicians can make corrupt policies simultaneously.

Third, in the last sample of political cartoons posted in mid-2022 (see Figure 3. c), cartoonists deliberately targeted events that captured the public's attention, peppered with political scandals. The cartoon illustrates an electronic car racing event held in Jakarta. The two figures in the cartoon are an executive committee member and the head of the activity's politician. The caption attached to the committee figure reads independent race, in the sense that all event elements are managed by themselves, starting from the committee, the audience, to the news publication. There is a play on words that are used to satirize explicitly. The figure of the head of the committee seemed to be carrying a huge pile of tickets. The tickets were purchased so that the event could run smoothly. The cartoonist from the post satirically criticized the strange event and targeted politicians and the policies taken related to holding the event.

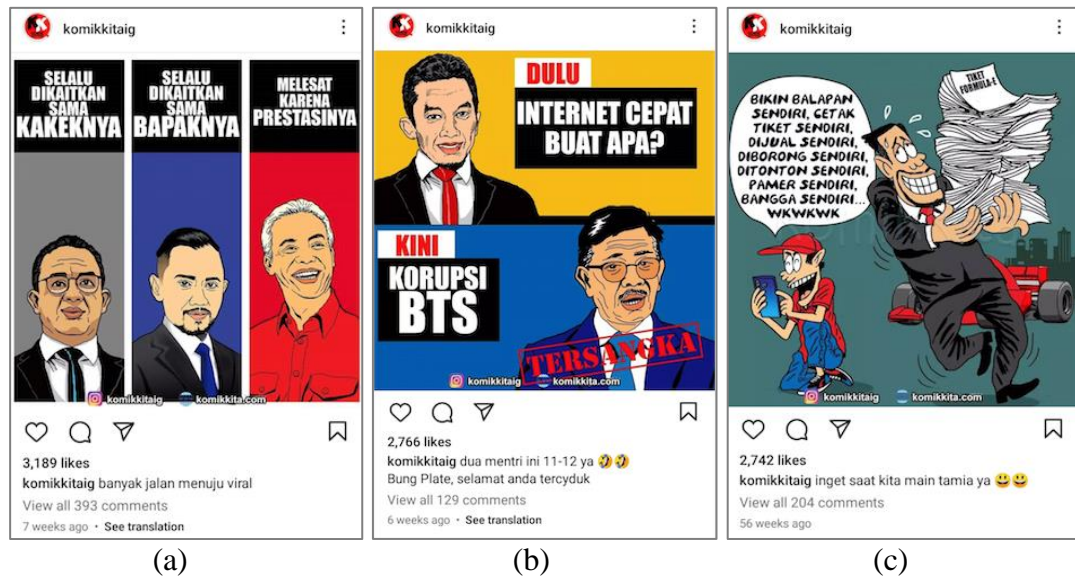


Figure 3. Prevalent themes and targets of political cartoons on Instagram posts

Accordingly, the recurring themes, targets, and stylistic patterns found in satirical comments within Indonesian Instagram posts offer valuable insights into the socio-political climate of contemporary Indonesia. One recurring theme in satirical comments is the critique of political figures and leaders. Political elites, including government officials and prominent politicians, often become the primary targets of satire (Balakrishnan et al., 2019). Satirical comments mock their actions, speeches, behaviors, or personal characteristics, exposing their flaws, inconsistencies, or perceived corruption. This theme reflects the public's skepticism and discontent with political leaders and their perceived abuses of power.

Another prevalent theme in satirical comments is the critique of government policies and actions. Satirists use humor to draw attention to policies that are seen as ineffective, unjust, or misguided (Holbert et al., 2011). They highlight the discrepancies between the stated objectives and the outcomes, shedding light on these policies' negative consequences or unintended effects (Weydmann & Großmann, 2020). This theme underscores the public's desire for more accountable and responsible governance.

Furthermore, societal issues such as inequality, corruption, and censorship are frequently addressed in satirical comments. Satirists use humor to critique and raise awareness about these issues, often employing irony, exaggeration, or absurdity to make their point (Morgan, 2010). By addressing sensitive topics through satire, satirical comments challenge societal norms and conventions, prompting critical reflection and promoting public dialogue. The targets of satirical comments extend beyond political figures and policies. Satirists also aim for cultural or social phenomena, including popular trends, social behaviors, or cultural norms. These comments often rely on intertextuality and references to popular culture to enhance the satirical effect. By critiquing cultural or social aspects, satirical comments reflect the broader societal concerns and provide a commentary on the state of contemporary Indonesian culture.

Regarding stylistic patterns, satirical comments in Indonesian Instagram posts often exhibit a combination of humor, wit, and sarcasm. They employ linguistic devices such as wordplay, puns, and clever constructions to create humorous remarks. Satirists make use of irony and sarcasm to convey their critique, often employing a tone of mockery or derision. The stylistic patterns aim to engage the audience, evoke laughter, and provoke thought (Piata, 2016). The recurring themes, targets, and stylistic patterns in satirical comments within Indonesian Instagram posts reveal important insights about the socio-political climate in contemporary Indonesia. They reflect a public sentiment characterized by skepticism, discontent, and a desire for change. The themes of critiquing political figures and policies point to a growing demand for accountable and responsible governance. Critiquing societal issues highlights the public's concerns about inequality, corruption, and censorship, indicating a desire for a more just and equitable society.

Moreover, the choice of targets and the use of humor and satire as a means of expression reflect a societal need for alternative communication channels and dissent. Satirical comments provide a platform for individuals to voice their opinions (Faliha & Putri, 2022), challenge authority, and participate in shaping the socio-political landscape. The recurring themes and stylistic patterns in satirical comments demonstrate the role of humor as a tool for social critique and political engagement in contemporary Indonesia.

In sum, the recurring themes, targets, and stylistic patterns found in satirical comments within Indonesian Instagram posts shed light on the socio-political climate in contemporary Indonesia. They reflect the public's skepticism towards political figures and policies, their concerns about societal issues, and their desire for change and accountability. Satirical comments provide an outlet for critical engagement and offer a glimpse into Indonesian society's diverse perspectives and opinions.

Conclusion

This study analyzed satirical comments within Indonesian Instagram posts, exploring their linguistic and discursive strategies, their impact on challenging power structures and critiquing political figures and policies, and their contribution to public discourse. Through the lens of CDA, this study has provided valuable insights into the nature of political humor in contemporary Indonesia. The findings of this research have revealed several important aspects of satirical comments. Linguistically, satirists employ various strategies such as wordplay, irony, sarcasm, and intertextuality to create humorous comments. Discursively, satirical comments challenge prevailing power structures, critique political figures and policies, and engage in public discourse by fostering dialogue and encouraging active participation. The recurring themes of critiquing political figures, policies, societal issues, and cultural norms reflect Indonesia's socio-political climate.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study: (1) The analysis was limited to satirical comments on Instagram, which may not capture Indonesia's entire spectrum of political humor. Future studies can expand the scope to include other social media platforms or offline contexts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. (2) This study focused on satirical comments in the Indonesian context, and the findings may not directly apply to other cultural or linguistic contexts. Cross-cultural studies could be

conducted to explore the similarities and differences in political humor across different societies. (3) This study primarily employed critical discourse analysis as the methodological approach. While this approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the linguistic and discursive strategies employed in satirical comments, future research could consider using complementary methods such as qualitative interviews or surveys to gain insights into the audience's perspectives and reception of political humor.

Investigating the impact and reception of satirical comments in future research directions would be valuable. Understanding how different audiences interpret and engage with political humor can shed light on its effectiveness in shaping public opinion and promoting social change. Additionally, longitudinal studies can provide insights into the evolving nature of political humor over time, capturing the dynamics of satirical comments and their response to socio-political developments. In conclusion, this study has contributed to understanding satirical comments within Indonesian Instagram posts and their significance in the socio-political climate. By examining the linguistic and discursive strategies, the impact on power structures and political critique, and the engagement in public discourse, this study has highlighted the role of political humor as a form of expression, critique, and engagement. Despite the limitations, this study lays the foundation for future investigations into the dynamic landscape of political humor in Indonesia and beyond.

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YOUNG PEOPLE AND FASCISM PROPAGANDA IN IRAN: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ANTHEM ‘HAIL COMMANDER’

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<https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i2.7283>

received 27 September 2023; accepted 26 March 2024

Abstract

Since its inception in 1979, the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) has enormously capitalized on exploiting youths, from the recruitment of child soldiers during the Iran-Iraq war to deployments of underage boys and girls for political socialization. Political socialization, in this sense, has involved reinforcing Shia/Revolutionary ideologies through mobilizing young people for various cultural activities and propaganda campaigns. As part of these efforts, and in line with IRI’s mounting domestic and international struggles, since March 2022, the government has heavily invested in propagating ‘Hail Commander’, an anthem produced and broadcast by the state-run media. Exclusively performed by 7-14 years old children in uniforms, the content of this anthem (lyrics and visual features) bears a close resemblance to the lyrics of *Giovinezza* (Juvenility) of fascist Italy (1924-1943) and the political ideals promoted by *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth) in Nazi Germany (1926-1945). By drawing on theories of fascism, propaganda, and political socialization, and using comparative critical analysis, this study reveals the underlying propagandist messages in Hail Commander and its relations to the fascist/Nazi praxis and ideologies. It is further argued that the creation of Hail Commander should be seen as the revival of the child soldier phenomenon, albeit in the form of media representation.

Keywords: child soldier, fascism, Iranian youth, political socialization, propaganda

Introduction

In the dictator-ruled system of governments, the leader who often relies on violence to suppress critics and oppositional groups has indubitably less trouble ruling if the beliefs and worldviews of the people are more aligned with the state’s ideologies. Recognizing the importance of the formative years in shaping one’s belief system that is carried on during adulthood, totalitarian regimes throughout history have typically kept a sharp and watchful eye on the younger segment of their population. Indeed, the emphasis on youthfulness was one of the consistent themes throughout the convoluted path of fascist ideology (Ledeen, 1969), while Hitler’s oft-repeated phrases in this regard were “Whoever has the youth has the future” (Kunzer, 1938). Following this view, the physical and mental training of German youth became one of the Nazi party’s greatest priorities, and much



importance was placed on childhood activities and education. Similar beliefs also led to the establishment of a fascist student youth organization in the 1920s by Benito Mussolini's National Fascist Party, as part of a revolutionary cultural movement that saw impressive physical courage and patriotic values in youth's minds as an imperative catalyst for fascism.

These trends by no means have been limited to Fascist Italy, Nazis Germany, or Communist USSR; over this century several unitary one-party republics or states have emerged around the world that followed the footsteps of these long-gone totalitarian regimes in terms of exploiting youth for nation building and advancing their ideologies (Stanley, 2020). Among these, is the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI) which despite its efforts to portray itself as a democratic country, has been internationally known to be moving from theocratic authoritarianism towards a more totalitarian form of government (Parchami, 2022). As such, while election is the only justification for publicizing democracy in Iran, there have been several reasons for categorizing the country as a totalitarian nation. These include violating human rights and freedom of speech, supporting terrorism, as well as the cleric absolutism headed by the Supreme Leader who is the most powerful political authority in the country. Here, what seems to be remarkable is that the Iranian election itself is a complete sham; the Guardian Council which has the authority to allow/block candidates from entering parliamentary, presidency, and the Assembly of Experts elections, are all appointed by the Supreme Leader himself (Saikal, 2021).

Extending for more than four decades, the cleric leadership in Iran has been paying specific attention to the youth as a valuable asset, both in terms of manpower supply and also cultural resources. In the former sense, throughout the Iran-Iraq war which began in 1980, a year after the Islamic Revolution and lasted for eight years, the authorities have actively recruited young soldiers to be sent to the frontlines. It is, however, in this latter sense that the state has mostly focused and invested on, particularly in the post-war era; winning the hearts and minds of the new generation and ensuring their allegiance before coming of age (Bajoghli, 2019). Indeed, heavily politicized cultural activities promoted in top-level cultural policy in the past three decades or so reflect the determination of the IRI's cultural elite to garner the support of Iran's youthful population (Powell & Cwick, 2017). This has taken the form of inculcating Shi'ite and Revolutionary ethos and values through altering the education system and mobilizing the mass media and other social institutions to adapt the youth to the dominant ideologies. And exploiting the youth for symbolic representation, on the other hand. Symbolic representations, in this way, take many cultural forms, mostly through means of mass media where underage people are used for evoking particular meanings and emotions among the public about the Islamic regime's ideological or political priorities at the time (Wojcieszak et al., 2019).

One of IRI's latest undertakings in this regard was the making of the 'Hail Commander', an anthem produced and broadcast by the state-run media where a large group of underage boys and girls are shown in uniforms as they praise and declare loyalty to the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei. As expected, soon after airing the original video on national television, several other remakes of the anthem sprang up across various television channels and other state-sponsored communication platforms. These government-funded video productions featured

young people and schoolchildren, not only in different locations in Iran but also around the world and in cities like Beirut and Houston, Texas (McCarthy, 2022).

Nevertheless, soon after its sudden appearance, Hail Commander created a wide range of reactions among the general public as well as various oppositional groups outside Iran who either sneered at this anthem or made a burlesque of it. Along with these, there were also several controversies and prognoses; some surmised that the anthem's sudden appearance was a pretentious gesture by the regime as it boasted of having the youth's support, particularly at the time when nationwide dissidence seemed to reach an all-time high. Others construed it as a timely and strategic move to distract public attention from the deterioration of mullahs' power which has recently become more obvious due to the increasing international sanctions against Iran (Berman, 2020). Apart from the likely circumstances that had led to the decisions behind the making of Hail Commander, what seems to be remarkable is that the content of this anthem is rife with symbols and messages that are reminiscent of the praxis and political ideals promoted by youth organizations in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany between 1920s-1940s.

This close resemblance, in turn, opens up the possibility for an argument that not only criticizes the Iranian authorities for following in the footsteps of fascist and Nazi regimes in exploiting the young people for propagating their political ideologies but also questions the nature of the IRI's governing system as a republic where the power is supposed to be held by the people and their elected representatives. In this view, and to substantiate the aforementioned argument, the present study, critically analyses Hail Commander's content and compares it to the similar symbolic elements found in the politicized cultural activities of the fascist and Nazi youth organizations.

Youth and political socialization

Around the world and in different societies individuals learn and often internalize a political stance through a process of political socialization. This is where people acquire most of their knowledge about the arrangement of power in their society and learn about themselves and their place in the networks of power. This process, as Tracy H. Koon pointed out, effectively takes place during the formative years of individuals, shaping their "attitudes, values, and beliefs about their political system or the way they absorb a certain political orientation from their environment" (1985, p. 15). She suggested that understanding political socialization in a given society was only possible through studying the cultural transmission in the local context. The goal of political socialization, in her view, was to direct the young people's behavior into conforming forms of political and social activities, so that they become useful members of their society. Since it is through the socialization process that the political culture can be altered or preserved, transformed, or maintained, the study of political socialization can elucidate the phenomenon of political change or stability.

The political socialization of the young people is not a new phenomenon, as in the course of history almost every society has somehow engaged in undertaking this form of nation-building project (Guidi, 2022). Throughout the past century, however, such a process has taken on new and sometimes alarming overtones due to the influences of the First and Second World Wars, East-West ideological tensions, and the advancements in mass communication technologies. That being

said, the process of political socialization also varies in tone and intensity from nation to nation, depending on whether a totalitarian or a more pluralistic system of government is at work in a given society. In totalitarian regimes, such as the one in Iran, a whole array of socialization agents is worked on or mobilized to help young people gain an understanding of the political world. Among these agents are the family, the education system, the mass media, and other social institutions that the government uses to serve its agenda (Peters et al., 2022). Furthermore, some studies such as the one done by Greenstein (2017) suggested that the children's first conception of political authority is more based on emotion than cognition. He also found that children's emotional response to political leaders is remarkably more positive than adults' (Greenstein, 2017). This points to the vulnerability of the children and their less cynical state of mind, unlike adults who form their political beliefs through the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought and experience.

Basic concepts of fascism and Nazism

Fascism as an ideology has a long history and draws from a variety of sources. The origin of fascism was linked to the ideals of Plato (with some differences) and was inspired by the Spartans of ancient Greece who believed in the rule of elites and emphasized racial purity (Griffin, 2018). However, it was during the rule of Mussolini in Italy and between 1919 and 1945 that fascism got its full glare of publicity. Besides Italy, other nations such as Germany, Austria, and Japan which comprised the Axis during WWI and WWII followed the same form of nationalist and totalitarian system of government.

Fascists believe in the obsolescence of liberal democracy or any form of the parliamentary system and instead emphasize the necessity of mobilizing the society under a one-party totalitarian state, getting the nation ready to respond to any economic predicament or armed conflict. Neumann (1936) summarized some of the core features of fascism: 1) authoritarian-based leadership; 2) highly inspired by nationalism; 3) dictatorial form of capitalism; and 4) militarism (the use of war, imperialism, and terrorism). Christian Fuchs (2022), however, added another characteristic to these, that is (5) "fascism uses the friend-enemy scheme for creating imagined enemies and scapegoats to distract from social problem's foundations in class inequality and power asymmetries" (p. 17).

Similar to Fascism, was German Nazism, albeit with a more extreme form of ideologies and practices. Nazism emerged with the rise of Adolf Hitler and gained a place in the public eye between 1933 to 1945. Although both Fascism and Nazism strongly believed in nationalism, violence, and militarism, the latter had an additional element of racism in their doctrine (Passmore, 2014). Hitler called himself an Aryan (Central Asian race) descendant, therefore, his main motive was the glorification of Aryanism (or Germanic race). In contrast, fascists preserved the class system, regardless of the person's race, religion, and culture. For them, the 'state' was of utmost importance, and nationalism was a blend of all races and cultures (Martins, 2020).

Neumann regarded Nazi Germany as a racist state where the Leader has the authority to make or break a law at will. Hitler and his cabinet passed laws per the decree, and since the judiciary did not act independently, the judges were the absolute servants of the law, or in other words the Leader. Neumann also argued

that the policies of Nazism represented an irrational and lawless system because of the independent and yet symbiotic operations of Germany's four power centers; the Nazi party, the German state bureaucracy, the armed forces, and big business. For Neumann, both the inherent power and vulnerability of Nazi Germany came from the conspiratorial nature of these four self-interested groups, each of which strived for the expansion of Germany and its might without surrendering status or authority to any of the other parties.

Youth in Nazi and fascist regimes

Since the beginning of nationalism in the early 19th century, there have been numerous youth movements that, to some extent, have attempted to pour youth into a national mould. It was not, however, until the early twentieth century that the first official movements embracing the whole youth of a nation, emerged in countries like Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union. *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth) was an organization set up by Adolf Hitler in 1933 for educating and training male youth in Nazi principles. *Hitlerjugend* was under the leadership of Baldur von Schirach, one of the most important Nazi officials in the Reich and the head of all German youth programs, and included almost 60 percent of German boys by 1935. Later, on the first of July 1936, it became a state agency, expecting all young Aryan Germans to join. By 1945 *Hitlerjugend* had almost all German boys in the Reich, while another similar organization, *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (League of German Girls), recruited hundreds of thousands of German girls. *Deutscher Mädel* trained girls ages 10 to 18 for comradeship, domestic duties, and motherhood (Ponzio, 2015).

One of the Nazi party's greatest priorities was the physical and mental training of German youth and much attention was paid to activities and education of the children. Within the system of military exercises, educational programs, marches, camping, and community service that comprised the *Hitlerjugend*'s activities, much importance was placed on music, in particular group singing. At the age of ten, German boys were registered and investigated particularly for 'racial purity' and, if they were qualified, they were given a position in the *Deutsches Jungvolk* (German Young People). At the age of 13, these young people became eligible for the Hitler Youth, from which they graduated as they reached 18. Throughout these years they learned dedication, fellowship, and conformity to the Nazi, generally with little parental guidance. From the age of 18, they became Nazi Party members and served in the state labor service and the armed forces for three years.

Unlike *Hiterjugend* which was a part of its party's machinery for the foundation of a new regime, *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (the Italian youth movement) in Mussolini's Italy was established by law as an institution under the control of the Ministry of National Education in 1926. The law initially did not require young people's membership; however, a later enactment made it compulsory for boys aged 6-18 and girls 8-14 years old. 10 years later, another organization (*pre-Balilla*) was set up for training all the Fascist boys under 6 years of age, and only in the city of Milan ten thousand of these little soldiers were enrolled in this form of militarized nursery school. After 2 years of physical training these young warriors entered the scouts and at the age of 12, they joined *Balilla Riflemen* where they completed their training and later at the age of 14-16 accepted into *Avanguardisti* (Advance Guard).

Right after their service in the *Avanguardisti*, these young people became Young Fascists, and if they desired to continue a three-year preparatory training service, they were eligible for party membership. Therefore, it seems that the true mission of the Italian youth movement was to prepare the young generation for both military and political matters so that they were physically and mentally ready to defend Fascist Italy.

Method

This study employed a comparative critical analysis to examine the underlying ideological basis of the Hail Commander and its relations to fascist/Nazi ideals and practices. In media studies, critical analysis is an all-encompassing term for describing concepts that despite their diversity, “are united by their skeptical attitude, humanistic approach, political assessment, and commitment to social justice” (Ott & Mack, 2020, p. 15). Performing its analysis within such theoretical perspective, this study began with investigating several shots (or frames) extracted from the original video of the anthem, selected precisely for their relevance to the focus of the study, and then continues with an analysis of the lyrics in their entirety. From a theoretic perspective, the process of analysis involves establishing what is obtrusively manifest in the anthem at the level of denotation and then extracting what is more latently there among the connotative levels of meaning. Hence, exploring the implications of the codes and conventions employed in the lyrics and the selected images also includes comparing these textual items with fascist/Nazi principals and praxis, ultimately allowing to develop some form of critical analysis of the role of the Hail Commander in contemporary political culture in Iran.

Therefore, as the first step of the analysis, the visual aspect of the original footage was examined where after a general description of the video, selected frames of it are juxtaposed with some archived photos of militarized formations and youth organizations during fascist/Nazi rules. Next, after transcribing the lyrics (and translating them into English) each verse was described as they appear before they are interpreted and made explanations within the context of their production and circulation. Lastly, by juxtaposing the lyrics of *Giuvinazza* to Hail Commander, further revelations were made on the relationship between fascist Italy and IRI regarding the involvement of youth in propaganda.

Findings and Discussion

Analysis of ‘Hail Commander’

At the beginning of the analysis, it is useful to have a general introduction to Hail Commander, its production, and also the circulation of it in Iran and purportedly around the world. Released on Iranian national television on March 20, 2022, right after Khamenei’s yearly Nowruz (Persian New Year) message, ‘Hail Commander’ emerged as an ideological and pro-regime anthem that was well received by many religious families. Soon, a great deal of media hype surrounded the release of the anthem both within domestic and international arenas, mostly through social media sites and platforms. Within two months after its release, a series of promotional and religious campaigns began around the country, particularly in large cities such as Tehran, Shiraz, Isfahan, Hamadan, and Bandar Abbas, bringing together and mobilizing children and teenagers to perform this anthem in the squares and streets (Azar, 2022). At the same time, the state-run

media extensively engaged in advertising the anthem with a high coverage through a handful of its satellite channels that reportedly reached beyond the national borders in some countries at the heart of Europe as well as North Africa and even the US and Canada.

Initially, some of the fans and those who were involved in the production of Hail Commander believed that this anthem was a response to the widespread popularity of some of the recent hit songs of Sassy Mankan (formerly underground and currently exiled Iranian hip-hop singer) among Iranian youth (Koo, 2020). Of course, such conjectures were raised as the result, and in the aftermath of the sudden wave of the uploaded videos going viral and showing young boys or girls dancing to Sassy's songs in school and other public or private places. Yet, others, mostly anti-government groups, saw this as not a hasty response to Sassy's song, but a reaction of the regime to the recent uprisings in the country that signaled the frustration of the youth and their disinterest in the Supreme Leader and his dictatorial decrees and obsolete worldview.

The controversies surrounding this anthem abound; there have been criticisms about the quality of the hymn, including the fact that its profound and serious content is not suitable for the age and understanding of children at this age (Sinaee, 2022). At about the same time, photos of past and present world leaders such as Khamenei, Mubarak, Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein, Mussolini, Hitler, and Kim Jong-un appeared on social networks. The common title of the photos was 'Hail Commander'. From these online content creators' views, the title of the anthem was merely an excuse or irony to impart a censorious message: the bitter fate that these dictators suffered from or awaiting them. Among some other arguments was also the one that tried to mollify the fanaticism implied in the lyrics by claiming that 'Commander' here refers to 'Mahdi', not the Supreme Leader, so to make the anthem look less extremist (Iranian children in Azadi, 2022).

From the economic and financial perspective, however, there have been some other lines of reasoning that questioned the government's expenditure on propaganda and systematic spread of the state's ideologies. Many of these critics called the huge budget allocated to these organizations, a big wastage of the money of *Bait-al-Mal* (financial institution responsible for the administration of taxes in Islamic states) which could be otherwise used for developing the country and improving the lives of the people. Some pro-regime groups also argued that various ministries and propaganda organizations in Iran have been established to defend the cultural policies and ideology of the government, and yet, in the past years, these organizations have not been able to produce an influential video at this level. So, for this group of critics, the production and broadcasting of Hail Commander questions the performance and efficiency of many costly establishments such as cultural affairs, Islamic propaganda organization, Iran's state television, and their subsidiary departments and other related operational divisions.

In a situation where, for many years, the regime's propaganda machine did not seem to succeed in attracting people, the sudden and possibly made-up success of the Hail Commander has provided these politically motivated media and cultural institutions with a reason to justify their extensive efforts and budget allocations. To prove the popularity of the anthem and the loyalty of the new generation to the revolution and Khamenei's leadership, they came up with several strategies, such as creating many more remakes of the Hail Commander in different venues both

inside and outside Iran. Dressed in various military or other organizational uniforms, the children and teenagers were featured in different countries as far as the Lebanon and US as they chanted in foreign languages like Arabic and English. Despite these efforts, the shady success of the anthem and the true purpose of making and promoting it remains highly dubious, especially considering the countless responses from Iranians on social media who either criticized or made mockeries of the anthem.

Analysis of the images

Besides the spoken language (lyrics), the visual aspect of ‘Hail Commander’ (the original version) constitutes another imperative aspect of this anthem in terms of the construction of the meaning. Although the visual aspect of this version of the anthem is comprised of a wide array of film features and imageries which opens up a range of possibilities for semiotic and other forms of textual investigation, here, the focus is only on those signs and symbols that are closely akin to fascist/Nazi praxis. The original video which lasts about 8 minutes features an adult man (the lead singer) and a large number of children divided into girl-boy groups who are standing in columns in some type of military formation. Figure 1 is one of the arial shots showing a view from above where we can see the girls on the left, boys on the right, and the lead singer in the middle of the picture.

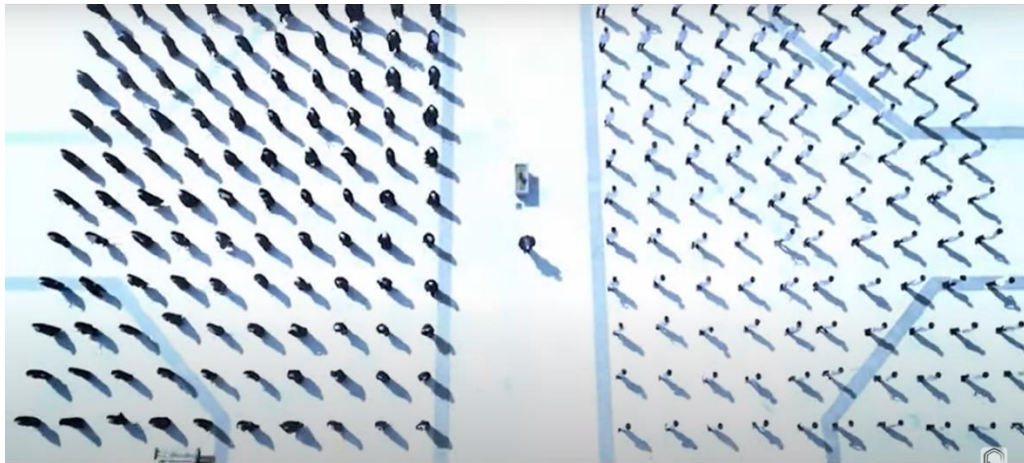


Figure 1. An aerial view shot of original video

This type of youth military formation, though denser in terms of participants, was a common sight during fascist and Nazi reigns. There are many archived photos accessible today showing youth’s large gatherings in these regimes, albeit from a lower angle due to the unavailability of drones and limited photographic technologies of the time. Figure 2 is one of these photos, showing German youth at Nuremberg. Here, the German Nazi leader Adolf Hitler (center, right) is seen reviewing Hitler Youth formations at a Nuremberg Rally in 1935. Immediately behind Hitler are Rudolf Hess (1894-1987), the nearest one to the camera, and Hitler Youth leader Baldur von Schirach (1907-1974) next to him.



Figure 2. Youth at Nuremberg (<https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/news-photo/german-nazi-leader-adolf-hitler-reviews-hitler-youth-news-photo/82947096?adppopup=true>)

Despite differences between these two photos, in terms of composition (e.g., camera angle, lighting, etc.), density, uniforms, and other elements which are not the concern of this study, what we should note here is the presence of a ‘leader figure’ (an adult lead singer with an implied authority in the former photo taking the role of Hitler in the latter) next to the large number of people in uniform who stand in military formations. Although, this kind of event and military arrangement were fairly common practices that involved German and Italian youth in the early twentieth century, emulating them in another form of dictatorship almost a century later struck a chord.

The next frame to discuss here is a Medium Wide Camera Shot chosen from another moment of the original video, showing a number of the young participants in Hail Commander who lined up in military formation giving salute; the right hand’s palm facing forward and fingers slightly touching the right side of the forehead (Figure 3). They are dressed in black pants and untucked white shirts buttoned up to the neck, an ensemble popularized by extremist pro-regime groups right after the Islamic Revolution. Alongside this, were also some shots that featured the young girl counterparts dressed in a white veil and black chador (a dark traditional garment worn in public by Muslims that covers almost all of the head and body). In post-revolution Iran, dressing in this ensemble for women, particularly the young ones, indicates their support for the Islamic regime, which

automatically sets them apart from other women who wear mantua, at least superficially.



Figure 3. Young boys in original video of Hail Commander anthem

Although this is not an identical gesture to what was known as Nazi salute (or Fascist salute) in which the right arm was fully extended, facing forward, with palm down (Figure 4), yet, what we should pay attention to is the essence of the act itself and the age of the performers. This means that when an act of military salute, regardless of its form, is performed by a group of children in a strictly organised manner, the real meaning of such event transcends the mere idea of war or defence; it becomes a political gesture that is unique to dictatorial regimes.



Figure 4. Members of the Hitler Youth in Berlin performing the Nazi salute at a rally in 1933 (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/03/Bundesarchiv_Bild_147-0510%2C_Berlin%2C_Lustgarten%2C_Kundgebung_der_HJ.jpg)

Analysis of the lyrics

Perhaps the most outstanding segment of the lyric is its title ‘Hail Commander’ which is also repeated several times throughout the anthem. The ‘Commander’ here refers to the formal role and title of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as commander-in-chief, since he was appointed as the Supreme Leader by the Assembly of Experts on 4 June 1989, right after Ruhollah Khomeini (the founder of the Islamic Republic and Iran’s first Supreme Leader) death. With absolute authority, the supreme leader as the commander-in-chief exercises supreme command and control over the armed forces and all military branches of Iran. In comparison to the Nazi leadership system, Khamenei’s absolute role as the commander-in-chief is largely in synch with Adolf Hitler’s, who after rising to power in 1933 began one of his most overt and audacious moves by establishing the *Wehrmacht* (defense force), a modern offensively-capable armed force which formed the heart of Germany’s politico-military power. Now, the intention behind the use of the term ‘Hail Commander’ becomes more obvious if we look at the Nazi salute (*Hitlergruß*), or the *Sieg Heil* salute, a gesture that was used as a greeting in Nazi Germany and was performed by extending the right arm from the shoulder into the air with a straightened hand while the person offering the salute would say "*Heil Hitler!*" (lit. 'Hail Hitler!').

Table 1. Lyrics of Hail Commander (English and Farsi)

	Hail Commander	سلام فرمانده
1.	love of my life, my <i>Imam Zaman</i> , world is meaningless without you	عشق جانم، امام زمانم، دنیا بدون تو معنایی نداره
2.	love of a lifetime, when you’re there, our world is like the springtime	عشق روزگارم وقتی که تو باشی دنیامون بهاره
3.	Hail commander, a hail from this zealous new generation	سلام فرمانده، سلام از این نسل غیور جامانده
4.	Hail commander, Seyed Ali has called up his 90s generation	سلام فرمانده، سیدعلی دهه‌ی نودی هاشو فراخوانده
5.	Hail commander, please come forth so that I become your supporter	سلام فرمانده بیا جون من بیا یارت میشم
6.	I become your fan, become your Ali ibn Mahzir	هوادارت میشم گرفتارت میشم علی بن مهزیارت میشم
7.	regardless of my small stature, I become your military officer	با همین قد کوچیکم خودم سردارت میشم
8.	don’t look at my small stature, when the time comes, I’ll rise for you	نبین قدم کوچیکه پاش بیفته من برات قیام میکنم
9.	don’t look at my small stature, I’ll execute the duty just like Mirza Kuchak	نبین قدم کوچیکه مثل میرزا کوچک کارو تموم میکنم
10.	don’t look at my small stature, I hail you from row 313	نبین قدم کوچیکه از صف 313 تا بهت سلام میکنم
11.	don’t look at my small stature, you just call me and watch what I can do for you	نبین کمه سنم تو فقط صدام بزنی ببین چیکار برات میکنم
12.	don’t look at my age, I will pray for you with my small hands	نبین کمه سنم با همین دستای کوچیکم همش دعوات میکنم
13.	don’t look at my age, I swear to sacrifice everything including the lives of my father and mother	نبین کمه سنم بایی انت و امی همه رو فدات میکنم

	Hail Commander	سلام فرمانده
14.	Hail commander, hail from this zealous new generation	سلام فرمانده سلام از این نسل غیور جامانده
15.	Hail commander, Seyed Ali has called up his 90s generation	سلام فرمانده سیدعلی دهه‌ی نودی ها شو فراخوانده
16.	I promise, one day I'll be of use for you, I promise, I'll be your Haj Qasem	عهد میبندم روزی لازم‌ت بشم عهد میبندم حاج قاسمت بشم
17.	I promise to be at your service just Behjat and your anonymous soldiers	عهد میبندم مثل بهجت و مثل سربازای گمنام خدمت بشم
18.	I promise that I remain loyal to this government	عهد میبندم که میمونم پای کار این نظام
19.	I wish I could seem worthy in your eyes just like Haj Qasem	کاشکی مثل حاج قاسم من به چشم تو پیام
20.	For more than one thousand and one hundred years the whole world has been waiting for the emergence of Mahdi	هزار و صد و اندی ساله همه عالم دنبال مهدی اند
21.	Don't worry about soldiers, my sire, your soldiers are 1400s	غصه سربازو نخور آقا سربازات هزار و چهارصدی اند

Line (1) reads ‘Love of my life, my *Imam Zaman*, world is meaningless without you’ which indicates the highest form of affection to *Imam Zaman* (also known as ‘Mahdi’ by the Twelver branch of Shiism). In Twelver Shia belief, during the major Occultation which began in 941 and is thought to continue until a time decided by God, Mahdi will reappear to bring absolute justice to the world (Litvak, 2020). The *Imam Zaman* is fundamental to the concept of *Velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of the Islamic jurist) which is a system of governance that has underpinned the way Iran operates since the country’s 1979 Islamic Revolution. Similarly, *Velayat-e faqih* is at the crux of Shia Islamism and is central to understanding not only how the Iranian system works but also how the Islamic regime can influence religious and political Shia networks beyond its borders (Arabi, 2019). Line (2) also extends this exaggerated affection to both the Supreme Leader and equates him to Mahdi, by saying ‘love of lifetime, when you’re there, our world is like the springtime’. Lines (3, 4, and 5) respectively read ‘Hail commander, a hail from this zealous new generation’, ‘Hail commander, Seyed Ali has called up his 1390s generation (Islamic Iranian calendar equal to late 2000s-2010s)’, and ‘Hail commander, please come forth so that I become your supporter’, all of which represent fanaticism among young Iranians (around the age of 7 to 14 years old). In this view, these young people express their enthusiasm to be enlisted in the army willing to do the ultimate sacrifice under the command of the Supreme Leader.

Such fanatic sentiments continue in lines 6-13, albeit with a constant emphasis on this generation’s youthfulness and physical immaturity. A few names also appear in lines 6 and 9 as well as the number 313. Here, the first name is Ali ibn Mahzir, who is believed to be one of the few blessed followers of Mahdi who had a chance to pay a visit to him before minor Occultation. The second name is Mirza Kuchak Khan (1880 – December 2, 1921) who was an Iranian twentieth-century revolutionary leader and the president of the Persian Socialist Soviet Republic. He was the founder of a revolutionary movement based in the forests of Gilan in northern Iran that became known as The Jungle Movement (*Nehzat-e*

Jangal). This uprising started in 1914 and remained active against internal and foreign enemies until 1921 when the movement was completely abandoned after the demise of Mirza Kuchak Khan (Matin-Asgari, 2009). The number 313, however, refers to a Shia myth which holds that there will be only 313 true Muslims in existence before the arrival of Mahdi. These 313 will form Mahdi's army in the fight against injustice. Embedded in the aforementioned lines, therefore, lies a strong association of the reciters with Twelver Shia fundamentalism while highlighting their fighting spirit against opponents of the Islamic regime. Alongside these ideologies are powerful the reciters' determination to make sacrifice at highest level which typically reminds us of enlistment of child soldiers during Iran-Iraq war and the ways these young people were brainwashed to give up their lives to keep Islamic regime alive (Figure 5).



Figure 5. An Iranian child soldier in the Iran-Iraq war (<https://i.redd.it/xuvru5kl8wm61.jpg>)

In the lines 16 and 17, after skipping two choruses (14 and 15), we can see two distinguished names from recent times that the reciters aspire to be: Haj Qasem and Behjat. The first name refers to Iranian general Qasem Soleimani who was killed by an American drone attack in Iraq on the third of January 2020. Soleimani was the commander of the Quds Force, an IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps) division primarily responsible for extraterritorial and covert military operations. In his later years, he was considered by some analysts to be the Supreme Leader's right-hand man, and the second-most powerful person in Iran (Tajbakhsh, 2021). The second name refers to Grand Ayatollah Mohammad-Taqi Bahjat Fomani (24 August 1916 – 17 May 2009) who was an Iranian Twelver Shia *Marja* that is authority given by a *hawzah* (a seminary where Shi'a Muslim scholars are educated) to make legal decisions within the confines of Islamic law for followers and lower-ranking clerics (Ridgeon, 2022). Ayatollah Behjat was known to be in contact with *Imam Zaman*. Here, the former name, Haj Qasem, represents symbol of Jihad, a campaign waged by Muslims in defense of their faith against people, organizations, or countries regarded as hostile to Islam. The latter name, Behjat, can

be seen as the symbol of connection to Mahdi and receiving orders from the unseen divine world where this long-awaited savior resides. It also is an indication of youth's hope for a future when, according to the Shia mythologies, Mahdi arrives on a white horse with a sword to kill the infidels rid the world from evil and injustice. Similar themes can be seen in Nazi propaganda messages, particularly regarding Hitler Youth. Indeed, from the 1920s onwards, the Nazi Party targeted German youth as a special audience for its propaganda messages. These messages emphasized that the Party was a movement of youth: dynamic, resilient, forward-looking, and hopeful.

Also, in line 17 we can see the term 'unknown soldiers' who are part of the IRGC Intelligence Organization and have full authority to do whatever they like, including torture, murder and interference in sentencing. The group was formed by direct order of Khomeini in May 1983 and more specifically has been referred to as Unknown Soldiers of *Imam Zaman*. This reminds us of both OVRA (Organization for Vigilance and Repression of Anti-Fascism) in Mussolini's Italy and *Gestapo* in Nazi Germany. Being the precursor of the German *Gestapo*, OVRA was Mussolini's secret police and was assigned to stop any anti-fascist activity or sentiment. It is estimated that OVRA with 50,000 agents headed by Arturo Bocchini infiltrated most aspects of domestic life in Italy (Alexander, 2004). In Nazi Germany, however, *Gestapo* which was founded by Hermann Göring in 1933 functioned as the official secret police (Carnaghi, 2021). Employing underhanded and terrorist methods against individuals suspected of disloyalty *Gestapo* ruthlessly eliminated opposition to the Nazis within Germany and its occupied territories and, in partnership with the *Sicherheitsdienst* (Security Service), was responsible for the roundup of Jews throughout Europe for deportation to extermination camps.

In the line 18, the young reciters of the Hail Commander express their full allegiance to the theocratic regime and presumably everything within its fundamentalist doctrine. The ideology-driven attitude of absolute devotion to a head of the state (Khamenei), together with the notion of 'unknown soldiers' resurrect the Nazi and Fascist political ideals and system of operation. Finally, the last three lines (19, 20, and 21) respectively praise Qasem Soleimani once again, immortalize Mahdi, and cheer the Supreme Leader up by assuring him of having an army of very young soldiers. All of these concluding verses reaffirm the Nazi/fascist ideologies, albeit in the guise of Islam's righteousness. Here, instead of nationalism which was fundamental to Nazi/fascist doctrines, Jihadism is promoted. Rooted in political Islam, Jihadism is understood as a holy militant Islamic movement that is existentially threatening to the West.

Hail Commander and Giovinezza

At this point, it is helpful to put Hail Commander and *Giovinezza* side by side for comparison in order to realise their interconnectedness at ideological level. Such juxtaposition is relevant because they both belong to the same genre and format, and that they are purposefully created as means of political and ideological propaganda to win over minds of the masses in dictatorship regimes. *Giovinezza*, (literary means "Youth") was the official hymn of the Italian National Fascist Party, regime, and army, and was an unofficial national anthem of the Kingdom of Italy between 1924 and 1943. It was written by Italian playwright, screenwriter, and film director Nino Oxilia (1889-1917). The hymn in *Giovinezza* underlines youth as a

theme of the fascist movement, but other themes are in accord with Hail Commander, too.

To begin with, as one could expect, there are numerous indicative words and concepts in *Giovinezza* that point to the centrality of nationalism in the fascist narrative. These are simply expressed through the use of the word 'Fatherland' in lines (2), (15), and (24) as well as 'Italian borders' in line (17), emphasizing both the country's physical boundaries and the ancestral heritage, that are now handed down to the young generation. In this respect, the youth hail the fatherland's immortality to not only express their beliefs in the continuity of the nation but to pledge their allegiance to their forefathers. Other aspects of nationalism, namely 'people' and 'heroism' as in line (1), 'flag' in line (31), as well as 'Italian pride' in line (27). Adding to these sentiments of nationalism, are 'poets and artisans' (25), as powerful elements of national identity derived from historically distinctive individuals that have made substantial contributions to the nation through producing culture, literature, and art; and also 'lords and countrymen' (26) as an indication of the conformity to the deeply-rooted 'class' hierarchy in the social system of the fascism.

At this point, it seems to be fair to say that, while *Giovinezza* is rife with distinct elements of nationalism, there is no indication of such ideals in Hail Commander, whatsoever. Although, this might mark a notable point of disparity between the two anthems, but it is misleading if we only focus on the strict meaning of nationalism without taking into consideration the history and context that shape this collective form of belongingness to nation. In this case, it can be argued that what drives the nationalistic sentiments in authoritarian Islamic countries like Iran, is the religion, and loyalty to the '*ummah*' (the community of the believers) or to the nation-state (Ataman, 2003). In this way, a social boundary that influences the identity of Muslims is largely taken as a geographical boundary, associating or dividing '*us*' from the '*others*'. Hence, we could say that, unlike its Italian equivalent in which nationalistic ideals are manifested in the form of land, class, history, and people, Hail Commander takes on Shia mythologies and revolutionary values such as martyrdom and valor in order to project an exclusive form of nationalism.

Moving on from nationalism, we can locate another striking aspect of fascism equally embodied in *Giovinezza* and its Iranian counterpart: the idea of the 'leader'; an untouchable, all-powerful head of the state who has the absolute authority to decide on the lives of its people and the fate of its nation. Such ideas are at times more explicitly placed in both anthems, as the actual name of Iran's Supreme Leader (Seyed Ali) appears twice in Hail Commander, while repeatedly referring to him as a rather divine and political leader. Here, the Supreme Leader is taken as an ultimate source of power and divinity, the only status worthy of his followers' sacrifice and dedication. Similarly, in Italian version, the leader's name 'Mussolini' distinctly appears in (13) and (28), albeit in a dramatic manner whereby strong fealty is sworn upon his name, suggesting the youth's determination to follow his orders and submit to his will.

As for the next prominent fascism theme in *Giovinezza* we can point to the expressions of war and heroism, particularly reflected in lines (5) and (20) where respectively 'warriors' valor' and 'tomorrow's war' accentuate the bravery and warring spirit of the Italian youth. Likewise, the violent and militant aspect of

fascism are ubiquitous in Hail Commander, and as demonstrated earlier, they take discursive forms. For example, in lines (9), (10), and (16), references are made respectively to a) Mirza Kuchak, a twentieth-century rebellious leader of the Persian resistance fighters, b) the number 313 that stands for the elite soldiers of Mahdi, the messianic savior in Shi'ism, and c) Haj Qasem, an Iranian commander. To mention other forms of expression in the category of war, we can point to the great zeal among youth to be fanatical soldiers to fight at the Supreme Leader's command, which is reflected in lines (17) and (21). Adding to these, are also some other elements that in one way or another articulate the idea of war, devotion, and sacrifice, throughout the lyrics by using words such as 'zealous new generation', 'sacrifice everything', and so on.

Table 2. Lyrics of *Giovinezza* (English and Italian)

<i>Giovinezza</i>	Juvenility
1. Hail, people of heroes,	Salve o popolo d'eroi
2. Hail, immortal Fatherland,	Salve o patria immortale
3. Your sons were born again	Son rinati i figli tuoi
4. With the faith and the Ideal.	Con la fede e l'ideale
5. Your warriors' valor,	Il valor dei tuoi guerrieri,
6. Your pioneers' virtue,	La virtù dei tuoi pionieri
7. Alighieri's vision,	La vision dell'Alighieri
8. Today shines in every heart	Oggi brilla in tutti i cuor
9. Youth, Youth,	Giovinezza, giovinezza,
10. Spring of beauty,	Primavera di bellezza
11. In the hardship of life	Per la vita, nell'asprezza
12. Your song rings and goes!	Il tuo canto squilla e va!
13. And for Benito Mussolini,	E per Benito Mussolini,
14. Eja eja alalà	Eja eja alalà
15. And for our beautiful Fatherland,	E per la nostra Patria bella,
16. Eja eja alalà	Eja eja alalà
17. In the Italian borders,	Dell'Italia nei confini
18. Italians have been remade	Son rifatti gli italiani
19. Mussolini has remade them	Li ha rifatti Mussolini
20. For tomorrow's war,	Per la guerra di domani
21. For labour's glory,	Per la gloria del lavoro
22. For peace and for the laurel,	Per la pace e per l'alloro,
23. For the shame of those	Per la gogna di coloro
24. Who repudiated our Fatherland	Che la patria rinnegar.
25. The poets and the artisans,	I poeti e gli artigiani
26. The lords and the countrymen,	I signori e i contadini
27. With an Italian's pride	Con orgoglio d'italiani
28. Swear fealty to Mussolini	Giuran fede a Mussolini.
29. No poor neighbourhood exists	Non v'è povero quartiere
30. That doesn't send its hordes	Che non mandi le sue schiere
31. That doesn't unfurl the flags	Che non spieghi le bandiere
32. Of redeeming Fascism	Del fascismo redentor.

Nonetheless, to summarize the analysis performed in this section, it can be said that the comparison of Hail Commander and *Giovinezza* reveals a great deal of similarities regarding the principles and ideals of fascism (as well as Nazism). What came into light in here was some of the prominent themes that define the fascism;

namely, extreme forms of nationalism, the existence of godlike, absolutist leader, fanaticism and devotion of the masses, and their readiness for war, soldiery, and sacrifice. Moreover, these common characteristics are encapsulated in a larger theme of youth and juvenility, making both anthems remarkable representations of fascism and the centrality of young generation to its dogmatic fundamentals. These are ultimately suggestive of an organised and systematic recruitment of youth in militarised activities and political socialisation under the rule of the clerics in IRI, the rebirth of the same ideologies once held by Fascist and Nazi regimes more than eighty years ago.

Conclusion

During the war with Iraq, the Iranian government used propaganda to advance the war effort. By relying on their propaganda division, they routinely spread information to the public. Although as a positive force these propagandas helped the government to mobilize public opinion during the war, later on and after the war, they were labelled negatively by the peace advocates who called them partisan appeal based on half-truth and devious manipulation of communication channels. One of the implications of such mass manipulation was the child soldier phenomenon during the war, where underage children were brainwashed, sometimes with their families' consents, to join *Basij* (Resistance Mobilisation Force), a paramilitary volunteer militia established in 1979 (McNab, 2022). Years later, as the state ideological apparatus continued to function vigorously during the post-war era, the authorities' exploitation of the youth took a slightly different path. As such, they began to invest more and more on deployment of underage boys and girls for political socialization and various propagandist campaigns. One of the concrete expressions of these campaigns was the production of Hail Commander, an anthem presumably created for children but heavily loaded with the religious and political charges that echoed the ideologies held by fascist/Nazi regimes in the first few decades of the twentieth century.

In response, the current study addressed these outrageous resemblances and the controversies around Hail Commander, by reflecting on its emergence and critically analyzing the lyrics and some of the visual features present in the original video of this anthem. In turn, these analyses provided demonstrable evidence of likeness between some of the representational aspects in this video and the fascist/Nazi ideologies and practices. Thus, for such notorious interrelatedness between these dictatorial regimes, including their histories of recruitment of young into army, it is argued that the emergence of Hail Commander should be viewed as the revival of child soldier phenomenon. Of course, such revival is not about sending young to the frontlines per se, but fostering the same 'idea'; construction of a bold, fanatic and ready-to-war army of youth through discourse and discursive practices, largely carried out by media representations.

Nevertheless, while humanitarian and human rights groups have undertaken a major initiative to end the use of child soldiers since past few decades (Fox, 2021), there seems to be little done against the exploitation of children for the ideological/political objectives of the governments and parastatal groups (Wells, 2021), particularly in modern-day dictatorships where information is often manipulated or suppressed. As a final point, in light of the current youth and student-led uprisings in Iran, it is evident that, for the authorities, the production of

this anthem and the great efforts in promoting it, was a timely scheme to ensure social control, and an opportunity to instill officially prescribed ideologies (Matin, 2022), and thereby, regain their shaken legitimacy.

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International Journal of Humanity Studies
<http://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/IJHS>
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FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION SEEN THROUGH LYRICS IN RICH BRIAN AND NIKI'S SONGS

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<https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i2.6759>

received 29 June 2023; accepted 27 March 2024

Abstract

Music is not only used as a tool to entertain people but also could be used as a medium to express the ideas of the songwriter or the singer. They could deliver the arguments that they are trying to tell not only to their fans but also to the other people. In this research, the writer wants to see the ideas that Rich Brian and NIKI are trying to express through their songs. The writer uses semiotics to get the data from Rich Brian and NIKI's songs, especially the lyrics. In this research, the writer finds that Rich Brian and NIKI are expressing their arguments about issues that are still happening now. They are delivering their opinion through their lyrics to remind people. However, the writer also sees that through the lyrics, Rich Brian and NIKI are also trying to show their support for the issues that still happen.

Keywords: issues, lyrics, NIKI, Rich Brian

Introduction

It could be found from a long time ago. However, the purpose is not only for entertaining but also for certain rituals. It is used as a medium to communicate with the spirits and gods. It is the tool that is used by humans for communicating with the spirits and gods to invite them to join in the rituals (Sumardjo, 2000, p.237). Nowadays, music has another meaning for humans. It is also used to express what people think and feel through the elements of music such as the melody, harmony, and expression as part of the song itself (Jamalus, 1998, pp. 1-2). It is clear why now it can be found that there are many types of music which have various expressions. It can express their feelings when they are falling in love, feeling blessed, broken-hearted, or even when they are feeling like they are at their lowest point and drowning in sadness.

As it mentioned before, music is one of the tools that could be used to express feelings and ideas. Freedom of expression could be found in the Black music genre also known as African-American music. Through music, they are expressing things that they could not deliver directly and infrequently being heard. During the slavery era, music was one of the most important things for Blacks to express their thoughts and feelings (Levine, 1977, p. 191). It is also mentioned that through music they were trying to depict the freedom that they always dream of. This statement is also mentioned by Burton W Perreti in his book entitled *Lift*



Every Voice, The History of African American Music that Black musicians were expressing their feelings and hope to be recognized and felt freedom through music that they were made (2009, p. 48). Many of them also describe their suffering as slaves, for example, there is a song called *Juba*. Until now, in America, African-American music genres, such as Jazz, Hip-hop, and R&B, are music genres that still could be used to express their ideas or feelings freely. Rich Brian and NIKI are two of several Indonesian musicians who were signed by American music labels *88Rising* and eventually can go to America. Through their music, they often express their arguments about certain issues. They succeeded in becoming Hip-hop singers in America, received awards, and were often invited to many radio, television shows, and YouTube for American music channels because their works are considered outstanding works. Through their songs, they are freely expressing their arguments and opinions about issues that happen.

Exploring the other research that also used Rich Brian and NIKI's songs as their object, the writer could find journals that are using them as their research material. One of the researches is written by Intan Tia Ajeng Ariyanti entitled *African American Vernacular English (AAVE) Used by Rich Brian: A Sociolinguistic Investigation*. In this research, Ariyanti is trying to investigate the use of AAVE by Rich Brian in his rap song lyrics which is aimed to identify the grammatical features of AAVE in the *Amen* album. She found 7 out of AAVE's 13 grammatical features in Rich Brian's song lyrics. She also argues that Brian got the causal effect on the use of AAVE by the environment or neighborhoods where he grew up. This makes Brian obtain AAVE's native-like control. Another research entitled *Yellow in Black and White: Representasi Identitas Asia oleh Rich Brian dalam Musik Hip-Hop di Amerika Serikat* is written by Nokia Putri Andika Lainsyamputti. This study aims to uncover how Brian represented his identity in US hip-hop music. The researcher is using Stuart Hall's circuit of culture theory for her analysis. She found that Brian did not cover his background and poisoned himself on the spectrum of social identity. This then affects his songs, including his argument about identity and stereotypes of the Asian race. He also depicts the struggles of Asians who are part of minority groups in the United States.

The writer also found that several journals discuss NIKI's songs. The first journal is written by Wenny Alfiani. In her journal entitled *Type and Meaning of Figurative Language Found in NIKI's Selected Songs Lyrics*, she mentioned that the research aims to analyze the figurative language in NIKI's songs *Lose, Indigo, and La La Lost You*. The researcher found that there were seven types of figurative, such as metaphor, hyperbole, repetition, simile, apostrophe, paradox, and allegory. She also argues that the figurative language that is used in this song could teach poetry that can give positive and full attention to learning and also improve memory and imagination. The second article journal that is found is entitled *Figurative Language in the Niki Zefanya Every Summertime Song* by Chintia Handayani. The researcher wants to find the type of figurative language in Niki Zefanya's song, *Every Summertime*. To analyze the data, the researcher is using Perrine's theory which explains the various forms of figurative language. The researcher found allegory, hyperbole, personification, synecdoche, metaphor, and metonymy in the song.

Based on the related studies that are mentioned above, it can be seen that this research is different from the previous research that was found by the writer. This research wants to find the argument, opinion, or maybe the idea that Rich Brian and NIKI deliver in their songs' lyrics. To find that, in this research, the writer is using semiotics theory that focuses on the message that is trying to deliver. The writer wants to see if there are any other messages that Rich Brian and NIKI are trying to deliver through their songs' lyrics related to certain issues that happen.

Method

In collecting the data to reveal the phenomenon, the writer decided to use qualitative analysis. This method lets the writer make interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2008, p. 3). The phenomenon that is selected can be solved using the qualitative research method through the process of deep understanding of the phenomenon itself. In this research, the writer used semiotics which is stated by Roland Barthes. He stated that what the researcher should be researching is the audio and visual, the background of the language itself, and the use of the language to interpret the text (Pembayun, 2013, p. 32). Barthes tries to explore how language functions and its relation to ideology. In using the Semiotics approach from Roland Barthes, it is explained that Barthes has two main concepts in using this approach (Wibowo, 2013, pp. 21-23). It explains that Barthes identified a sign as a system containing an expression or signifier that has a relation with the content or signified. Thus, a primary sign system could be an element of a sign system that has a more complete or comprehensive meaning compared to the previous meaning. Barthes got a lot of influence from Saussure in analyzing the meanings of signs, so this is what guided Barthes in developing the idea of two orders of signification (Sobur, 2003). The significance of the two stages refers to the system of denotation and connotation. Barthes explained that denotative is the most real meaning of a sign (Barthes, 1957, p. 122). Moreover, Barthes uses connotative science to show the second stage, where the denotative sign interacts with cultural values and meets feelings and emotions.

Findings and Discussion

Based on Rich Brian and NIKI's song, the writer is finding the argument and opinion that they are trying to deliver. The writer would divide it into certain issues that are mentioned in their song.

Expressing about racism issue

Racism in America is still an issue that has often been discussed. Even though there are people who believe that every American is equal, there are also people who feel superior towards other races. One of the examples is racism towards Asian Americans. According to an article written by Nicole Chung in *Time*, on a survey that Chung found, there are 37% of white Americans did not know about the spike in attacks on Asian Americans and 42% of respondents could not mention a single prominent Asian American (Chung, 2021, para. 2). Other than that, Chung also stated that Asian women were becoming targets for the victim's gender and the majority of the perpetrators were white and male. These are only a few of the reasons why racism still happens in America and

becomes an issue that is interesting to be discussed. Another proof that Asian Americans, especially Chinese, are still discriminated against could be seen from the pandemic that happened because of the virus COVID-19 which is believed to come from China. The speech that was delivered by Trump said that the virus COVID-19 is a Chinese virus that made Chinese who live in America discriminate from Americans. There are so many reports that the Chinese get discriminated against not only verbally but also physically abuse. They are getting physically abused, ridiculed, spat upon, and even threatened to leave America immediately for the safety of another citizen. Some of them even become afraid to go outside their house. Quoted from an article written by Didik Atmaja, it is explained that the discrimination that is happening in America because of this virus is they are ignoring the reality that discriminated Asians can become American citizens and nationalities (2020, para 4). They might even be born of Asian ethnicity that has lived for a long time, passed on from generation to generation, and regenerated. This discrimination indeed would have impacts on them. It is argued by Hsiu-Lan Cheng in his journal that COVID-19 anti-Asian xenophobia and racism will negatively contribute to Asian Americans' mental health and sense of self and identity (2020, para 4). This situation might lead some of them to melancholia and haunt them with the feeling of fear. Rich Brian through his songs is trying to deliver his experience and opinion about the racial injustice problem that happens in America and also from his own experiences. In his song entitled Chaos, he shows how he thinks that a question about race to discriminate against certain races is unnecessary. This song was released in 2018 from his album named Amen.

*Cake, cake up on this belt, the day I landed in the States
Doin' one take all day and I'm just spittin' out the mace (mace)
She like sippin' out that mason jar
She a hippie, she gon' suck for some granola bars
Little freaky got me curious like I'm on Mars
Sayin', I forgot my roots, goddamn, you went too far*

Based on the lyrics from the song above, Brian is telling the story of when he landed in the United States to continue his career. He explained that he worked hard and spent all day making his song. He feels that he is in a strange place like he is on Mars when he finds a culture that is different from his culture in Indonesia. In this part of the lyrics, he gives an example of his own experience. When he sees a Hippie woman eating granola bars from a mason jar, it makes him feel strange since eating granola is not a habit that usually people eat back in his hometown. When Brian alludes to his roots and the woman argues that he forgot about his roots to continue his career in America, Brian feels offended. Based on the part of the lyrics that are mentioned above, Brian has to face discrimination when he is making his song in America and he feels that he is offended by that statement. However, in the next part of his song, Brian stated

*Ayy, damn you went too far
Got these people all around me, man, that treat me like a star*

This part shows how people around him from the music company always support him and do not care about his roots or where he comes from. Brian is one of the artists from 88Rising music company which is also known as an American mass media company. It is stated by Miyasiro, the founder of 88Rising, in an interview with Forbes that he made this company to celebrate global Asian culture (2016, para. 2). He is trying to make a safe place for Asians and Asian-American to create songs under an American company. This explains that even though he was discriminated against by a hippie woman, he still feels accepted by the music company.

Another song that Brian used to deliver his opinion about racial injustice also could be found in his song entitled Kids. This song is one of his songs from the Sailor album that was released in 2019. The song became more famous since this song became a soundtrack from one of Universal Pictures' movies named The Invisible Man (Marhendri, 2020, para. 2). In this song Brian is delivering his argument that he does not agree with racism and even gives his support through the lyrics.

*Tell these Asian kids they could do what they want
Might steal the mic at the Grammy's just to say we won
That everyone can make it, don't matter where you from*

Through these lyrics, Brian is trying to encourage Asian kids that they have the right to do things that they want to do. Brian is trying to emphasize that they have the right to explore their ability and talent. They could do anything, even crazy things like Brian said in these lyrics, to steal the mic at the Grammys to celebrate their victory. In the last part of the lyrics, Brian also once again wants to deliver to people that no matter who they are and where they come from they still could achieve their goal and do things that they want. In the other part of the lyrics in this song, Brian also tells about his experience of being discriminated against when he was making his music in America.

*They told me I ain't welcome, I'm here to stay, and my visa says so
Just wait and see who's songs they gon' blast up in they headphones
Come back like every couple years to destroy like tornadoes*

These lyrics describe his experience directly. In the first part of the lyrics, Brian is telling how he is not being welcomed by some people in America even though he moved to America to stay and continue his career as a rapper. Even the visa that he had could not help him feel belonged in America. Even though he cannot feel comfortable and welcome, it does not make him feel sad or desperate, and even goes back to his hometown. It turns out that it determined him to prove to people who underestimate him that he can do amazing work. It is stated by Brian in an interview that he made this song to tell about his journey to achieve his dream (Bulut, 2019, para. 3). He wants to show that he is not ashamed of being Asian and wants to talk about it. In this song, he also wants to explain the atmosphere that he felt when he first came to L.A.

The color yellow is a color that has a history for Asian Americans. Yellow is used by many people in America to call Asian-American. They call them yellow because their skin is not white but also not black. This “yellow” predicate

that is given to Asian Americans makes them always considered foreigners (Lin, 2002, p.537). This inspired Brian to write his song that used yellow as the title. He explained in an interview with Kimberly Yam for Huff Post that this song expresses his own story as an immigrant in America (para. 16). It is stated that he tries to describe it through the song that starts with melancholy music that describes his struggle the first time he arrived in America. The lyrics at the beginning of the song also describe his fear of becoming no one.

*How do I disappear
Without anybody knowing?
Will anybody even miss me
When I'm gone?*

The purpose of going to America is to do his best work but the fear of failure also haunts him. He was afraid that he would end up with nothing and without any work that would make people know him. However, in the interview, Brian also explains that this is also made to depict his victory. At the end of the song, he explains that he is using grand orchestral swells to emphasize the message that he is trying to deliver. Even though, as seen from history, the word “yellow” is used to offend Asian Americans, Brian is using this word to give a hopeful reclamation of the term (Yam, 2019, para. 18). Brian is also using the lyrics to depict his victory.

*Dinner, dessert, eat these rappers for fun (fun)
Don't give no fucks if you don't fuck with my shit
Rock fifty stages in all fifty states, bitch
I did it all without no citizenship
To show the whole world you just got to imagine*

He is using the lyrics to see how now he could be calmer and feel that there are hopes. He would not listen to what people say. Through this song he also delivers how he feels blessed that has a platform that he has freedom in expressing his idea or topic that he never talked about before (Paramasivam, 2019, para. 9). He made this song also expresses how he felt in that moment and being honest of his feelings to make the listener know how vulnerable he was. He hoped that this song could depict what maybe his fans are feeling whether they are Asian or Asian American. Since he wrote this song, he feels proud of himself and proud to say that yes he is yellow.

Expressing women power

Feminism is one of the important events that have happened in American history. It is stated that the first American feminist movement happened in 1848 and fought for discontinuing discrimination based on gender (Gamble, 2001, p. 20). Cady Stanton is mentioned as one of the women who had a big impact on the first wave of feminism. She was fighting for the change of divorce laws, about rights for married women's property, and the vote (p.21). Their battle to achieve the goals still could be felt now, one of the examples that women getting their right to vote. Entering the new wave, in America women were fighting for the equality of employment opportunity (p.25). Moreover, the right to get higher

education also became one of the things that had a big impact on women. The efforts by Emily Davies for the renewal period regarding educational regulations allowing women to attend schools which then also influenced America. In 1861, many colleges began in America that allowed women to get higher education in various fields, one example of which was law (Coryell, 2012, pp.239-240). This then opened a new profession for women, as a lawyer. In the 1990s, feminism entered a new phase that is also known as the Third Wave. It is explained, that in this phase most Americans approved the new things that were changed by the movement that had been fought for by the women (p. 489). It is also stated that they got their place to express their idea of having equal rights with men even though sometimes they were considered radical extremists.

On the other side, NIKI through her song is expressing her idea about women's power. The spirit of women fighting for their rights and their effort to support each other can also be found in NIKI's song lyrics. Based on the NIKI's songs, the researcher found three songs of NIKI that expressed her idea about women's power. In the first song entitled Newsflash, NIKI stated in the lyrics,

*I ain't interested in being a pretty name on your list
I got dreams and aspirations with prettier lips to kiss*

In the lyrics, NIKI is emphasizing that becoming a man's dream girl and being included in his list is not interesting for NIKI. She has dreams that are more important than being that girl. She also has hopes and ambitions to achieve rather than wondering if she is on the list of women a man dreams of. In this song, NIKI is trying to emphasize how she believes that life is not only about how to make a man interesting or fall in love with her but about how dreams, hope, and ambition to achieve her dream are more important. In this song, NIKI also writes

*Save your intrigue and all your techniques
You think you sleek but
I'm smart and very very out of your league*

She is trying to say that she is not that easy to believe with things that they would do to get her. She could recognize all their tricks or techniques. She already knows their game and she is emphasizing that she is smart to know about it.

Another song that NIKI wrote to show women's power is a song from her third album entitled Wide Open. In an interview, NIKI explained that this song was inspired by events that were experienced by the women around her. Many of them had bad experiences about how they are considered incapable of doing many things and are not respected. NIKI also explained how lucky she is to be able to join 88Rising where even though she works with men they really respect her and treat her well. She has never felt or had a bad experience with them. This song is indeed made by NIKI to show its support for women out there who may be at their worst rock bottom. She even emphasized that she wanted to "make an outrightly feminist statement there but in a sardonic manner". This was later proven by the lyrics of the song that give encouraging lines to show her support.

*So girl don't you give in
To all of the voices around you*

Saying you can spread your wings

According to the lyrics above, it can be seen how NIKI is trying to give positive influence to women who listen to the song. She is showing her support and encouraging them to be brave and not give up. Even though many people may underestimate them and doubt them, NIKI wants them to still move forward and spread their wings to achieve their dreams. NIKI wants them to believe in themselves no matter what people say. NIKI also writes

*At the ready to spread the word to save their pretty face
So let these words be your saving grace
There's a much longer trail to blaze
And it's ours (so straighten up), ooh*

These lyrics could also be seen as proof of how NIKI is giving her support through the song. She is spreading positive words and spreading them through her song to save the woman's pretty face from the sadness that could grab their beautiful smile. She hopes that the lyrics could make the women rise again. She also hopes it could be used as the grace that could help them drowning from the grief. She tries to convince the women that they still have a long way to go and they have the control to make it shine.

Different from the previous song, this song is inspired by her own experience. The last example of women's power from NIKI is entitled Switchblade. She stated that this song is inspired by the beginning of her journey when she arrived in the United States for her career (Dodson, 2020, para. 3). In the lyrics of the song NIKI depicts her situation when she first came to America as explained above.

*What is this place?
The skies are vast and no one's a familiar face
But I'm not afraid
Kinda feeling brave
The winds of change have nothing on this switchblade faith*

NIKI describes how the United States is a completely foreign place to her. She could not find people she knew to comfort her. Even though it is described as an uncomfortable situation, NIKI is not afraid and still has a little courage. Even though the situation was indeed different from before, it did not shake her faith at all. She made this song as a reminder and a tribute to herself that she has been a woman who dared to take risks and braved to make a space for her. She stated that the problem when she has to leave music to be more serious with her education is something that might also happen with other women out there when they are required to do things that must be done by existing regulations. NIKI in her interview said that

“I see that happened a lot and I think I'm here to be like, no girl, do whatever you want to do, whether it be music or art or anything. As long as that's what you're passionate about, then just do it.” (Dodson, 2020, para. 11). She hopes that through this song many women will be inspired and be braver in taking risks to do what they love. As long as it is a good thing and can have a good influence

on their lives and happiness, then they dare to achieve what they have dreamed of. NIKI also delivers these in her lyrics

*I'm running free like a child
On the crown of a mountain and I could keep goin' for miles
I don't know what's coming next, I feel a buzz in my legs
But heaven knows that I'm quick on my feet and
Good with a blade and some old-fashioned faith in a place like this
Feeling bulletproof and far from faces I don't miss
So many brand new risks to take*

These parts of the lyrics are the same message as what NIKI stated in the interview. She feels free and it makes her feel like she could do many things more about it. Even though she does not know what will happen in the future and sometimes it makes her nervous she wants to do it anyway. She is ready and brave enough to face things that will happen next. Even though she knows that there are new problems and risks that she has to deal with and take.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that in the past maybe music or song was for a ritual tradition or only for entertainment. However, as time goes by, music could be used as a tool to express arguments, opinions, or ideas from musicians. Through music, musicians can express things that they believe. They not only could write and make songs about love and express their feelings when sad but also could discuss issues that happen around them and express their arguments, opinions, and ideas. Rich Brian and NIKI are musicians who could be used as examples. They are expressing their arguments, opinions, and ideas through the lyrics of their songs. In Brian's song, it could be found how his opinions and arguments of racism are based on the situation that happens around him. Moreover, he is also telling the story from his own experiences. On the other hand, NIKI is also using her ability to use her song to express her mind. NIKI's songs also discuss issues that still happen now. Through her song, she not only delivered her opinion and arguments, but she also showed her support to the other women to become a strong woman.

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International Journal of Humanity Studies
<http://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/IJHS>
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WHEN IN *STELLIS*: AN AUTO-ARCHAEOLOGY OF A DIGITAL ARTIFACT COLLECTION FROM *TEARS OF THEMIS*

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<https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i2.5446>

received 30 November 2022; accepted 27 March 2024

Abstract

Primarily, this research aimed to appraise and discover how a 21st-century Filipino object owner collocates meaning with digital artifacts and identify what cultural underpinnings influence the affinity with these things. Two novel ideas in contemporary archaeology were utilized in this study: (1) auto-archaeology, a method of employing archaeological analysis on one's objects, and; (2) archaeogaming, which treats digitally constructed objects as artifacts (Reinhard, 2018). Using these postmodern perspectives, I conducted an auto-archaeology of my collection of digital artifacts from the game *Tears of Themis* (COGNOSPHERE, 2020) and aimed to unearth a retelling of my recent past as a posthuman Filipino. Informed largely by Ellersdorfer's (2021) autoethnographic archaeology and Woods' (2022) gacha game discourse, my case study involved extracting memories from select pieces from my collection of digital artifacts. Findings reveal that not only can these objects reconstruct their distinct semiotic context through the game design, story of acquisition, and in-game usage but also deconstruct off-game contexts that are personally attached by an individual owner to its immateriality through perception and affective embedding. In so doing, the digital artifacts amplify the different voices inscribed within each artifact in its decontextualized form as a unit in a rhizomatic network of digital objects.

Keywords: affective embedding, archaeogaming, auto-archaeology, memory, *Tears of Themis*

Introduction

Recently, a tidal wave of (virtual) artifacts splashed onto our calm shores as contemporary life has become so entangled with the digital (Aycok, 2021). Thus, a postmodern view of materials emerges from the waters: one that includes objects characterized not merely by their physicality or thingness but also by their (im)materiality in cyberspace. For instance, Reinhard (2018) explained how video game objects are considered immaterial artifacts belonging to culture and people tied to their game lore and players. If, indeed, things and their properties are "not fixed attributes of matter but are processual and relational" (Ingold, 2007, p. 1) in character, there is something more to digital artifacts than just their (im)materiality.



Likewise, contemporary methods of analyzing objects and artifacts are gaining much traction. From remote analysis and network analysis to archaeology of the virtual world, new archaeological methods are continuously re-explored and re-imagined from a plethora of viewpoints. One of the fairly new lenses is auto-archaeology, which attempts to understand the history and experience of an individual by allowing the object-owner himself/herself/themselves to become the intermediary for the object's material narrative. Unlike traditional archaeology which identifies culturally significant artifacts to reconstruct the past, auto-archaeology amplifies the marginalized context, history, and value found in personally owned objects that may otherwise be treated as too idiosyncratic, too insignificant, or too inchoate for archaeological analysis in an academic context.

At its core, auto-archaeology excavates personal narratives that are tied to larger social histories. For instance, Ellersdorfer (2021) wrote an autoethnographic essay on her collection of postcards to underscore a self-reflexive analysis of objects framed from a Marxist historical point of view/ In effect, she was able to explain what memories her postcard collection may hold, and why they were collected, and why they were kept. By carefully analyzing objects, one can find stories embedded into its material, where the traces of its use "have the potential to become witnesses of past times and anchors of memory, which can serve as a basis for the creation of meanings and histories" (Stockhammer, 2020, p.42).

As they stand, memories are reflective of personal and social histories. However, they categorically remain ephemeral at the onset of degradation, distortion, and disinformation. To solidify personal and social histories, memories within artifacts remain a source of meanings and histories of a group of people about their collective identities (Stockhammer, 2020). By re-animating the memories from objects through the owner's self-reflexive practice, auto-archaeology allows the researcher to emphasize the capabilities of distinct individual stories to contribute to collective identity, shared history, and public discourse through the juxtaposition of the biographies of both the object and its owner. In this way, auto-archaeology elicits the multivocality of objects, especially in the contemporary period. Nevertheless, auto-archaeology has not been applied to the study of digital objects despite the increasing importance of digitalization in the lives of contemporary individuals.

In this study, I attempt to unpack an archaeology of the recent and contemporary past by examining select pieces from my digital artifact collection from *Tears of Themis* thereby exploring the linkages between (digital) artifacts and memory through my posthuman experiences in the gamespace of *Stellis*. My collection, like other *Tears of Themis* collections, is a magnum opus waiting to be archaeologically reviewed.

Informed largely by Ellersdorfer's (2021) autoethnographic archaeology and Woods' (2022) discourse on gacha games, I attempt to discover how a 21st-century Filipino object owner like me ascribes meaning to a digital artifact and what underlying cultural underpinnings influence my affinity with these things. In so doing, I attempt to understand how digital artifacts may be archaeologically understood and recorded. As a postmodern ethnoarchaeological approach to the objects of the contemporary past, auto-archaeology allowed me to situate my virtual memories within the Philippine historical conjuncture of early 2022 to identify what a fragmentary perspective of the posthuman Filipino experience looks like then. At

the core of my study is an autoethnographic relay of the memories encapsulated within the digital artifacts I present, painting a juxtaposition of the material and immaterial aspects of myself and my lived experience about the historical conditions at that time. Similar to Hansen (2020), this study contributes to the literature on archaeogaming and auto-archaeology by proposing an understanding of the application and use of this ethnoarchaeological method in virtual items, a feat that has not yet been tackled by prior research. Ultimately, I intend to demonstrate how we can rethink virtual things, figuratively, and archaeologically.

Method

In media archaeology, the cartridge of the game itself is the artifact, where the game is considered a physical material relating to its box, the manuals, the disks, and even the plastic instructions (Moshenska, 2014); however, Reinhard (2018) critically explained in *Archaeogaming* that the code itself procures immaterial objects that are, in and of themselves, (digital) artifacts. Paying close attention to virtual worlds and blended realities, archaeologists concluded that aside from the physical artifacts of computers and phones, there subsists "born-digital artifacts that reside within spaces we cannot see without the aid of hardware, artifacts within artifacts" (Reinhard, 2018, p.7). These digital artifacts include in-game objects which are either deliberately made by code or the player representations in video games such as avatars or character-sprites (Reinhard, 2018).

A liberalized theorization of auto-archaeology allows its contingent application to these digital artifacts. Also called autoethnographic archaeology, auto-archaeology is defined as a method of ethnoarchaeology that "[explores an] individuals' artifacts as supporting evidence to interpret experiences... using autoethnographic methodologies" (Harrison & Schofield, 2009; Kattari & Beltran, 2019, p. 8). In addition, auto-archaeology is a transdisciplinary approach to archaeology that includes other social sciences relevant to interpreting materially embedded experiences, and its applicability to digital artifacts cannot be overlooked. If current methods of social science propose to dismantle the traditional (and often technically restrictive) modes of archaeological analysis, then a deterritorialization of archaeology from the fieldwork excavation and site digging must occur. To excavate artifacts must not only mean digging from a site and retrieving materials from underneath the soil brushed to perfection but also include rummaging through the virtual world to unearth traces of digital things that played a part in players-participants' in-game cultural mobilization.

Researchers commissioned auto-archaeology as an effort to understand the recent and contemporary past through self-reflexivity. By studying collected postcards, gazing upon psychological reports, and transcribing one's self (as an object of war), auto-archaeological scholars collocate personal experience with objects by describing the ideological viewpoints found in each material (see Ellersdorfer, 2021; Hanan, 2019; Schrader, 2014). On this premise, to formulate an auto-archaeology of digital artifacts means that the researcher has to elucidate his or her posthuman identity. After all, the human mind augmented computer-mediated identities (Wilde, 2020) which allows them to access the digital objects within a virtual world. Through the extension of technology, the 21st-century human is bewitched with a posthuman self, characterized by an array of digital identities that transcend the human body into several channels such as new media,

healthcare mechanisms for living support, and gadgets, among others (Haraway, 2000).

Triangulating the intersections of video game digital artifacts, auto-archaeology, and posthuman identities, I conducted this case study about my digital artifact collection in the gacha game *Tears of Themis* (accessible and retrievable by my digital identity Kei UID:200534885) to contribute to the pressing demand for archaeological analysis of digital artifacts (Aycock, 2021). Because these objects are now in my possession, the biography of these artifacts has been culturally linked to my experience as a Filipino in a wider social and historical context. In particular, I launched this case study with three research questions in mind:

- (1) How are memories associated with virtual objects from video games?
- (2) How can virtual artifacts from video games reconstruct the recent and contemporary past through semiotic representation?
- (3) How might virtual artifacts from video games be recognized archaeologically in the Southeast Asian context?

Anent the first question, on Ellersdorfer's (2021) note that material objects find their anchors of memory in the physicalities of the objects (i.e. creases, folds, its wear-and-tear), this case study seeks to identify the anchors of digital memory of virtual artifacts considering that they are immaterial in composition. Secondly, the semiotics of objects allows for a reconstruction of history through meaning-making thus marking the semiotics of virtual objects as one mode of reconstructing the recent and contemporary digitally-linked past. Lastly, drawing from the archaeological framework of record heirlooms by Lillios (1999), the third question arose out of the increasing need for virtual archaeology research to understand how virtual objects can be interpreted and reported archaeologically, especially in the Southeast Asian context where few archaeogaming artifacts have been put on archaeological record (see Russo & Watkins, 2005; Wallace, 2022).

An auto-archaeological approach to these queries allows the case study to account for the "shifting recategorization of artifacts... over their lifetime" (Lillios, 1999, p. 20) based on my distinguished point of reference. In the same way that postcards can reveal anthropological points of nostalgia (Ellersdorfer, 2021), a slew of academic records of disciplinary action reveal institutionalized homophobia (Fox, 2014; Fox, 2010), and that the self, as a participant in the war, poses as memorabilia of trauma (Schrader, 2014), I expect my collection of digital artifacts from *Stellis* to emphasize the distinctive posthuman Filipino narratives inscribed within them to illustrate the history in which my virtual objects are situated and how they may be archaeologically understood.

Findings and Discussion

Contextualizing tears of themis

Published by COGNOSPHERE, *Tears of Themis* is a detective-romance otome game (乙女ゲーム, otome gēmu, literally meaning 'maiden game') that features the story of Rosa—the main character whose name can be changed by the user—who is a well-instated lawyer from a reputable legal firm in *Stellis*. Through a series of battles of wit called debates, she navigates the city of *Stellis* with her argument-wrecking rhetoric powered by cards carrying images of the four male

love interests—Vyn, Luke, Artem, or Marius—following a rock-paper-scissors mechanic. As an interactive fiction, the gameplay of *Tears of Themis* involves preliminary investigation, case studies, and appearance in court through text-based click adventure. However, it is also largely considered a gacha game because of its in-game roulette model whereby the cards used in debates are acquired through loot boxes called 'Visions'. According to Woods (2022), gacha games "[incentivize] players to spend real money in return for the chance to open a loot box and receive a randomly selected virtual item" (p.2). These types of games generate revenue through these loot boxes because, although the currency needed to get the boxes is easily obtainable through rigorous grinding through time-limited events and progressing through the story, real-time payment options allow the consumer-player to bypass all the towering tedious tasks and buy off in-game currency to purchase loot boxes with real money. Underneath this peculiar business model of gacha games is a complex layer of cultural and socio-economic factors that determine gameplay and spending habits. Woods (2022) found that central to these purchasing factors is the relational characteristic of the characters in the gacha games that "rationalize different gameplay decisions" (p.2). In effect, motivation to spend and play in gacha games is underpinned by affective embedding, the relational investment that stems directly from a consumer and their perceived connection with any living or non-living thing. On a specific note, affective embedding in gacha games is controlled largely by psycho-social cues, player-perceived value, lifestyle, and capitalist logic (Woods, 2022).

Within the broader context of affective embedding, gacha games "manipulate player's desire for escapist fantasy" and "expand reality along new planes of experience and becoming" (Woods, 2022, p.5) through the marketing of these loot boxes in-game. The primary display of this technique stems from celebrating time-limited events that reward player participants with in-game currency, free loot box vouchers, expendable energy, and character power upgrades, to name a few. Aside from that, gacha games also provide daily log-in bonuses to encourage players to log in every day to get free rewards by simply just opening the app, all the while showcasing (through eye-popping ads) the new banners and features to discover how a 21st-century Filipino object-owner like me ascribes meaning to a digital artifact and what underlying cultural underpinnings influence my affinity with these things.

Within the gacha-designed world of *Stellis*, I distributed a part of my identity onto Rosa (whom I named Kei) as an extension of my technologized self. The initial complications in my dissection of this identity are found in the happenstance that Rosa is female and I am a male. Nonetheless, I position myself differently in *Stellis* as a man aiming to form homosocial relationships with the male leads and as an individual struggling to perform according to hegemonic masculinity and express affection (Soresca, 2013) in direct contrast to heteroromantic (or homoromantic) relationships that it sells to female and LGBTQIA+ players. Essentially, I am differentiating my position as a male player of *Tears of Themis* as opposed to female players; in this way, I can piece together *Stellis* memories that are truly personalized and unique from my perspective. After all, what has initially drawn me to this game is Artem's and Luke's delicate looks which defy hegemonic masculinity, situating my affinity with them through our shared 'soft masculinity' (Hong, 2021) as I find

my strengths not in my machismo or power but in my intellect and storytelling skills.

In the succeeding recollective vignettes, I also situate myself as a posthuman Filipino player who possesses an entangled digital and real 'I.' Apart from my physical self, I am also extending my identity by distributing a mediated self onto the gamespace of *Stellis* as another identity characterized by posthuman subjectivity (Wilde, 2020). Through this, I am actively dismembering my identity into two parts: a digital one and a real one which, by and large, are treated as the single 'I' that performs a digitized identity in *Stellis* mechanically controlled by my own hands and perceived through my own eyes. Forthwith, I narrate a story of these fragmented identities and how they coalesce into one.

Stories from Stellis: An assortment of sorts **(Un)sweet(ened)**

Birthday parties are always a wonderful treat, but the preparations for them have never been my cup of tea. Often, organizing get-togethers requires a lot of time and energy which, as of the moment, I cannot bear to manage. Despite my seemingly peculiar lack of interest in these activities, I unwittingly participated in the preparation for Artem's Birthday because of two things: (1) Artem is one of my two most beloved friends in *Stellis* (Luke is the other one!) and (2) I had to distract myself from the heavy lift that is law school.

Three souvenirs from this event commemorate my (virtual) participation in setting up Artem's birthday surprise: a common R card, an invitation, and a badge. Like a buttercream shortcake topped with powdered coffee grinds, these things taste sweet with a hint of bitterness.

The Deduction common R card has, on its face, Artem clad in business casual attire which he wore during the date with the main character (through which I have projected myself).

Bearing 5 stars to its name, this card has been caved in from five (5) duplicates of the same card obtained through the course of April 16, 2022, up until April 26, 2022. While it is not used directly for debates, this card with a power of 1856 at Lvl. 40 finds its spot in my support decks of my Strong Deck, Favorites Deck, and Revolving Deck for ample assistance. After all, its passive skills "Layer by Layer α 1" boosts a card's influence/power, and "Progressive 1" boosts defense when it is placed in the Support Deck.

The second object is called the "Mesmerizing" invitation featuring the street-side tableau of Artem's birthday celebration prepared by me. The invitation captures the picture-perfect moment of showing my surprise to Artem. It is displayed on the upper portion of my public profile and serves as a wallpaper from my user interface when I log in to the game. If I click on the wallpaper, it replays Artem's words of gratitude for my efforts.

The third object is a small badge entitled "Cherished Time Badge" which is aptly placed in the "Badge Display" section of my profile. Its description reads "Time passes, but you're still the only wish I have. Exclusive Days to Re-Live [sic] Forever badge."

As the badge reveals, these objects are apt remembrances of the cherished memories of the days I want to re-live forever. These days in *Stellis* merged one in me: my investigative journalist spirit and my legalistic technique of debating to

interview audiences about the Film Festival and the identity of the film critic Mockingbird. With each successful report, I obtain 'heartfelt gifts' which are used to purchase decorations for Artem's birthday celebration (I collected enough to fill a whole street).

To control my fictional stress in-game indicated by a gauge that fills up after every encounter, I am managing a fatigue system that allows only five to seven interviews per day. Lowering the stress level is easy, I just have to spend S-chips, the in-game currency that I periodically obtain through the ordeal. If only I had this fatigue system in real life, then the bitter taste of reality would not hit me so hard. Apart from Artem's birthday surprise, I am also powering through my mid-term examinations in law school. Unlike the in-game stress gauge, I cannot simply spend S-chips to ease my worries and lessen my fatigue. I cannot just pay my way out of physical and mental exhaustion. I only had the choice of pushing beyond my limits.

Of course, my examinations were tougher than I expected. Although I have a lesser academic load than usual, I still felt the weight of the difficulty push down on me. After a daily five to ten-minute break from preparing Artem's birthday surprise in Tears of Themis, I would spend the next couple of hours punching through difficult law provisions. After contacting audiences for one investigatory interrogation in Stellis, I then again, spent the succeeding hours memorizing the elements of various crimes punishable under the Revised Penal Code.

I think to myself the corollary truth: these exams erected huge roadblocks. I almost left blank answers if not for my capacity to type fast enough to type a slew of phrases. That's how online exams operate: you'd think they'd be easier than handwritten ones, but they're not. Despite preparing for the tests so much, I always felt unprepared, faced with an animal I have not encountered before: and the task is not only to identify what it is, but find a logical solution to capturing the wild creature. However, I also think to myself, how Kei and Artem have gone through this same dilemma before they went through the ruckus of legal studies and eventually emerged victorious.



Figure 1. Handwritten message for Artem at wouldulike cafe, Eastwood mall

The reward for doing menial and simple tasks for Artem's birthday turned out to be hearing his wistful words and receiving special souvenirs in return. But what about the rewards of taking an exam? Surely the best reward would be good scores, but that is too speculative. I thought I'd just reward myself with what I think I deserve.

Without hesitation, I actively went out to WouldULike cafe in Eastwood on April 27, 2022 (the day after my last exam) and took Artem's virtual celebration beyond Stellis. There, I was met with an Artem birthday shrine, pre-ordered meals solely for the event, and a message glassboard filled with heart-warming messages for Artem. There I wrote the words I will cherish in these days I will re-live forever: "Happy birthday Artem!!! Thank you for inspiring me to finish my law studies. - Kev" (see Fig 1.)

These simple yet sublime strings of words remind me of how Artem's birthday celebration coincided with a difficult portion of my life, and how I got through it thanks to the few (but meaningful) minutes I have spent in Stellis. And the three digital artifacts carry within (and by) them fragments of these bittersweet times.

Travel(ling) Far(away)

If I told anyone that I held (and timely renewed) my passport for over 10 years, they would probably ask me where I have flown to and what tourist destinations I have ticked off my bucket list. But my answer would probably disappoint them: I have never boarded an airplane in my life.

That is why virtually no one would probably believe me when I say that my Artem Sweet Tastes artifact is a souvenir from a trip abroad because that would defy all logic, would it not? If I had never flown coach or business before, how was I able to travel? The answer is simple: my (posthuman) self did. Artem's Sweet Tastes R card is utilized as a part of support cards for my Strong Deck, Revolving Deck, with its 2576 power and passive skill Progressive I which boosts defense in debates. It features Artem holding two ice cream cones in both hands, acting carefully so as not to have them melt and drip onto his hands.

To get this card in full 5-star power (i.e. getting five Sweet Tastes cards), I had to take the Artem route in the Romantic Rail Getaway event. The story prompt made me choose between Artem and Vyn, and I chose the former. The interactive story was split into five separate days, and each day was more memorable than the last. With a warm heart, I trace the days and map out the events that transpired during this 5-day trip

Day 1: What started as a normal day in Stellis turned out to be much more than that. Artem booked a windowseat so that I could get a beautiful view of the countryside. He was dressed in a trenchcoat, fashionably worn over fancy vests and business casual attire. With great excitement sitting by his side, I get a glimpse of European-style houses and a forlorn bridge. At our first stop, we took the tour bus which took us to three destinations that thematically show artistry and romance. Towards the end, we ate at a Lombarda-style restaurant, and he picked our dishes for us. This trip sure is full of love.

Day 2: We arrive at Dilly Plaza, a place boasting quite several inspirational spots. There we found the Dilly Art Gallery and Wax Museum. While trekking along the brick roads, we encountered a lot of individuals who helped us navigate these busy streets. We even came across some scammers scalping tickets from other

tourists! What a shame! The day ended with a beautiful pop-up concert by the streetwalk, and we listened to wonderful melodies under a starlit sky.

Day 3: Kylos is our third stop, and this place had even more fidgety locals than before. Luckily, the smell of freshly brewed coffee and delicious food whiffed through our nostrils as the tour guide ushered us into the beautiful restaurants around the Kylos Plaza. As the day seemed bright for it, we decided to also visit the Umbra Castle known for its luscious natural scenery: a garden of plants and roses, and also the Culinary Museum.

Day 4: James River is our fourth destination where we arrived at a riverside scenic area overlooking the James Bridge. We also had to stroll along the James Central Business District and James Plaza. The Greenhouse Park was also a heartwarming part of our itinerary; it is here where Artem and I realized how great of a team we were. I will never forget how he took a picture of me underneath the scorching heat surrounded by green ferns and red flowers.

Day 5: I do not recall much of this day except visiting a local temple and a bridge. What I do remember most fondly about this day though was probably the most breathtaking view throughout the trip: Artem holding an ice cream melting by his hand. It was the same picturesque image of the Sweet Tastes souvenir, forever etched into my mind. What a way to end this trip.

Was I there, or was I just virtually there? Is there even a categorical difference? Is my absence considered a presence in the virtual? Imagine all of us players going through this same event. Alone. In our own home, tapping relentlessly on our phone. But I'd like to think we're not alone, rather we are alone together in this shared experience. So who's to say we weren't there if several people (i.e. non-players) were not there?

To say I thoroughly enjoyed this trip is an understatement. Under the bridge and over, I digitally and physically felt an intertwined relief, a satisfaction cut short when I noticed the battery died out soon after I finished Day 5. Well, I would not pursue Vyn's story anyway, might as well charge it. Through the darkness lit only by a bedside lamp, I see my reflection on the black glass in my hand, filled with the longing for more—the unspeakable lengths of the ungraspable. As I look outside my bedroom window peering into the tangerine hues and damp stones in my own home, I dream of being able to (physically) set foot on a luxury train bound for the vast unknown with the one(s) I love.

In (Khaimit's) Desert(lands)

Heavy is the finger that obtained the artifacts from the limited-time event “Secrets of the Tomb” not because of its mass but because of the responsibility it has borne in its tip: a blotch of indelible ink to signify that I have voted. One could say that the acquisition of these artifacts falls under an important part of my democratic identity as a Filipino voter, and what joy would it have brought me had the elections been as I hoped, but maybe that is why we don't throw coins into a well anymore.

The grueling election season has now come to a close and today is the day I get to vote. I remember thinking: today is the day we get to win; a victory against disinformation. I have never been so wrong.

I glanced at my phone; it read 7 o'clock. I am excited to paint my country in pink. At the precinct, it was pretty uneventful; peculiarly, several precincts in the Philippines are situated in Public School classrooms where we have honed our developing minds. Within this learning, space turned electoral voting room, what unfolds? The answer is simple: the blending of the past (institutionalized learning) and the present (exercising one's voting rights). Did the Filipinos learn well enough in the past (classroom) to make tough and fair choices in the present (elections)? The answer came later into the night when the uncoiling and unraveling transpired.

Instagram saw it first: a picture of my ink-stained finger. Yes, I have voted, and yes I have learned better. With this not-so-photogenic digit, I decided to pull for the 'Overflowing Thoughts' Luke SSR Card. It currently holds a power of 3732 and possesses three great passive skills utilized in primary debates. It stands within Strong Deck, Favorite Deck, and Revolving Deck as a hard-hitting main front.

Meanwhile, the other two artifacts, the Roaring Sands Badge and the Desert Road Invitation, were obtained later in the evening. These digital artifacts came into my possession shortly after accomplishing the final set of tasks in the Secrets of the Tomb event, and spending some Khaimit coins I got from digging through treasure in the event's mini-game. The badge description reads: "Amidst boundless golden sand, who will watch over the ancient secrets?" That is my question for my fellow Filipinos too, adding only a slight modification: Who is watching over our ancient secrets?

While I was actively excavating rocks and stones in search of gold nuggets and historical artifacts underneath rock formations in Khaimit, my fellow Filipinos were excavating their version of the truth amidst the debris of fake news. While I was actively living in an alternate version of modern-day Egypt in Khaimit, my fellow Filipinos were (almost virtually) living in an alternate version of Philippine history, where perception is (apparently) everything and the truth is (supposedly) relative.

Evening came quickly and the precincts were closing. Filipinos were on the verge of vanquishment: malfunctioning vote counting machines, rigging and vote-buying issues, and electoral violence in some parts of Mindanao. All I can think about is: what the hell is happening? Looking back, I should have treated it as a premonition.

When the results were being canvassed on TV, horror consumed my whole body. My prospective candidate, who has shown what great lengths good governance can take us, is quickly losing her numbers. By dusk, I already knew my future was not as rose-colored as I hoped it would be.

I locked myself in my room, browsing through social media, searching for any glimpse of hope amidst the cataclysm. We have fought this battle hard, but it already felt like we already lost the moment we began. I found nothing.

As I glance into the night sky, holding Khaimit digital artifacts in my pocket, I start to see it as clear and bright as the moon in a desert view. Tomorrow is not a rose-colored pavement, but a red-stained path. Shooting stars did not chance upon the sky that night, but I earnestly hoped they would. I am trying to find the reason why comets did not come as frequently as they did, maybe they had a good enough reason not to. If a burning star fell from the heavens that night, in the vivid imagery of YOASOBI I'd say:

刹那に輝いた無慈悲な流れ星	(The merciless shooting star shined for an instant)
祈りはただ届かずに消えた	(and disappeared without answering my prayers)
この、手の中で燃え尽きた	(Burned out in this hand is)
金色の優しい彗星を	(A golden, gentle comet)
美しいたてがみを	(Its beautiful mane)
暗闇の中握り締めた	(I clenched in the darkness)

And yes, the Khaimit souvenirs transformed from being simply just keepsakes into mementos of defeat.

Materializing the (recent) past

Deconstructing the relational and processual relation of the select pieces from my digital artifact collection in *Tears of Themis* illustrated the histories and cultural underpinnings that encompass my recent past as a posthuman Filipino in the first half of 2022. The anatomization of the digital artifacts entailed a recognition of the blended realities in which it is condensed: specifically, that the in-game artifacts carry both the in-game context that surrounds the object and the social context (and realities) that I, the object owner, experienced when the acquisition took place. From the memory vignettes, three deductions materialize: first, that memory and personal history from digital artifacts are linked largely by affective embedding and perception; second, that digital artifacts from gacha games represent the ideological model of the economy of desire and the posthuman experience in a gamespace; and third, that digital artifacts can be understood from two perspectives: from the game's usage and the player's own experience with it.

All the stories from preparing Artem's birthday surprise during my exams, obtaining Artem's Sweet Tastes card while not having traveled by myself, and getting the Khaimit mementos during the 2022 Philippine National Elections, stem from the experiences intertwined with the acquisition of objects. These narratives are perceived by and through the digital objects thanks to an offshoot of projecting myself onto my *Tears of Themis* character Kei. By placing myself in her shoes, I can situate myself in the first-person perspective and co-experience all of these events with and through her. This projection is possible because of the relational aspect of gacha games (Woods, 2022).

The select pieces from my digital artifact collection fall under what Ellersdorfer (2021) described as "anchors of memory" (Ellersdorfer, 2021, p. 6; Stockhammer; 2020, p.42); however, there is a slight dissimilarity in what points consider the re-telling of the past. For Ellersdorfer (2021), the ties to the past can be seen in the materiality of the object: in its wears and tears, in its historical production, in its discoloration, and its real-world utilization coupled with perception. Proposing a critical challenge to this, my digital artifacts blend the memories not in their physicality but in what player value I ascribed to the digital object. Absent any affective embedding and perception linked to the object, memories seem to drift away when salvaged from it.

Artem and Luke are characters designed to be relatable, admirable, and likable, in every sense of those words, and thus possessed qualities which merited my affective embedding. The way their personalities and aesthetics are designed based on East Asian ideals touched on several cultural matrices of my aesthetic appreciation. Their character archetype and design capitalized on my nostalgia for

anime culture. In the Philippines, Japanese cartoons called *anime* have been pervasive since the early 2000s (Bravo, 2012), incidentally the period of my developmental youth. Because of this transnational reception of anime culture in the Philippines, anime established a cultural phenomenon in the Philippines through Japanese language and subject appreciation, Filipino popular media culture, and Filipino cosplay culture, among others (Bravo, 2012). On a personal level, *anime influenced* my appreciation of the Japanese visual culture's artistic style of cute, beautiful, and attractive visually drawn characters, effectively solidifying them as my perceived aesthetic ideal and standard for visual culture.

Beyond a wistful recollection of childhood exposure, Artem and Luke's design also taps into the cultural point of my postcolonial identity. Underneath the surface, my identity is largely (but not fully) xenocentric in a way that our country is molded by the State despite our multicultural and multiethnic population (Bankoff & Weekley, 2017). In his dissertation entitled *Text and Transformation*, Lacson (2004) explained that reconfiguring the postcolonial identity in the Philippines necessitated an understanding of the Filipinos' culture of poverty, propensity to splinter, incredible absence of credible leaders, and historical despoliation. Succinctly, the postcolonial Filipino has a weak sense of national identity and an impactful dissociation and disconnect from history. One might wonder why, despite my country having strained relations with Japan during the Japanese occupation in World War II where several Filipino women were sexually assaulted, a globalized anime culture permeated the Philippines and directly onto my visual aesthetic appreciation. Lacson's (2004) findings provide a modest answer to this peculiarity: "[a]nything that happened before the Marcos dictatorship does not seem to have any relevance to Filipinos today" (p. 223). As a postcolonial Filipino, I am drawn to an assortment of different transnational cultural media: indie Filipino films, Japanese animation, Chinese video games, Korean pop music, manhwa, and American television shows, to name a few. Such an assemblage mimics an incredible disconnect from historical hostilities against events of the past. This is the postcolonial virus laying dormant within me: regardless of what strained relations our countries had before, I still maintain a healthy relationship with the new media they present to me.

Yet, memory anchorage to digital artifacts all comes back to character design (i.e. the aesthetic of Japanese visual culture and soft masculinity). This almost-perfect mixture of different aesthetics, culturally-specific masculine traits, and the incredibly vibrant and relatable back story makes up the qualities that have compelled me to effectively embed values into the characters and, in turn, emotionally charge the digital objects obtained about the character's events and narrative. Stroking my disposition toward Japanese anime culture and nudging my postcolonial lack of a conceivable national identity, *Tears of Themis* reconstructed characters that bear my perceived aesthetic ideal of light-skinned tall and slender figures and soft masculinity characterized by anti-hegemonic traits (Hong, 2021). The supplementary socio-economic matrix touched upon by these relational characters and digital souvenirs is my player participation within a digital culture of desire and pleasure which will be discussed later on.

Apart from connecting several cultural underpinnings of my thought process, *Tears of Themis* characters effectively resonate with me on a personal level too. The fictional background stories of the characters build the foundation of why I

perceive them in a positive light. Artem, as a hardworking lawyer, struggled immensely to gain prestige. In retrospect, he inspired me to be motivated in my legal studies because of his dedication to the profession. I relate to his chosen line of work because that is what I hope to achieve; I admire Artem's passion for justice. Luke is also working in the field of investigation, but his work is private and catered only to a few specific clients. This, too, falls under my relativity because I am a huge fan of detectives and mysteries. My penchant for solving puzzles made Luke's backstory all the more appealing. After all, Woods (2022) explained that gacha game characters are not just descriptive interfaces and drawings, but a representation of human integration into aspects of new technology (Apperly & Clemens, 2017). Simply put, the characters are built with their perceivable agency outside the player's control; they possess an evocative lifelike back-story where they act in their fictional capacity. Through these mimetic subplots coupled with Japanese visual design, the characters of *Tears of Themis* are now presented within *Stellis* as interactive sprites with completely fictional agencies that respond directly to my choices, actions, and movements. Artem and Luke are more than just a string of code attached to visual images; they are built as avatars with perceivable and interactive positive qualities within a gamespace ruled by an economy of desire and are thus a magnet of relationality (Woods, 2022) to which I effectively gravitated.

Because of my affective embedding of Artem and Luke's characters, I can attach sentimental value to the digital objects appendaged to my homosocial interactions with them. As if viewing the digital semantics of objects, I assigned a meaning to the digital artifacts, tied directly to its manifest image, and not its (im)materiality per se. In other words, the recollection is made because of the context surrounding the acquisition of the object and what it signifies from my point of view.

This perception speaks partly true to what Ellerdorsfer (2021) explained as "the way [objects] are perceived cannot be separated from our context" (p. 7). Borrowing largely from Stockhammer's (2020) idea, Ellerdorsfer (2021) discussed the particularity of the narratives encountered in objects as products of perception and experiences where changeability is underscored. According to Stockhammer (2020), our perception of things changes over time causing things to inevitably (de)mystify. Looking back, this is what recalling memories from my collection entailed: a recalibration of my perception. Instead of merely referring to the narratives within *Stellis*, I also remembered the off-game instances that came with it. Since our past is largely mediated by the present (Ellerdorsfer, 2020), I positioned every digital artifact memory-extraction from the present reading. Although the experiences remain the same, the sense of significance either grows or dims depending on the changing of the tides; what memories I might perceive of them now will most probably not be the same several years from now. However, the way my digital objects are perceived in the present is where I found a strong link with memories of the recent past. Because of my current perception of these things, I was able to retrieve otherwise furloughed echoes of my recent past. When tied with the object's value sparked by affective embedding, perception plays a significant role in linking the memories to the digital objects.

Simply put, there begins to be an 'occurrence of things' which Ellerdorsfer (2021) noted as the processual nature of the object. Because of the changing context of perception of the object-owner, the memories associated with the object spatially

and temporally change in meaning (Ellersdorfer, 2021). Apart from bearing only in-game values, these objects and artifacts are now situated under my socio-political conditions and historical conjuncture; while the in-game narratives inscribed therein have juxtaposed themselves with my off-game encounters coupled with cultural underpinnings.

Primarily, what these objects from my digital artifact collection essentially signify is the totality of the economy of desire (Woods, 2022), the economy of pleasure (Hong, 2021), and the posthuman identity that is created by the gacha gamespace. At different capacities, the cards, invitations, and badges act both as vestiges of the gacha gamespace and as a token of nonhuman (digital) experiences.

The memories unsheathed from the affectively charged digital objects include both in-game and off-game experiences because of the entanglement of my actual self and my digital self. Wilde (2020) stated that this posthuman subjectivity is not merely mechanical but an awareness of "our constantly intra-connected and transient relationship with our environment and others within it, both human and nonhuman" (p.1). To illustrate the experiences in the digital world means to speak of a larger context of my identity as a 21st-century human with a technologized self accessed through my mobile phone. Gourlay (2015) describes this complex relation by explicating how a digital device and nonhuman agency disrupt the binaries between text, author, device, and user. Me and my digital identity are not mutually exclusive of one another: we are the same, entangled by an invisible string of mediated connection(s), represented by the digital artifacts we share in our possession. Corresponding with Stojnic's (2021) descriptive dissection of *Neon Genesis Evangelion's* climactic resolve, my posthuman self transpired a coextension "existing not as disparate subjects attempting to connect, but as a self-sufficient flow of consciousness" (p.40).

As a steady stream of posthuman consciousness, I am procedurally experiencing in both human and nonhuman capacities the stories narrated by the digital artifacts. When I access the Khaimit collection, I recall not only the Secrets of the Tombs event tasks of archaeological excavation but also the Philippine National Elections. When I retell the story of Artem's Romantic Rail Getway, I also appraise my lack of travel experiences. When I divulge my sweet memories of participation in Artem's birthday event, I cannot help but also recall the bitter feelings about my 4th Year Second Semester mid-term law school examinations.

Similar to how Wilde (2020) described how a person is constantly changed, affected, and mediated by human and nonhuman things, I perceive these select pieces from my artifact collection as influential aspects of the "posthuman-that-is-me" (p.10). In recalling what memories are found within my artifact collection, I am reminded of a specific moment of both my in-game and off-game experiences: of being comforted in Stellis during my exams, of being able to travel to another place without leaving my doorstep, and of being a voter amid a pressing National Election with Khaimit souvenirs in my bag. These visibilities of blending the real and the virtual are solidified and illustrated by what the artifacts present within its contextual acquisition.

Woods (2022) indirectly described posthumanism in discussing how the relationality of characters in gacha games "prompts the player to engage with their characters in ways that go beyond the game" (p.10). Even though the author spoke of cosplaying events and other similar modes, I speak from experience in the same

vein: my mediated self has chosen to celebrate and interact with the physical Artem event that is happening in a nearby city next to mine. It is because I have elucidated how these digital artifacts were used and what motivations prompted the acquisition of these artifacts from my collection that one starts to see their unbiased and unperturbed history of use and the memories found in their (im)materiality. I also speak largely of my off-game context, evident in the recollection of the 2022 National Elections intertwined with the acquisition of Khaimit artifacts and my juxtaposed travels within *Stellis* even though I have not mobilized myself.

By illustrating how affective embedding and character relationality motivate me to participate in the game events to get the digital artifacts, I have painted a picture of *Stellis* as being ruled by the "economy of desire" procuring its vernacular of "capitalist logic." (Woods, 2022, p.6). These artifacts are surrounded by relational characters and participation that is fueled by the investment of emotional capital. Spending five to ten minutes per day into characters to which I have effectively embedded myself, I can present how my efforts (to spend less than thirty minutes per day) are rewarded by the emotional satisfaction of finishing the task and being rewarded with interactions with Artem, with digital souvenirs, and with fragmented digital experiences. Fundamentally, the digital artifacts serve as a souvenir of these interactions that I have sought, all premised within a desire-driven economy. I found the motivation from my desire to collect these objects related to the characters I like and from the pleasure of having these digital artifacts in my possession as a remembrance. In a way, retelling the story of what these three digital artifacts cost to obtain (my effort, my time, and my emotion) showed the blending of economies of desire and pleasure that are involved in gacha games: if you would want to acquire this object, then you have to participate in these events which requires time and energy. Within this capitalist logic, my motivations have compelled me to invest part of my time and emotional capital just to get the virtual things. I have also invested in-game currency as capital to obtain the Overflowing Thoughts SSR card by spending roughly around 14400 S-chips and the Desert Road Invitation by paying 32000 Khaimit Coins. This exchange of goods through emotional investment or actual spending of in-game currency definitively illustrates a capitalist logic. Significantly, what this gamespace presents is how social relationships are marketed by *Stellis'* gentrified ecology of desire and pleasure, and what better representation of this economy than the actual in-game rewards from this emotional investment (i.e. the select pieces from my digital collection).

Lastly, my autoethnographic snippets revealed how the digital objects in a gacha game function much like an heirloom in their capacity to be of different meanings for each different possessor (Lillios, 1999; Ellersdorfer, 2021). However, the digital artifacts' only difference is that they pass only in one generation: from game developer to player. Thus, since my gacha game artifacts can only be passed from game to me, as a player, but does not hinder other players from obtaining the artifacts, the archaeological recording of digital artifacts in the gacha ludic design can be visualized as follows:

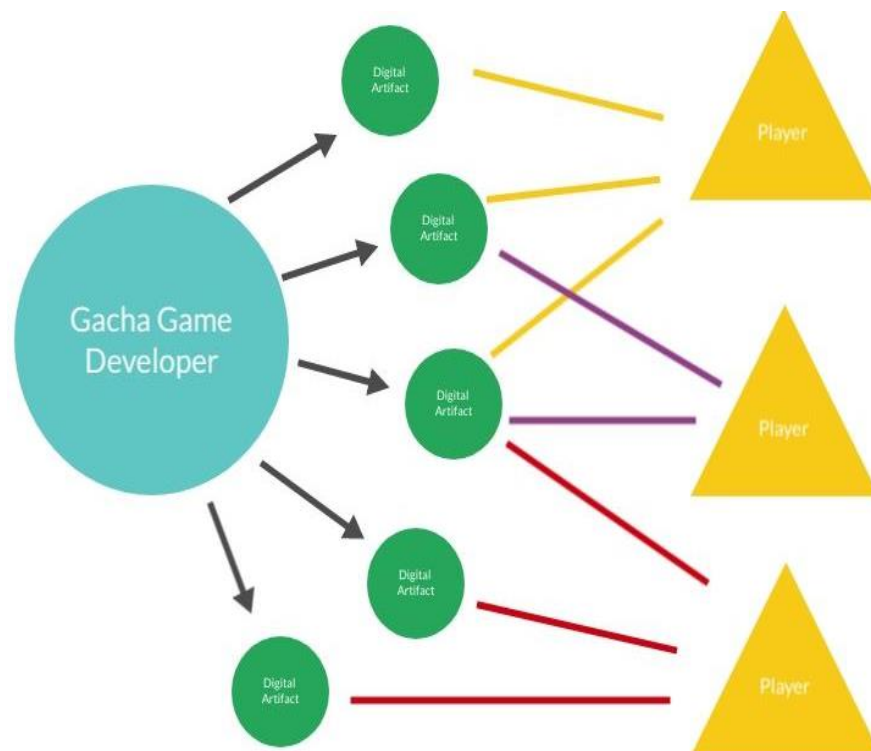


Figure 2. Archaeological network of gacha game digital artifacts

The gacha game developer is the sole source of the digital artifacts, and each artifact is attached with its in-game context, lore, and mechanic. However, these artifacts are owned by players in different supervening capacities based on their choice to participate in the events, manner of obtaining, and value. Each differently colored line (red, yellow, and purple) represents a player's collection of digital artifacts, upon which each of them has attached different meanings to the objects apart from in-game context into a story, memory, and meaning of their own. In this way, digital artifacts can be archaeologically understood as intermediary artifacts between in-game context and off-game context. Lillios (1999) describes this transmission from one person (in this context, a game developer) to another (in contemporary applications, gacha game players) as a form of disposition: whereby the owner relinquishes the ownership of the thing and grants it to another (in this case, to several players) to transmit status, rank, or historical significance. In the same way, the gacha player, myself, has acquired possession of the objects as I have attached significantly new histories to them. Like the variables of tension between "competing sources of identity and rank that ultimately generates the conditions that lead to the use and circulation of heirlooms," (Lillios, 1999, p. 256), these digital artifacts are transmitted based on the tensions between affective embedding, player perception, and motivation as exemplified by my auto-archaeological recollection. The tension between what I can do, what my resources are, and what I choose to do for these artifacts dictates if these artifacts are worthy of my possession and effort to obtain. Thus, to understand how digital artifacts may be explained in the Southeast Asian context, the player's side of the archaeological analysis must be underscored. Because of the disposition of the objects from COGNOSPHERE to its player, the digital artifacts become part of the objects

owned by Southeast Asians, regardless of their origin; and it is thus best archaeologically understood and recorded as part of the objects owned by 21st-century posthuman South East Asians with digital identities of their own. This transmission decontextualizes the artifacts from its game-specific lore and into the hands of possessors from Southeast Asia—in my context, as a Filipino. After all, Lillios (1999) explained that it is when heirlooms are stopped from circulation that their archaeological recording must commence. Similarly, since the artifacts from *Tears of Themis* end up in the possession of each player once transmitted (and are stopped from further circulation except when re-introduced by the game developer), their archaeological recording (such as illustrated by my auto-archaeology) must be launched.

Conclusion

In all of their official *Tears of Themis* social media channels, COGNOSPHERE commemorates the 1st anniversary of the release of the mobile game's global server by writing that "This little keepsake conveys the feelings he has had for you this past year, as well as his hope for the future" (*Tears of Themis* [@tearsofthemisen], 2022, July 2016). As this social media post suggests, the game developers acknowledged that these virtual objects that the players receive from the game are keepsakes of memories. The developers of the game recognize that these objects act as vestiges of the past and possess a representational capacity. Such is a piecemeal reverberation with Ellersdorfers' (2021) auto-archaeological significance of memory and Woods' gacha game findings. If new media such as *Tears of Themis* aptly recognizes the importance of the memories stored within the digital artifacts (consistent with archaeological theory and game studies), so should we, as (post)humans of the contemporary past occupying various virtually constructed worlds, look at virtual objects as sources of personal and social memory. On another note, Ellersdorfer (2021) explained that:

"[it]is unlikely that if anyone else were to look at [her] postcards that they would be able to decipher their significance to [her], in much the same way that [she] can only really imagine the experiences that they signify for [her] mother."

The same rings true from the auto-archaeology of my digital artifact collection. I am the only one capable of deriving an accurate and precise reading of my digital artifact collection's importance and role in my complicated life which is a network of posthumanism, postcolonialism, childhood nostalgia, and sociopolitical context. It is unlikely that a future archaeologist, who would probably unearth my digital collection, may be able to accurately decipher the memories encapsulated within them, the relational perception I have with the characters who accorded me the motivation to acquire these artifacts, and the representation that these artifacts signify to me, much less even access these digital artifacts from my phone. Thus, this case study revealed how vastly significant the auto-archaeological analysis of digital objects is, considering that it allows a personal reflection on artifacts owned by the object-owner himself/herself/themselves. This case study also emphasized the importance of the narrative enshrined within my digital artifacts, in that they may represent the gacha game economy, my posthuman

identity, and my recent past by providing a linkage between personal and social history.

At the core of the memory retrieval from these artifacts from my *Tears of Themis* digital collection, three notable points emerged. One is that memories within digital objects are anchored on the value attached to them as a reverberation of affective embedding and perception. Because my memories of the objects are tied to why and how I obtained the object, it is apparent that my player-perceived value brought about by effective embedding helped coalesce the memories inscribed in each of the digital artifacts from both in-game and off-game circumstances. Second is that the digital artifact collection represents the posthuman identity which not only has the sole capacity to access these artifacts but also a continued presence in affecting both in-game and off-game circumstances. By having access to these artifacts primarily using my credentials to log in to the game itself, my digital self is the one (virtually) touching these artifacts. In turn, this propagates my identity as someone posthuman, possessing a technologized self occupying *Stellis*, a virtual world, but also mechanically controlled by a real self, occupying the human world. These artifacts represented the bigger picture of my post-humanity as they tended to meld memories from the real and the virtual. In a larger context, the artifacts also represent the economy of desire and pleasure that creates capitalist logic within gacha games (Woods, 2022) because these virtual artifacts are obtained through different personal motivations derived from the investment of emotional capital. Third is that a digital artifact collection may be archaeologically understood through a network of disposition (from game developer to player), functioning like an heirloom as an artifact that is relinquished from its owner's context to another owner's context, effectively bridging two artifact-center histories: that of the game's context and that of the player's off-game context. With this new model of rethinking digital artifacts and memory, the researcher recommends efforts into archaeologically reporting digital artifacts owned by players in different archaeogaming contexts; in particular, in-game artifacts owned by Southeast Asians in vastly bigger contexts.

"He Zhiwu, Cop 223: If memories could be canned, would they also have expiry dates? If so, I hope they last for centuries."

- Chungking Express (1993), (dir. Wong Kar-wai)

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EXPLORING THE ROLE OF MUTED GROUP THEORY IN UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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<https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i2.7305>

received 3 October 2023; accepted 27 March 2024

Abstract

Muted Group Theory describes women as being viewed as a “muted” group because of male dominance. This paper aims to provide an overview of the gaps faced by women, to find out the application of the Muted Group Theory, and to identify the application of the basic concepts of the Muted Group Theory related to the experiences of women in their environment. This study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. This research systematically identifies and evaluates women's experiences in several previous studies. However, along with the development of time and technology, communication not only focuses on direct interaction (face-to-face) but can also be carried out on other platforms such as social media or other online media. This can broaden women's opportunities to express and share their opinions.

Keywords: muted group theory, gender, woman

Introduction

There is a dominant expression at every level of society that forms a dominant structure within it (Ardener, 1975). In essence, if a person has this dominant way of expressing themselves, their surroundings will notice it. Muted Group Theory provides an argument for the placement of people in specific societies, in this case, members of the lower class, because it is more difficult for them to voice their thoughts (Chavez & Griffin, 2009). This theory has also been developed to address issues concerning unequal power distribution between dominant and silent groups (Owusu, 2016). Muted Group Theory is a valuable theory for analyzing situations with power differentials (Warner, Dzubinski, Wood, & Martin, 2017).

This is also in line with the perspective of Edwin and Shirley Ardener, who created the Muted Group Theory as an argument for excluding women in anthropological research (Ardener, 1975). Adwin and Ardener (1975) describe how women are perceived as a "silenced" group due to the effects of male-dominated speech. Men are used as communication and behavior gatekeepers in strategies to

silence women's voices and ideas, making women continually work to be heard (O. Alichie & Oriola, 2022). Due to their different life experiences, men and women have different viewpoints on the world. However, because they have fewer linguistic alternatives than men, women sometimes struggle to express themselves clearly. Women frequently feel excluded from mission and missiology, which inhibits their thinking, contributions, and proposals (Warner et al., 2017). According to the Muted Group Theory, women must mimic men's language to be heard; otherwise, they risk not being understood and being perceived as impartial (Ardener, 1975).

In the context of gender, women constitute a demographic that experiences limitations in their ability to freely express themselves and voice their opinions, primarily as a result of the prevailing dominance of men (Ardener, 1975). Ardener notes that within the field of social anthropology, there is a tendency to overlook the collective experiences of women and their marginalized status within society. The study conducted by Henley and Kramarae (1994) on cross-sex misunderstandings demonstrated comparable findings about the asymmetry in the metastructure of interpretation. These findings indicated that the prevailing interpretation of an interaction tends to favor the more dominant individual (Henley & Kramarae, 1994). This aligns with the viewpoint presented by Spender (1980), who has elaborated on Ardeners' notion to back up his hypotheses regarding how individuals control language. Spender argues that males possess the capacity to exert control over the collective view of reality within society. The voices of women, aiming to articulate their unique experiences, are frequently marginalized due to the inherent limitations of a language system that does not prioritize the empowerment of women (Spender, 1980).

This study uses the systematic literature review (SLR) method to review the literature to determine how Muted Group Theory is applied in research on women's experiences in their environment. This is because Muted Group Theory highlights the inequalities that women face. The following research questions are used to explore these two subjects: (a) what is the Muted Group Theory's application? (b) how does research on women's experiences in their environment incorporate the basic idea of muted group theory?

Muted group theory

The theoretical framework known as Muted Group Theory (MGT) was first developed by Edwin and Shirley Ardener, as evidenced by scholarly sources such as Wall and Gannon-Leary (1999) and West and Turner (2010). Both individuals were social anthropologists who directed their attention toward the study of social hierarchies and systems. The study conducted by Wall and Gannon-Leary (1999) focused on the examination of the rituals performed by Bakweri women in Cameroon. The findings of this research were then published in the journal *La Fontaine* in 1972 and were further supplemented by another research publication in 1975. In the early stages of his research, Edwin Ardener attempted to clarify the underlying reasons behind the predominance of male informants in the anthropological material collected. In his scholarly work titled "Belief and the Problem of Women," Edwin Ardener observed the peculiar tendency among numerous ethnographers to assert their comprehension of a particular culture

without explicitly acknowledging the significant role played by women, who constitute half of society (Griffin, 2003).

Initially, Ardener believed that the absence of consideration given to the experiences of women constituted a distinct gender-related issue within the field of social anthropology. Nevertheless, the individual came to the realization, alongside his spouse Shirley Ardener, who is also an academic from the University of Oxford, that the absence of vocalization within a certain social group originates from their marginalized position and consequent lack of power and influence. The absence of vocal expression does not imply that marginalized communities lack any form of communication or agency. However, the concern lies in the fact that individuals possess the liberty to articulate their thoughts and opinions in a manner of their choosing, without restrictions on the time, place, or manner of expression. The dominant group does not exhibit any concerns over this matter. Nevertheless, muted groups must modify their vocabulary while engaging in public discourse, making it exceedingly challenging for them to effectively articulate their authentic convictions. They are consequently frequently dismissed, silenced, and rendered invisible—"mere black holes in someone else's universe."

Muted Group Theory's (MGT) central premise is that members of marginalized or subordinate groups are muted or rendered unable to express themselves effectively. Instead of using explicit authority or force, everyday political and cultural practices are used to silence people. Silencing calls for cooperation and a genuine shared knowledge of which groups in society have more authority over others, in contrast to speaking activities that require one player. The dominant group creates and controls the language system that silences the subordinate group. West & Turner (2010) summarized Kramarae's thinking that silencing in MGT occurs through ridicule, ritual, control, and harassment. Men frequently deride women as fussy, spoiled, whiny, gossipy, irritable, and so on.

Rituals can be used to silence women as well. Kramarae claims that the marriage ceremony is the rite that most obviously silences women (West et al., 2010). Women are not allowed to speak at various wedding ceremonies around the world. In the context of the world of sports, the media covers more sporting events involving men than those involving women. Media coverage of women's existence and communication styles is less prevalent.

According to the anthropologists Shirley Ardener and Edwin Ardener (1978), it is suggested that a muted group framework is inherent in every culture. According to Ardener (1978), the group that occupies the top position in the social hierarchy has a significant influence on the communication system that prevails in a society. Muted-group theory (MGT) posits that language serves as a reflection of one's worldview. Individuals belonging to the dominant group gradually construct a communication system that aligns with their conscious and unconscious understandings of the universe. They subsequently perceive this system as the appropriate language for the entirety of society (Ardener, 1975). Members of non-dominant groups are often forced to utilize a communication system that fails to accurately represent their collective experiences (Orbe, 1998).

Orbe (1998) asserts in his journal that scholars in the field of communication subsequently embraced Muted Group Theory (MGT), originally formulated by anthropologists Shirley and Edwin Ardener to examine the experiences of women (Kramarae, 1981) and African American men (Orbe, 1994). The structure of the

silenced group is present within any societal context characterized by asymmetrical power dynamics. The research conducted by Kramarae (1981) and Orbe (1994) utilized the muted-group paradigm to investigate the communication encounters of individuals belonging to non-dominant or co-cultural groups, specifically women and African-American men, respectively.

Shirley and Edwin Ardener laid the foundation for MGT. Cheri Kramarae, however, formulated three fundamental tenets of the philosophy that she focused on communication (Griffin, 2003; West, Turner, & Zhao, 2010).

According to Kramarae (1981), the Muted Group Theory (MGT) posits three fundamental postulates. These postulates assert that men and women possess distinct viewpoints on the world. Additionally, the theory suggests that men consistently achieve and retain political control. On the other hand, women must transform their unique ideas, interpretations, and encounters into masculine language or forms of communication to engage in societal interactions.

These differences are rooted in the division of labor between men and women. Freud's claim that "anatomy is destiny" is rejected by Kramarae because, in her opinion, the unequal relationships between men and women are brought on by the unequal allocation of power between the sexes (Griffin, 2003). Women are positioned as inferior parties who speak like men to be understood by a patriarchal culture due to the various experiences men and women have. The division of labor between men and women results in two quite distinct perspectives on how people experience the world. If a person spends every day at home and takes care of household duties, their worldly experience is closely related to the domestic affairs they manage. Because of the different world experiences between men and women, the vocabularies of women and men are not the same. For example, men create terms related to drinking and competition, while women create terms related to relationships and personal issues such as appearance (West et al., 2010).

According to Cheri Kramarae, the public-private distinction leads to the assumption that women's language is only appropriate in the private sphere or small world of interpersonal communication (Griffin, 2003). In patriarchal settings, the creation of a specifically female language is viewed as unimportant because the "big world" of significant public discussions where male vocabularies resonate is regarded as more essential.

The deliberate suppression of women's ideas and interpretations, which limits their ability to receive widespread societal recognition, contributes to the ongoing establishment of male political dominance. The dominance of men's perceptual systems can be attributed to their political dominance, which in turn undermines alternative models of women's perception and expression of the world (Griffin, 2003). According to MGT, it is argued that the reason behind women's inability to articulate their personal experiences using their language is not due to their lack of knowledge but rather from the limitations of the language itself in accurately representing women's experiences (West et al., 2010). Women often encounter obstacles when trying to express their ideas and experiences due to the limitations of language. According to Kramarae, the publishing sector had a longstanding restrictive practice of barring women from employment for five centuries (Griffin, 2003). It is hardly surprising that, as per her perspective, the dominant form of language expression is characterized as reflecting a male-centric perspective.

MGT highlights that male political dominance creates a space for dominating masculine perspectives. Alternative perceptual forces, like the experiences of women, are subordinate. This subordinate position hinders women's communication. Men gain from male supremacy, which reproduces itself in hierarchical structures. It is considered that the experiences of men, particularly white men, are more prevalent than those of women, let alone women of color. Therefore, to be accepted, successful women of color marginalize their own experiences.

The five principles of MGT posit that: (1) the dominant group assumes the role of constructing the language employed in shaping power dynamics and societal policies; (2) this language fails to comprehensively capture the diverse lived experiences of subdominant groups, leading to their marginalization and suppression; (3) consequently, subdominant groups are compelled to acquire proficiency in the language of the dominant group to maintain or enhance their social standing (Ardener, 2005); (4) resistance against silencing and the potential for transformative change exist; and (5) these dynamics persist even in the absence of the dominant group (Barkman, 2018). MGT places significant importance on the necessity of collective power as a means of reducing the marginalization experienced by vulnerable groups. The significance of muting lies in its ability to hinder the participation of individuals with less influence in accessing social advantages (Barkman & Barkman, 2020).

Ardener saw that ethnographers silenced the voices of women, children, and other marginalized groups by ignoring their viewpoints. Kramarae's (1981) feminist muted group theory primarily focuses on women; however, it is important to note that her conceptual framework extends beyond the female gender. According to Miller (2005), the dominant group within a culture exercises control over both opportunities and modes of expression, resulting in a preference for their style of expression. About the subject of instructional race-related research, the aforementioned hypotheses exhibit little disparity. To ensure their voices are acknowledged, scientists from diverse racial backgrounds must integrate their study of race into the prevailing research agenda (Wilson, Umi, Reid, & Hendrix, 2022).

Minority groups have the right and obligation to be heard and included. The muted group theory also uses this idea as a concept and construct (Cubbage, 2018). There are lessons to be learned about effective teaching, how to avoid "gendering" the classroom, and how treating students simply as individuals can undermine group learning and social interactions.

Muted group theory and women

Cheris Kramarae believes that women are burdened with conceptualizing thoughts, scanning, and transferring their vocabulary to one that follows masculine logic to be understood by other people, who typically employ a male vocabulary. Women are prevented from becoming "accomplished speakers" by this translation process. According to Kramarae, it is not unexpected that women frequently assist one another, speak simultaneously, and even interrupt one another when attempting to explain something that cannot be communicated under the current linguistic system.

Numerous scholars, prominently Dale Spender and Cheris Kramarae, have derived insights from and adapted the Muted Group Theory, thereby exerting a

significant influence on the feminist movement. This is due to the established, challenging communication patterns between men and women. Therefore, women frequently look for other means of expression than those dominated by men. Kramarae also suggests that although women have unique experiences requiring specialized language, they are unlikely to invent relevant words because they are not picked up through male communication (Wall & Gannon-Leary, 1999). Due to their structural roles in society, women see the world differently than men do. Ardener attributes this lack of verbalization by women to male-dominated social structures (Ardener, 1975).

Cheris Kramarae proposes that women critique audience/consumer-media power relationships by engaging in analyses of such relations as political acts by applying muted group theory to women's relationships with mass media. She argues that it is crucial to recognize the influence of men when defining experiences by identifying language, particularly words invented by men and those in power (based on race and class), to oppress weaker identities. Additionally, it is necessary to deconstruct the language of oppression by offering different meanings to experiences and creating new terms to label experiences (Baldo-Cubelo, 2021).

Mahony (1985), a British classroom researcher from the 1980s, discovered that in British classrooms, it was "normal" for teachers to overlook girls for an extended amount of time, for boys to call out, and for boys to predominate in-class conversation and classroom space. Boys frequently dominate attention in classroom interactions through dominance or the utilization of physical or verbal space. This space usage intrudes on the verbal and physical space reserved for girls in favor of boys. However, Ackers et al. (2001) state that lessons in most African classrooms have teachers who use a 'transmission approach' where children remain passive; the lesson is "teacher-centered with the teacher asking questions and students answering in chorus or, sometimes, individually and copying what is put on the board" (Jule, 2018).

Method

Research method and strategy

The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was chosen as the research method for this study because it is known for its systematic, explicit, comprehensive, and repeatable way of finding, evaluating, and synthesizing the existing body of finished and recorded work in a certain field (Fink, 2007, as cited in Dobbins et al., 2021). Systematic literature reviews are highly beneficial in offering a methodical and rigorous synthesis of existing knowledge, facilitating decision-making based on evidence.

To guarantee the strength and clarity of the evaluation procedure, this study will adhere to the recommendations established by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). Page et al. (2021) define the PRISMA guidelines as comprising four fundamental phases, namely identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion criteria for reports that are consistent with the research topic. Adhering to these standards improves the clarity and dependability of the review, establishing a methodically solid basis for integrating and evaluating the existing literature about the topic. The use of both the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method and the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) criteria shows a

commitment to a thorough and structured approach, making this research project more academically sound.

Data criteria

The scholarly journals that have been identified are written in the English language and conform to international standards. The search approach is doing queries on a search engine utilizing certain phrases, such as "muted group theory" and "women." The findings are thereafter carefully organized to identify publications that are relevant to the specific criteria of this study. The primary search phrases employed in this study encompass "muted group theory," "women," "women," and "female," hence facilitating a thorough examination of pertinent scholarly works within the specified research framework.

Data collection technique

The technique of collecting data included a thorough search and deliberate selection of scholarly publications from diverse esteemed online databases, including Scopus, Sage publications, Taylor & Francis, and ProQuest, within the designated period spanning from 2016 to 2022.

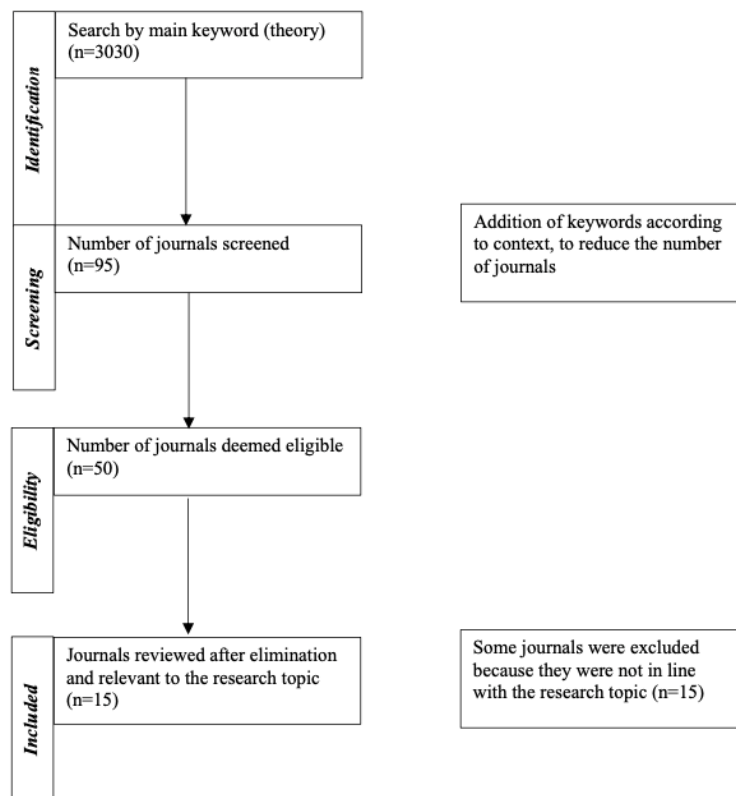


Figure 1. PRISMA chart

The process of journal search involved prioritizing scholarly articles that adhered to international standards, employing certain keywords, and imposing a temporal limitation. The application of this methodology resulted in the identification of a collection of 50 scholarly journals. Following this, a meticulous

selection process was implemented, which focused on the relevance of the journals to the research subject matter. As a result, 15 journals were identified for comprehensive examination. The theoretical analysis undertaken in this study will be based on a selection of 15 journals. These journals have been carefully chosen to provide a focused and complete review of relevant scholarly literature within the chosen timeframe and research topic.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The results of the systematic literature review's journal search are classified based on many criteria, including the year of publication, geographical location of the research, academic discipline, research methodology utilized, and the actual research findings. Structured analysis facilitates a thorough comprehension of the various aspects of muted group theory within the framework of women. By putting the data from the 15 carefully chosen scholarly articles into clear categories, a clear pattern emerges that helps us understand the many different parts of muted group theory in the field of women's studies. The systematic way of putting results into categories guarantees a thorough look at the topic and makes it easier to spot broad patterns and trends in the academic literature about muted group theory and how it applies to women's real-life experiences.

Table 1. List of selected journal articles

No.	Journal	Year	Author	Research Methods
1.	Mute in pain: The power of silence in triggering domestic violence in Ghana.	2016	Dora Asomani Owusu	Qualitative
2.	Reflections on the 2014 celebration of women in a debate tournament at George Mason University.	2017	Jackie Poapst & Allison Harper	Qualitative
3.	I was able to still do my job on the field and keep playing: An investigation of female and male athletes' experiences with (Not) reporting concussions.	2017	Jimmy Sanderson, Melinda Weathers, Katherine Snedaker, & Kelly Gramlich	Quantitative
4.	Justice meets justification: Women's need for holistic ministry in world mission.	2017	Shawna Warner, Leanne M Dzubinski, Sarah Wood & Colleen Martin	Qualitative
5.	Shop talk: talking shop about creating safe spaces in the HBCU classroom.	2018	Jayne Cabbage	Quantitative
6.	All together now: Choral responses, gender and linguistic space in a Cameroonian primary classroom.	2018	Allyson Jule	Qualitative
7.	Nigerian Women, Memories of the	2018	Nefi Ainesi Wole-Abu	Qualitative

Past and Visions of the Future through the Communication Narratives of the Media.				
8.	Supporting indigenous women missionaries: An alternative paradigm for mission in the barrios of Tijuana	2020	Linda Barkman & John Barkman	Qualitative
9.	Gender and the national crisis of contested nationhood: news visibility of women in Nigeria's unity debate.	2020	Oyewole Adekunle Oladapo	Quantitative
10.	Women Advertisement-Makers' Standpoint on the Production of Beauty Product Advertisements as Negotiated Co-optation of Feminism.	2021	Julienne Thesa Y. Baldo-Cubelo	Qualitative
11.	Journalistic representation of women in the reportage of military operations against Boko Haram in Northeast Nigeria.	2021	Ben-Collins Ndinojuo	Quantitative
12.	The Dragonfly Effect: Analysis of the Social Media Women's Empowerment Campaign	2021	Aya Shata & Michelle I. Seelig	Qualitative
13.	The Communication Activities and Women's Roles in Rudat Culture Based on Adat Law	2021	Anna Gustina Zainal, Karomani, Yulia Neta & Dian Kagungan	Quantitative
14.	"You don't talk like a woman": the influence of gender identity in the constructions of online misogyny.	2022	Bridget O. Alichie	Qualitative
15.	Still passed over race and the forgotten professors and students of color.	2022	Cicely T. Wilson, Shukura A. Umi, Alice Reid & Katherine Grace Hendrix	Qualitative

Article publication year category

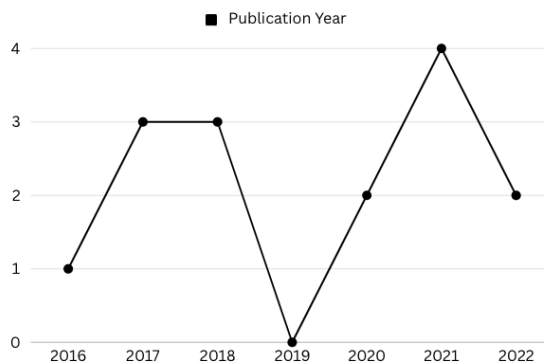


Figure 2. Article publication year category diagram

Upon examining the publication years of the chosen journal articles, a noticeable pattern becomes evident. The year 2021 stands out as the most prevalent year for article publications, accounting for the biggest proportion among the selected set of journals. Specifically, four journals were published this year, representing around 26.6% of the total journals included in the analysis. Significantly, the years 2017 and 2018 exhibit a tight correlation, with each year making a comparable contribution of three articles, accounting for 20% of the overall total. In the subsequent years, specifically 2020 and 2022, a total of two journals were included, representing 13.3% of the journals that were chosen. In contrast, the year 2016 exhibits the lowest level of representation, as it is represented by only one journal, representing around 6.67% of the overall total. The examination of publication years not only offers valuable insights into the time course of research on muted group theory about women but also highlights the evolving nature of scholarly contributions to this topic over the analyzed period.

Research country location category

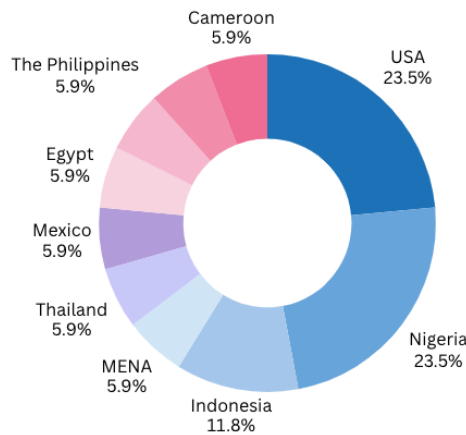


Figure 3. Research country location category diagram

When examining the geographic distribution of research within the selected publications, it is noteworthy to observe the prevalence of studies originating from diverse countries. The two study locations that are most commonly seen are the United States and Nigeria, which collectively contribute four journals, accounting for around 23.5% of the entire dataset. Indonesia is positioned closely thereafter, emerging as the second most prevalent research destination, hosting two journals, which account for around 11.8% of the total. Furthermore, a wide range of nations, encompassing countries from the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, Thailand, Mexico, Egypt, the Philippines, Ghana, and Cameroon, each made significant contributions. These contributions were represented by individual journals, collectively constituting 5.9% of the overall distribution. The presence of several geographical locations highlights the worldwide scope of study on muted group theory within the realm of women, hence presenting a range of perspectives derived from various cultural and societal contexts.

Disciplines category

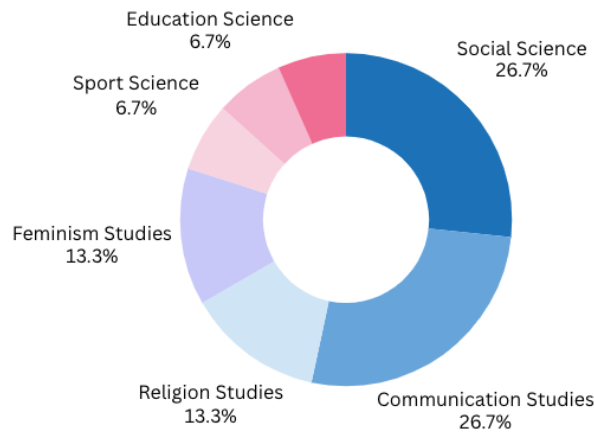


Figure 4. Disciplines category diagram

A comprehensive analysis of the disciplinary allocation among the selected journals uncovers fascinating trends and a wide range of academic fields. The fields of social science and communication science are particularly notable since they each contribute four journals, accounting for a significant proportion of 26.7% of the overall total. The prevalence of these disciplines highlights the crucial role they play in examining muted group theory within the framework of women. The fields of religion and feminism have a similar level of academic interest, as seen by their respective representation in two publications, or 13.3% each. In addition to this, the disciplinary terrain reveals intricate contributions from the fields of law, education science, and sports science, with each field being represented by a solitary publication. Together, these fields account for a combined total of 6.7% of the overall scholarly output. The diverse disciplinary representation in this study not only demonstrates the multidisciplinary character of research on muted group theory but also underscores the various academic perspectives through which scholars investigate women's experiences with this theory.

Research methods category

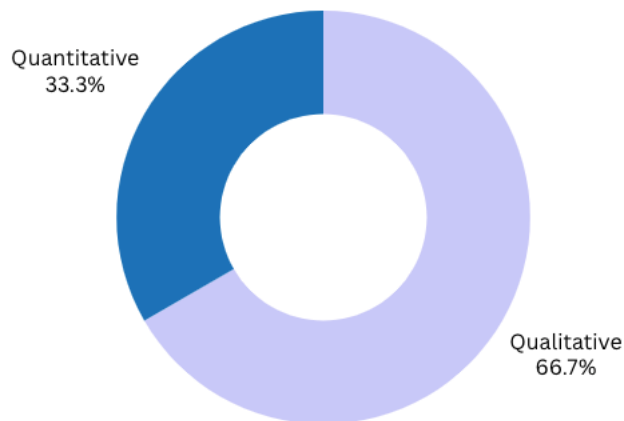


Figure 5. Research methods diagram

The chosen journals demonstrate a significant variation in the research approaches they apply, primarily classified into two broad categories: qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methodologies are given priority, as evidenced by eleven academic journals, which account for a significant proportion of 66.7% of the overall sample, utilizing qualitative techniques for data analysis. The selection of this methodology frequently entails the utilization of interviews, surveys, and content analysis, facilitating a comprehensive examination of the topic at hand. Conversely, a noticeable subgroup, constituting the remaining proportion, chose to employ quantitative analysis, predominantly conducted via administering surveys. The presence of several methodologies highlights the range of approaches utilized by academics in examining muted group theory within the realm of women. The analyses were conducted using a combination of online and offline methods.

Discussion

According to the findings of the study, women are perceived as less dominant in their expression of arguments and cognitive processes. As a consequence of these circumstances, women exhibit a higher susceptibility to acts of violence, encompassing instances of harassment and domestic abuse. This statement aligns with the underlying premise of Muted Group Theory, which argues that individuals occupying lower positions within specific social structures encounter more challenges when attempting to articulate their viewpoints (Chaves & Griffin, 2009). This hypothesis highlights the significant influence of masculine dominance in language (Ardenner, 2005; Benston, 1998). The contributions made by certain individuals have been significantly minimized or completely disregarded to align with predominantly masculine perspectives (Ndinojuo, 2021). Thus, Ballard-Reisch (2010) argues that the subordination of women in matters that have adverse effects on them is evidenced by their reluctance to voice their concerns or take action against harassment (Owusu, 2016). Consequently, the heightened participation of women on digital platforms contributes to the perpetuation of sexual violence within online media, which intentionally constrains their online presence and expression (Alichie & Oriola, 2022).

Muted group theory offers a conceptual framework that facilitates the comprehension of power differentials between dominant and minority groups. The investigation of the topic was undertaken by anthropologist Edwin Ardenner, who conducted research centered on language usage and selection. Additionally, Cheri Kramarae (1981), a scholar specializing in communication and feminism, specifically examined the dynamics between men and women, asserting that men had greater societal authority in comparison to women. Muted group theory serves as a valuable framework for comprehending scenarios characterized by power asymmetry (Warner et al., 2017).

Muted group theory can also see a perspective to "investigate the restrictions of white, middle-class, hetero-male-oriented language on those whose world perspectives may be very different" (Poapst & Harper, 2017). First and foremost, it is commonly seen that the dominant group tends to exhibit a lack of regard for the speech of the marginalized group. Furthermore, it is the dominant groups within society that exert influence over the definition of acceptable and adequate knowledge to engage in high-level communication, such as public decision-making and policy formulation. And then, non-suppressed individuals frequently rely on

assumptions and interpretations to understand the experiences of silenced populations. Lastly, it is important to consider the matter of misrepresentation, as pointed out by Kramarae (2005).

The exclusion of women's contributions has been seen, with men often undervaluing and leveraging their relative dominance to advance narratives that favor themselves (Ndinojuo, 2021). This observation highlights the persistent pattern of representing women from a male-centric perspective, wherein sexism and discrimination against women are prevalent, often portraying them as the inferior gender (Ndinojuo, 2021). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that women can mitigate the impacts of the muted group theory by diminishing the prominence of men. This approach can potentially reduce the muted effects experienced by women in predominantly male-dominated societies, thus facilitating the advancement of women's empowerment (Shata & Seelig, 2021).

The dominant groups within a society's communication system exert influence over marginalized groups. In the Nigerian context, it is evident that women occupy a marginalized position, as they are often expected to maintain a passive role within certain Nigerian cultural norms, where their visibility is prioritized over their voices (Wole-Abu, 2018). The practice of silencing is specifically designed to reinforce the impression of women as subordinate individuals who are subordinate to men. The patriarchal structure in Nigerian society effectively silences the voices of women. The phenomenon of women's suppression originated in Nigeria and other societies characterized by patriarchal structures, persistently impeding any expressions of feminist opposition against oppressive institutions (Alichie & Oriola, 2022). The media's portrayal of women and the issues that impact them also reflects this silence (Wole-Abu, 2018). It is crucial to examine the representation and participation of women in the continuing debate surrounding the contentious concept of national identity, as portrayed in Nigerian newspapers as the negotiability of Nigerian unity (Oladapo, 2020).

One prevalent kind of communication is commonly referred to as "mansplaining," which is the act of a person, typically a man, presenting a concept or idea to another person, typically a woman, despite the latter's already possessing a greater understanding of the subject matter (Rothman, 2012). The phenomenon of mansplaining communication can be comprehended within a theoretical framework that examines communication dynamics within marginalized groups. First and foremost, the act of mansplaining serves as a distinct manifestation of disregarding and undermining women's verbal expression regarding a specific matter or subject matter. Furthermore, the term "mansplaining" is used in specific instances to illustrate the continued predominance of masculine viewpoints in shaping communication norms (Poapst & Harper, 2017).

Conversely, emerging modes of communication are gradually influencing women's cognitive processes and facilitating their ability to articulate their perspectives, viewpoints, and affiliations (Zainal, Karomani, Neta, & Kagungan, 2021). Women can utilize this approach to effectively articulate their viewpoints and enhance their level of engagement. The present circumstance demonstrates the limited execution of Muted Group Theory, as women are capable of overcoming communication obstacles in a coed environment and effectively transmitting the message's substance using their language without altering the overall content of the message (Zainal et al., 2021).

Houston and Kramarae (1991) observed in their academic analysis of the marginalization of women's voices that men play a crucial role in the legitimization of language through their control over grammatical norms, dictionaries, and the bulk of publishing outlets. On the other hand, women, especially in their roles as educators, are frequently assigned the responsibility of enforcing these language directions. The aforementioned mode of communication has the potential to empower marginalized groups by affording them a degree of agency. However, prevailing discursive frameworks are continually upheld through both explicit and implicit means. Consequently, the absence of a clearly defined and powerful voice among individuals belonging to non-dominant groups results in an implicit disadvantage and poses challenges to their ability to fight prevailing power structures (Ardener, 1975). Henley and Kramarae (1994) conducted a comprehensive examination of instances of communication breakdowns that transpired between individuals belonging to distinct genders. The results of their study indicated that the dominant understanding of communication occurrences tended to correspond with the viewpoints of those who held higher positions of authority, primarily males. According to the findings of Sanderson et al. (2017), the observed outcome can be attributed to the preferential treatment of male views of reality inside the discursive system. Male athletes may experience a sense of quiet and difficulty expressing their health issues due to the prevailing ideological norms in sports that prioritize attributes such as toughness, masculinity, and the ability to play despite pain. Consequently, these sportsmen may perceive themselves as unable to openly discuss their well-being and perceive themselves as being in a satisfactory condition (Sanderson, Weathers, Snedaker, & Gramlich, 2017).

From the discussion above, it can be seen that the journal explains the concept of silencing women. The muted group hypothesis, however, does not support all research that claims to have silenced women. Muted group theory encompasses the examination of non-dominant groups beyond gender, including but not limited to sexuality, age, disability, and various other categories.

Conclusion

This study's systematic literature review (SLR) gathered several journal papers on muted group theory and its application to the context of women's experiences. This study evaluates prior studies, and it is found that because of male dominance, women continue to feel silence as a barrier to speaking, expressing themselves, and engaging in social interactions. The Muted Group Theory is crucial in giving a general overview of the barriers women confront. However, not all women employ the Muted Group Theory notion similarly. Women's freedom to express their thoughts, attitudes, and sense of belonging without interference from male supremacy makes this possible. This Muted Group Theory idea can be tested in future studies. The Muted Group Theory notion can be used on various platforms, such as social media or other online media, to increase women's possibilities to express themselves and their perspectives rather than just focusing on face-to-face encounters between women. Future research is anticipated to deliver reliable research utilizing quantitative techniques based on empirically verifiable industry data. The effectiveness of the Muted Group Theory on women's experiences in the digital era is interesting and deserves further research.

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CARTOONS AND THE AUTOCRATIC CREEDS OF THE CULTURE INDUSTRY: VIOLENT AFFECTS AND EFFECTS IN CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT

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<https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i2.7897>

received 1 January 2024; accepted 27 March 2024

Abstract

This paper asserts that operations and patterns of violence are present in Hanna-Barbera's Tom and Jerry, Butch Hartman's The Fairly Oddparents, Thomas Edward Warburton's Codename: Kids Next Door, and John Kricfalusi's Ren and Stimpy. Cartoons are meant to be enjoyed by children. However, the incorporation of violence in cartoons can leave imprints in the impressionable minds of the children. With the media and reception of the children's audience in the foreground, the notion of false happiness can be deduced as the comedic and entertaining modes of representation in the cartoons do not just make the audience laugh but can also possibly penetrate their attitudes and behaviors. The cartoons and their violent features can be a springboard to engage media effects which can include aggression, agenda-building, and cultivation. As a framework, the discourses on violence and false happiness are supported by the critical claims of Adorno and Horkheimer on the culture industry and offshoots of immersing oneself in television. The analysis of the cartoons presented a typology of violence affirming that organized entertainment becomes synonymous with the displays of organized violence. These include blatant and forceful physical violence, subtle familial violence, violence of structural differences and tensions, and the aestheticization of violence.

Keywords: culture industry, false happiness, media effects, television studies, violence in cartoons

Introduction

Cartoons play an essential role in the media space allotted for children. Animated cartoons have occupied a significant domain in the development of the various aspects that underlie the varying dispositions and personalities of children. In this case, they have markedly become a considerable commodity in the media space of children. In the 21st century, this is a clear indication that media has become an essential means used in the dissemination of information intentionally or unintentionally. The easy exposure of children to cartoons is a testament to the fact that people are strikingly living in a media-concentrated society. This is an affirmation that television can be a commanding teacher and influencer (Wright &



Huston, 1995). A remarkable offshoot as well of living in the age of social media is the fact that children can be uninterrupted by other forms of media, not just television, but also movies, comics, Netflix, YouTube, Facebook, and computer games. Cartoons, being commodities that can be accessed through television, understandably serve as a source of entertainment. They are not just mere sites of entertainment and a prominent pastime for children. They are also educational tools that can also play a vital role in the academic formation of children. Children can acquire skills from cartoons and popular culture, in general, being propagated by television. Television, in general, is a pliant avenue to witness the cultivation of children. According to Bandura (1977), television is considered one of the leading means and enablers of the socialization process moving in consonance with the key players in the process such as the family, teachers, classmates, and other peer groups. This cultivation plays an important part in determining their behavioral patterns as well as their needs mentally, socially, and emotionally (Odukamaiya, 2014). Taking into consideration the juvenile dispositions of the intended audience of these cartoons, one can support the notion that these cartoons become remarkable sites that can unveil the ubiquitousness of the power of television and its ability to seduce children who are evidently and relatively not cognizant of the contents being conveyed by these cartoons. Aware of the children's attraction to the animation, dynamism, and graphical images of these cartoons, they become distinctly attracted to the child being the target audience and can generate a colossal influence on the formation of their personalities inciting emotional response and even the desire to be like the characters of their liking (Akca & Cilekciler, 2019).

In examining the effects of cartoons on children and the ideo-affective formations being stirred within them, it is essential to note that media, cartoons in particular, are observed, consumed, and scrutinized by children differently as compared with adults. This is where the concept of identification enters the hermeneutic process. Identification occurs when people experience reception and construal understanding of the text beginning from the inside as if such things were happening to them (Cohen, 2001). Taking the cue from the notion of the audience's effect, children can regard cartoons to be a positive avenue that can be utilized for the cultivation of themselves. They develop skills in gradually watching television affecting at the same time as well their physiological and mental dispositions and developments. Exposure to cartoons can significantly affect the stances, mental attitudes, and behavior of children. It can even have a strong effect on their linguistic formation and development, even their way of eating and dressing (Hassan, 2013).

In a study titled "Standpoint: Violence on Television: The Cultural Indicators Project, Nancy Signorielli, George Gerbner, and Michael Morgan (1995) said that in the United States, "violence appears in two-thirds to three-quarters of all television plays at a rate of between six and ten incidents per hour in primetime, and at rates three or four times as much in children's programming (mostly cartoons)." In this case, violence becomes ubiquitous in cartoons leaving marks on viewers (Muhammad, 2019). This can be further supported by the findings of Steven J. Kirsh (2006) in his study titled "Cartoon Violence and Aggression in Youth." He stated that the play-acts of violence, cruelty, and aggression in cartoons are minimal and "sanitize the outcomes." Kirsch recognizes the minimal structures and operations of violence in cartoons. In her thesis titled "The Cartoon Effect:

Rethinking Comic Violence in the Animated Children's Cartoon", Julia L. Staben (2018) affirms the "comic vs. authentic" debate about animating the cartoons created by Hanna-Barbera. It is a debate that is anchored on the principle of effect and affect. The comic vs. authentic debate focuses on further problematizing the two-way means by which one can make sense of the violence being projected by cartoons. On one hand, the comic perspective affirms that viewers view cartoons as just mere cartoons. It is not real and was created only for comic purposes and for the enjoyment and delight of the viewers. On the other hand, the authentic perspective espouses that if one takes a closer look at these cartoons, there lies the great structure of violence animating the overall patina of the cartoons. In the study conducted titled "Cartoon Network and Its Impact on Behavior of School Going Children: A Case Study of Bahawalpur, Pakistan", the proponent Ali Hassan further supported the impacts of the exposure and the changes in the behavioral patterns of children who had been greatly exposed to cartoons. In the study, it was revealed that there were correlations between the behavior of children in the classroom and the time they had allotted for watching cartoons resulting in them further imbibing the violence present within their impressionable minds (Anderson & Bushman, 2001). The findings of Hassan can be further correlated with the results of the study conducted by Clara and Marian (1980). Clara and Marian showed that instructors believe that cartoons and their attendant violent images have a strong influence on the behavior of students inside the classroom. They execute violence-motivated behaviors such as cruelly hitting their classmates with objects such as rulers and other sharp objects, bad-mouthing, clumsiness and even talking in an ungainly manner. Anderson accentuated further the lucid and distinct nature of violence presented in video games and television programs. Such content can conspicuously increase the aggressive and violent behavior of young people in both short-term and long-term contexts (Anderson, 2003).

In this related literature on cartoons and their concomitant violent effects further shaping the cognitive, affective, and performative layers of the viewer's dispositions, one can see the hallmarks of the cultivation theory under the banner of the powerful effects tradition in communication theory clearly at play. Heavy exposure to media conveying violence can aid the viewers in developing their perceptions of reality, patterns of behavior and dispositions, set of beliefs, mental attitudes, and reality frames based on the most recurring and consistent messages of a specific medium (Lester, 2023). In examining the violent content of cartoons, the powerful effects model becomes the fitting tradition that must be invoked because of television's uniquely pervasive and repetitive nature. In light of this theory from communication studies, watching a great deal of television will be instrumental in the formation of one's disposition moving by his picture of reality that may or may not correspond to the actualities of life (Hanson, 2011). In this paper, we recognize the weight of the comic vs. authentic debate that has been affirmed by Julia L. Staben further intellectualizing violence in cartoons in the light of the latter as opposed to the former. The discourses on the effects and affects of violence can be rendered as an operational structure that crystallizes into a salient feature that is repeatable, identifiable, and calculatable. One can endeavor to interrogate and scrutinize further the structures of power and violence placed within cartoons.

In interrogating the communicative patinas of violence, this paper attempts to qualitatively examine the contents of selected episodes from prominent cartoons such as Tom and Jerry, The Fairly Oddparents, Codename: Kids Next Door, and Ren and Stimpy placing a premium on their violent contents and rendering them as significant operations and tenors that are recurring in the selected cartoons. The analysis additionally focuses on unveiling images, cases, and actions of violence in the selected samples. They are to be further intellectualized as well taking into consideration the views that children can inculcate these violent and aggressive behaviors being presented on television most especially if the violence is merited or justified. An offshoot of the analysis is to provide as well as a discourse on the aggressive imagings posited by these cartoons as children can further develop the acquisition of aggressive and violent behaviors through these cartoons even resulting in the notion of desensitization on the part of the target audience. This is an indication of the fact that the more violence children witness in cartoons, the greater the insensitivity that they can have when speaking of violence and aggression in theory and practice.

Operations and patterns: Identifying and discoursing violence in selected cartoons

Operations and patterns of violence and cruelty are present in Hanna-Barbera's Tom and Jerry (Cartoon Network), Butch Hartman's The Fairly Oddparents (Nickelodeon), Thomas Edward Warburton's Codename: Kids Next Door (Cartoon Network), and John Kricfalusi's Ren and Stimpy (Nickelodeon). Tom and Jerry, an American animated media franchise, was created by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera in the year 1940. Up until recent times, Tom and Jerry is considered one of the classics successfully creating its niche in the genre of slapstick comedy. The show is also noted for its presentation of comic skirmishes within the same storyline in every episode. It is from these comic encounters or scuffles that the violence is highlighted and markedly augmented. In this animated franchise, Tom the Cat is always seen trying to keep the household free from the mouse Jerry. He does this by the orders of the owner of the house where he is residing, and sometimes, he does it by his own will and determination to get rid of the pest mouse in the house. But every time Tom chases Jerry or when the latter saves his life from the former, it is always seen that there are clear intentions to hurt each other and sometimes even commit acts that can certainly kill the two characters engaged in a scuffle. Despite these violent brawls between the cat and the mouse, it is evident from the franchise that there was no portrayal of bloodshed found in any of the episodes of Tom and Jerry created by various directors (Islam et al., 2021).

The Children's Television Act of 1990 was an important conditioning factor that launched Butch Hartman's The Fairly Oddparents. This act obliged every U.S. broadcast television station to air only strongly didactic programs—serving only the informational and scholastic needs of children (Federal Communications Commission, 2021). The act also adamantly affirmed that addressing the educational needs of children is truly a significant endeavor as it can lead to the positive formation of the impressionable minds of children. The marketing strategy of the network Nickelodeon prominently known as "kids rule" was the springboard that they had greatly utilized in further departing from the educational template

fashioned by the Children's Television Act of 1990. In the early 2000s, the said strategy became their foundation to place the images of children and their interests in the limelight. Sarah Banet-Weiser, Distinguished Professor of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, said in *Kids Rule!*: Nickelodeon and Consumer Citizenship that the network had greatly capitalized on the themes of child rebellion and activism in coming up with cartoons catering to its new children audience. According to Banet-Weiser in her introduction to *Kids Rule!*, Nickelodeon had started to market the idea of empowerment in the same way that it sells programming and merchandise (Banet-Weiser, 2007). Furthermore, Banet-Weiser said that this led to a contradiction between the very desire and objective of fashioning the children as "agents of change" and their "brainwashing into corporate consumers." The very marking and labeling of empowerment had an essential downside as it also raised the discussion on power and agency. Grounded on power and agency, kids in their cartoons were presented as encouraged to take their actions but only on the grounds of their social positions (Staben, 2018). Whether this is viewed as a controlling tactic or a necessary evil, it becomes evident in their cartoons that the child's means of governing himself greatly discourages social development or transformation. *The Fairly Oddparents* is one of the perfect examples of a cartoon of post-government regulation that substantially frames violence—mental and physical violence in particular. This can be seen in the affective foreground of the cartoon. Apparent in *The Fairly Oddparents* are the subject matters and themes of absent parenting moving in consonance with the formation and imaging of the childhood market and the disbanding of the family because of neglectful parents. As stated in the opening jingle of *The Fairly Oddparents*, "Timmy is an average who no one understands" is already indicative of the kind of immanence and inwardness that Timmy is experiencing as a ten-year-old boy. Centering on Timmy Turner's life as a ten-year-old boy, viewers will markedly notice the disposition of his parents who are often more interested in pursuing their happiness than parenting their one and only son. This neglect understandably makes possible the suffering of their son Timmy. Icky Vicky, the abusive babysitter of Timmy, is also a great factor that bolsters his physical and mental suffering. This animated franchise by Hartman significantly presents Timmy Turner as one of the greatest miserable children in the world. This misery is what makes him eligible for keeping "Fairy God Parents." The possession of two powerful fairies renders him not so typical indeed. The show highlights his magical escapades considered his means of escaping his miserable life. It is from here that the themes of fantasy and escapism are further unveiled. These are two important themes that can be used in framing the notions of physical and mental violence in this animated franchise by Butch Hartman.

Thomas Edward Warburton's *Codename: Kids Next Door* is an animated franchise that is also famous for its incorporation of violence in its episodes. The show centers around a group of elementary pupils who are members of a global organization known as the titular *Kids Next Door*. The organization is regarded as an activist group boldly working to preserve the rights of children in society. *Codename: Kids Next Door* is noteworthy for how it represents adults influencing the lives of children. The franchise depicts adults as either illiterate, inconsiderate, oblivious, malevolent, or in some occasions as from the episodes, they are seen as insurrectionists. They are also represented as the principal reason for the suffering

of children in society. Very strong at the surface of Codename Kids Next Door is the strong depiction of the child and adult binary. The circumstances that make possible such animosities take their cue from the structural differences and tensions that produce the “becoming adult” as opposed to the adults themselves (Deleuze, 1992). The child/adult binary significantly launches the tenors of violence in the cartoon. The said binary also ushers in more problems rather than leading to the solutions to the problems. The various conflicts between children and adults are teeming with codes and categories that move by the notion of violence. Zeroing in on the notion of violence, Codename: Kids Next Door is also apparently different from The Fairly Oddparent when it comes to its very structure, particularly its plot. In Codename: Kids Next Door and The Fairly Oddparents, the plots are presented in episodic mode. In this episodic kind of plot, a conflict is presented and is resolved at the end of the episode, and the world will be in one way or another reset to normal in the ending (Staben, 2018). In every ending of an episode from The Fairly Oddparents, Timmy Turner and his godparents Cosmo and Wanda celebrate the return with relief and epiphany. At the end of the day, there is recognition on the part of Timmy—a recognition of morale or an important lesson as well as the appreciation of the return of the status quo (living his miserable life as a ten-year-old boy) regardless of the challenges and dangers that had transpired. This is a feature that is markedly absent in Codename: Kids Next Door as it is one of the cartoons that is seen to reverse such a feature of an episodic plot in cartoons. Codename: Kids Next Door projects the image of the normal as violent, cruel, and harsh. Stalen further augments this view in cartoons. To quote Stalen:

A typical children’s cartoon may present the following formula – peace, conflict, peace. Superhero shows use this formula, allowing its viewers to rest in the comfort that the day is saved (Staben, 2018).

In Codename: Kids Next Door, viewers can recognize that violence is part of the status quo. Instead of the conflict and peace with the former being addressed and the latter being the theme celebrated at the end of the day, Codename: Kids Next Door lays down the image of an episodic plot animated by conflict, resistance, aggression, and hostility.

John Kricfalusi’s Ren and Stimpy is an American animated television series centering on the everyday engagements of Ren, a short-tempered, demented, deranged Chihuahua Dog and Stimpson “Stimpy” J. Cat, a happy-go-lucky cat. The roles being played by Ren and Stimpy vary from episode to episode. The adventures of the two protagonists include nature escapades, outer-space adventures, and living life in the Old West. The series became controversial because of its shocking employment of violence, adult humor, dark humor, and jokes on sex and shock value—with characters seen drinking from the toilet bowl, eating human feces, and swallowing nasal and ear discharges. With the shocking employment of such hallmarks in the cartoon, Ren and Stimpy is seen to have significantly and violently transformed the conventions of cartoons. This is a remarkable departure from the Children’s Television Act of 1990. Ren and Stimpy altered the image of the children’s cartoon thereby challenging the oversaturation of optimistic and encouraging feelings in children’s cartoons when speaking of the effect and the

creation of positive ideo-affective formations within the impressionable minds of the children (Rocket to Nowhere, 2016).

Method

Critical foundations: The culture industry correlated with media effects in communication studies

With these patterns and operations of violence in these selected cartoons, we posit that violence in these cartoons can be analyzed resulting in the experiencing of a false kind of happiness on the part of the target audience of these cartoons. Animated franchises like the aforementioned cartoons are meant to be enjoyed by children. However, the direct and subtle remarkable incorporation of violence in these cartoons can certainly be cultivated in the impressionable minds of the children. In light of the cultivation theory in communication theory, viewing such cartoons for a long period will compel the audience to see what is shown as a reality in their perception. With the media and the reception of the children's audience in the foreground, the notion of false happiness can be essentially highlighted as the comedic and entertaining modes of representation in the cartoons do not just make the audience laugh but can also possibly penetrate their minds, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and affects. In communication theory, these can be examined in the light of media effects. The cartoons and their salient violent features can be a fertile springboard to engage various media effects which can include aggression, agenda-building, cultivation, direct effects, imitation, priming, and social identity. Taking into consideration the view that violence in these cartoons can significantly engage individual-level media effects on a negative scale, we, therefore, attempt to intellectualize such violent features and patinas from the vista of critical theory and establish close connections with communication studies and theories.

In critical theory, the German philosophers and members of the Frankfurt School Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer had advanced the prominent notion of the so-called "culture industry." In *The Culture Industry, Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, Adorno and Horkheimer refer to the culture industry as the mass production of commodities under the light of capitalistic ideology. They posited an image of society that is continuously barraged with products it does not need but is forced to accept. This happens because culture has been standardized, and as an offshoot of this standardization, cultural products are now based on predefined prospects. As a result, the audiences are now obliged to veer away and have no imagination or even the capacity to think, comprehend, and ruminate on what is being provided for them. The people simply have to enjoy the things being offered to them by the culture industry. Furthermore, for Adorno and Horkheimer, the culture industry powerfully dampens and discourages the capacity of people to think. It also kills the ability of the people to act critically further leading to the demolition and diminishment of the collective imagination of the people. Part of the culture industry is the people's experience of cartoons. With violence being a powerful animating element in people's entertainment through cartoons, Adorno and Horkheimer declare that there is only one lesson that can be deduced from the violence that the characters in the cartoons experience. For them, this is "the breaking down of individual resistance" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944). To quote the passage from *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*, Adorno and Horkheimer declare:

Cartoons were once exponents of fantasy as opposed to rationalism. They ensured that justice was done to the creatures and objects they electrified, by giving the maimed specimens a second life. All they do today is to confirm the victory of technological reason over truth. A few years ago they had a consistent plot that only broke up in the final moments in a crazy chase, and thus resembled the old slapstick comedy. Now, however, time relations have shifted. In the very first sequence a motive is stated so that in the course of the action destruction can get to work on it: with the audience in pursuit, the protagonist becomes the worthless object of general violence. The quantity of organised amusement changes into the quality of organised cruelty (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944).

To further support these statements, another important notion that can be underscored by Adorno and Horkheimer is their affirmation of the idea and feat of violence suffered by the characters being a scenario that can turn into violence against the spectator, or at least the ones engaging the violence in the cartoons—the children being the more specific target audience of cartoons. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the distraction being laid down by the themes and motifs of violence can be translated into exertion. Put simply, the notions of violence can be brought to the level of praxis. With these scenes of violence being a powerful enlivening element in the cartoons, it is certainly possible to witness “the breaking down of individual resistance.” In the more specific area of communication theory, this can be further intellectualized in the light of media effects. The individual can succumb to the comic and dynamic representation of violence in the cartoons and further assimilate the messages in real-life experiences. A cognitive media effect can be seen occurring as the human mind absorbs the messages and representations of violence through familiarization and memorization. Going beyond memorization, the information can even be transformed into knowledge. The human mind can also cluster these messages into various ways to come up with many possible meanings and further assimilate them within real-life experiences. It can also generalize beyond media messages to generate principles about real life (Potter, 2012). Cartoons, being a part of the culture industry, can also affect the beliefs of the people as they can incessantly create and fashion their attitudes. These cartoons can show more of the things that are happening in the world than the audience can see directly for themselves. Attitudes can also be formed by watching cartoons. As they present issues, events, and people with a special emphasis on the violence transpiring among them, the audience can be led to make their judgments and rationalize the place of violence in their lives. Despite the comic patina of cartoons, emotions, and moods can also be triggered as the audience gets exposed to violence. Lust, anger, fear, desire, yearning, hatred, and rebelliousness are just some of the possible emotions that can lead to the absolute imbibement of violence in their lives. This is where one can underscore the magnitude of the effect as these people get exposed to the violence being projected by the cartoons. The explicit and apparent actions of the audiences of cartoons can also be examined (Albarracin, Zanna, Johnson

& Kumkale, 2005). In media effect studies, this is known as behavior (Potter, 2012).

In assimilating Adorno within the ambit of communication theory, we posit that at the foreground of Adorno and Horkheimer's assertion of "the breaking down of individual resistance" are the aforementioned media effects that can be further explored on a micro level—the individual in particular—the target audience of the cartoons. In the essay titled *How to Look at Television* published in *The Quarterly of Film, Radio and Television*, Theodor Adorno further accentuates and discourses on the totalizing effects of television implicitly underscoring the various aspects of the self that can be molded positively and negatively as people gets exposed to the manifold contents shown by television. To quote Adorno:

The effect of television cannot be adequately expressed in terms of success or failure, likes or dislikes, or approval. Rather, an attempt should be made, with the aid of depth-psychological categories and previous knowledge of mass media, to crystallize a number of theoretical concepts by which the potential effect of television-its impact upon various layers of the spectator's personality could be studied. (Adorno, 1954)

Capitalizing on a descriptive-analytical approach, we lean on the critical ideas of Adorno particularly the endeavor of systematically investigating the possible stimuli from the cartoons. These are the potent stimuli that also lay down the foundation for the investigation of psychodynamics in the transaction transpiring between the audience (children) and the cartoons. The reference to psychodynamics makes fertile ground for the discourse on the effect and effect beginning with the salient violent codes from the selected cartoons. In this paper, we focus only on certain episodes from the selected cartoons zeroing in on the messages and themes of violence and cruelty. These are episodes that can also accentuate the so-called media-influenced functions further animating effect and affect. This entails looking at the operations and patterns of violence that possess the capability to fashion the very character of the effect in the psychodynamic groundwork of the transaction between the audience and the cartoons. These functions include acquisition, triggering, modification, and reinforcement (Potter, 2012).

Findings and Discussion

Analysis

Tom and Jerry have been one of the prominent cartoons viewed by children and adult audiences ever since its creation in the year 1940. In 2004, BBC News released a survey that declared Tom and Jerry to be one of the most popular cartoons around the globe (Tom and Jerry Top Cartoon Survey, 2004). Tom and Jerry also ranked third in the list of the best cartoons of all time. Despite its enormous reputation, Tom and Jerry has also been criticized for the many controversies which include the racial depiction of characters, the usage of colors in achieving these portrayals, and the stereotyping of the villain through color usage. According to Potter (1999), the content and projection of violence are truly distinctive and potent. The depictions of violence are powerful enough to sanitize and desensitize the audience resulting in them not seeing and being concerned anymore with the images

of violence in the animation. Morrison (1993) declared that if the violence from Tom and Jerry had been removed, there would have been nothing left to show for the entertainment of the people watching the cartoon. Gene Deitch's *The Calypso Cat* (1962) is one of the most prominent episodes in Tom and Jerry. It starts with Tom chasing Jerry on a ship (*Caribbean Queen*) on the way to the Caribbean Islands. The first scene also projects a clear instance of violence as Tom is seen to be running to catch Jerry with the former holding a thick piece of rope and getting hit on the head by a heavy bowling ball. It is also in this episode that Tom meets Toodles Galore. In many ways, Tom tries to win the heart of Toodles which Jerry does not like at all. With this, Jerry tries to get again the attention of Tom by setting the foot of Tom on fire. Tom, Jerry, and Toodles meet the Caribbean Calypso Cat in the end. Tom and the Calypso Cat become enemies as they both try to impress Toodles resulting in them forgetting Jerry. In the end, the Calypso cat beats Tom with the help of his drums in front of Jerry and Toodles.

Love Me, Love My Cat (1966) by Chuck Jones begins with Tom making some preparations to meet his beloved Toodles Galore. He has Jerry kept inside a box to be given as a gift to Toodles. But for some reason, Toodles does not want to eat Jerry. She tries to save Jerry every time Tom tries to eat him. Because of this, Toodles comes ahead and hits Tom with kitchen utensils such as a cooking pot and a plate. Having seen this, Jerry purposefully tries to make some tricks to make it appear that Tom wants to eat him compelling Toodles to even greatly punish the cat. At the end of this episode, Tom prepares a trap with a heavy iron to kill Jerry but unfortunately, the iron falls on Tom. Toodles Galore finally prepares her knife and fork to kill and eat Jerry.

A Mouse in the House by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera shows Tom asking assistance from Butch the Cat as they are both asked by the maid of the house to protect it from the mouse. As they both want to be the heroes in the eye of the maid and the owners, they start to execute their plans of capturing Jerry but they end up being enemies to each other. In one scene from the episode, when Tom and Butch were trying to look for Jerry inside the stove, Jerry decides to set the stove on fire to finally get rid of the two cats.

The patterns and operations of violence present in Tom and Jerry are presented playfully and can be summarized by the violent scenes present in the three sample episodes. In the light of slapstick comedy, Tom and Jerry has lucidly provided categories and images that can be rendered into "algorithms" taking the cue from Potter's definition of the term (Potter, 2012). From the three sample episodes discussed, the violent acts in Tom and Jerry can be seen as operationally present with the aid of the following tools being employed by the main characters crystallizing into categories: cutting tools, knives, kitchen tools, pieces of wood, sports equipment, cutting tools, tennis rackets, baseball bats and firearms. The operations of violence are further augmented by the acts of serious punching, hitting, tripping, and falling. Other remarkable instances in Tom and Jerry can supplement the fruition of the algorithms in it. Apart from the prominent tools that make possible the imaging of violence in Tom and Jerry, other acts are not fitting to be viewed by the impressionable and juvenile minds of the audiences. These violent acts evoke the worry of Adorno possessing the capability to fashion the very character of the effect in the psychodynamic groundwork of the transaction between the audience and the cartoons. These functions include acquisition, triggering,

modification, and reinforcement (Potter, 2012). These violent acts include drinking alcohol, unsettling a sleeping vicious dog, attacking someone with a gardening tool like a grass-cutter, and using other farming tools like spades and a forkhoe to gravely hurt someone. In the case of the juvenile minds of the children, and as a means of contextualizing the observations of Adorno on television, “templates” or “algorithms” (a string and a chronological sequence of mental codes according to Potter) can be heavily affected and animated by violence. The violent acts that they had witnessed can permeate mental models, schema, and cognitive maps. In the reception of a process with such sorts of violence projected, the filtering tasks on the part of the individuals can be governed by the violent algorithms coming from the contents of the cartoons.

In this case, the algorithms can be programmed by the exposure of the individual to the violent contents of Tom and Jerry (the media in particular) and his sequence of codes shaped already by violence. In communication studies, the algorithms employed in the endeavor of meaning-matching in the case of Tom and Jerry become a clear definition of how algorithms can be shaped by mass media and can even be internalized by the highly impressionable disposition of the audience. Taking the cue from Tom and Jerry, the algorithms at play in the construction of meanings become a tool to possibly internalize violent suggestive guides resulting in the construction of meaning being problematic.

The general storyline of *The Fairly OddParents* revolves around the concept that miserable children are assigned powerful and magical godparents who will be there always to grant them an unlimited number of wishes. These magical and immortal fairies stay with their godchild until they reach adulthood before they are assigned to new children. Butch Hartman’s animated television series affirms the discourse on violence by lucidly reinforcing the image and plight of miserable children. In the TV movie from *The Fairly OddParents* titled *School’s Out: The Musical*, Timmy makes a wish so that kids can rule the world. This wish of Timmy has a strong consequence for Fairy World as the fairies are driven out of business forcing them to sell Fairy World to a bigger corporate system known as The Pixies. In the directives stated in the *Da Rules* from Fairy World, should Fairies be forced to retire from their duties, the Pixies then are to be given absolute authority and control to grant wishes making the world based on their plans and desires. A result of this is that the fairies are drawn back to Fairy World. They have nothing else to do but chores now that the kids have full control in society because of the wish that Timmy Turner made. With the fairies rendered powerless and soon facing expulsion in the face of the Earth, they further leave a wide vacuum for the Pixies to take over. Regardless of the illogical and erratic nature of this rule, it asserts that the entire balance of magic itself is greatly dependent on miserable children. The fairies need the great miseries of children to activate their magic and to once again dynamically animate Fairy World. To stop the Pixies from taking over the world, Timmy must renounce the power he has acquired and submit again to the system of control and subjugation. The result of this is that Timmy Turner must return to a life of violence and neglect. With Timmy returning to the status quo, things go back to normal, and Timmy sacrifices his wish for the good of the world. The miserable life of the protagonist Timmy Turner is a constant theme and motif occurring in *The Fairly Oddparents*. To cite some examples from the episodes of *The Fairly Oddparents*, in the episode *Kung Timmy*, Timmy wishes for karate skills to exact

his revenge on Francis the bully in school. In the confrontation between Timmy and Francis, the former receives every fatal blow from the latter as he tries to exact his revenge because of the many times that he has been insulted and bullied by Francis. In *The Grass is Greener*, Timmy Turner decides to run away from home because of his parents not spending quality time with him further augmenting the miserable kind of life that he is living as a 10-year-old. In *The Secret Origin of Denzel Crocker!*, Timmy witnesses the history of his teacher Mr. Crocker who is the first and leading cause of the miseries of children in school. In *Timmy's 2-D House of Horror*, Timmy greatly experiences the domination of Vicky as his parents have decided to make them stay in the night because they are friendless in Dimmsdale.

The violence in *Tom and Jerry* is presented through the glaring employment of the hallmarks of slapstick comedy crystallizing into potent communicative algorithms. In *The Fairly Oddparents*, the violence is specifically affirmed through the miserable undertakings of Timmy Turner. In the case of Timmy Turner, the violence presented is more subtle as compared to the glaring violent elements present in *Tom and Jerry*. The patterns of violence are subtly represented concerning the selected episodes summarized in this paper. When speaking of the violent algorithms presented, audiences of *The Fairly Oddparents* can process such algorithms consciously. Throughout the many episodes of *The Fairly Oddparents*, the theme of absent parents and the dissolution of the family are reinforced. *The Fairly Oddparents* knows how to bolster such themes with the incorporation of magic in the series. With these themes strongly being reinforced in the cartoons, audiences can actively interact with such elements resulting in exercising some control over the processing of these subtle violent codes. This processing can happen on a partial to extensive processing concerning the weight and magnitude of the subtle violence presented in *The Fairly Oddparents*. As stated by Staben, *The Fairly Oddparents* is not the only cartoon of post-government regulation to frame physical and mental violence through the cartoon's affective performance (Staben, 1998). In her study, Staben further intellectualizes this claim through her general observation of violence in selected cartoons created by Nickelodeon, particularly *The Fairly Oddparents*:

The cartoon "gag" that assumes a status quo that denies long-term consequence paired with the changing social relationship between children, parents, and the corporation creates certain conditions of violence in the children's cartoon whose representation in live-action would seem abhorrent or at the very least inappropriate (Staben, 2018).

These elements of violence can be viewed in the light of the transported state being espoused by the discourses laid down by Adorno and Potter. With the violence being normalized in *The Fairly Oddparents*, for example, audiences can experience the so-called "tunnel vision" with a very high level of intensity and absorption focused on the message of violence subtly framed in the narratives of *The Fairly Oddparents*. The glaring, slapstick, and subtle algorithms presented in *Tom and Jerry* and *The Fairly Oddparents* respectively can incite contingencies on experiencing the complexities of media exposure. This is to echo the concern of Adorno in "How to Look at Television": By exposing the socio-psychological mechanisms of television, often operating of fake realism, not only may the shows

be improved, important possibly, the public at large may be nefarious effect of some of these mechanisms (Adorno, 1954).

In his critical discourse on “How to Look at Television”, Adorno posits a remarkable warning regarding television and mass media. According to Adorno, when one investigates the improvement of television, one must not just see it being mostly done on the grounds of the artistic or aesthetic extraneous to present customs. A spinoff of this is that we must not take for granted the dichotomy transpiring between autonomous art and mass media. One must be judicious when it comes to the “inner consistency of the artifact” and the perceived effect of the art upon the audience and spectators. The vestiges of the aesthetic claim can conceal operations and patterns that cannot be separated from the object itself—“a world unto itself” and an “offshoot of commercialization” according to Adorno. The operations and patterns of violence present in *Codename: Kids Next Door* and *Ren and Stimpy* can validate and attest to these claims of Adorno.

Codename: Kids Next Door is prominently noted for its themes of childhood insurrection and adult cruelty. One of the remarkable episodes pulled out and revised by Cartoon Network was an episode that was meant to be a Thanksgiving special with features of a Noir-like mystery and the classic zombie horror film similar to the 1968 film titled “Night of the Living Dead.” This episode is a half-hour episode. The network feared that this was an episode greatly terrifying for the children. They also did not want to risk objections and grievances from parents of the children who support the show. The said episode was then reduced to 15 minutes typical for an episode with remarkable modifications in terms of the story. There were no complaints from the audience and network. Be that as it may, there were clear instances of violence in the episode. In the aired episode, one can see a young boy no older than eleven sitting at a table at a party. The Grandmother of the boy is with him. The old lady continuously drones on guests making them leave the table. When the host steps in and asks for a volunteer who would like to pick up the chocolate sauce, everyone volunteers except for the boy who hides himself in his very seat. The boy was requested to pick up the sauce. However, he is reluctant to do so because of his addiction to chocolate sauce. The audience can then witness the Grandmother picking up her metal cane. She proceeds to repetitively beat the boy until he obliges to the request.

In analyzing this episode from *Codename: Kids Next Door*, one must be meticulous in examining how the logic of this cartoon diverges from the very physics of the world. There is a clear pattern of violence and the violence of control present in this episode—a pattern that is always present in the cartoon. In this episode, the boy can survive the hard beating being done by the Grandmother with no lasting impact or permanent damage at all. However, he is seen to be conveying his irritation and indifference to the old lady graphically executing the violence in the scene. The renunciation of the experience of the boy is a way for the cartoon to deny the existence of trauma as triggered by the pain. Even if the violence presented is intangible, the episode still reinforces a strong message. The scene is an exemplification of the violence emanating from control with pain and fear employed to be able to effectively control the behavior of a child. It is also important to note that this is not just the encounter with violence present in this episode. In the said event, many people had witnessed the beating but they did not do anything to save the child being beaten. In children’s cartoons like *Codename: Kids Next*

Door, the pattern is clear that the lack of action represents greater violence than what we can recognize as violent action.

Another episode from *Codename: Kids Next Door* is titled *Operation R.E.C.E.S.S.* In this episode, the students enrolled in an elementary school had their recess taken away from them after they engaged in striking oil beneath the playground. The students were able to strike salad oil in this episode. The high officials of the school decided to take advantage of the situation as they had transformed the school playground into an oil rig and forced the students to use their time during recess to work. The imagery that the audience can see here is quite gloomy and depressing. Some seesaws pump large amounts of oil into the barrels placed beneath the jungle gym resembling an inhibition chamber. The salad oil is bottled by the children and sold. It is also essential to note here that this is free tax-paid labor resulting in the administrators having a great source of income. The episode ends with the kids destroying the plans of the school. However, at the end of the episode, one of the students struck prune juice beneath the grounds of the school this time resulting in them experiencing again the cycle.

In *Codename: Kids Next Door*, it is important to note that the challenges are always resolved at the end. Yet, the general structural conflict is just basically repackaged. This repackaging makes one realize that violence is certainly a part and parcel of the status quo in *Codename: Kids Next Door*. In the light of media effects such as agenda setting, powerful effects, alteration of dispositions, imitation, exemplification, framing, cultivation, and cognitive media effect, the operations and displays of violence in *Codename: Kids Next Door* can be read as an overemphasis on the conditions and experiences of childhood. This is done to deliver humor. However, in this exaggeration of conditions, the cartoon also makes visible the real workings of the violence of normalization imposed by a harsh society. In *Codename: Kids Next Door*, the conflict between the child's physical body, their labor, their time, and even what they consume are the major concerns of the show. They are all rendered as remarkable sites of contestation in the comic battleground between children and adults in *Codename: Kids Next Door*. This affirms the violent theme of children versus the oppressive forces of adult expectations (Staben, 2018).

The violence presented in cartoons can also crystallize into a certain kind of aesthetics. The *Ren & Stimpy Show* by Nickelodeon was a cartoon that distinctly renovates violence. According to Paul Sheehan, in *Modernism and the Aesthetics of Violence*, breaking conventions is part of the goal of awakening consciousness. An offshoot of this is the endeavor of "violent renovation" (Sheehan, 2013). The *Ren and Stimpy Show* brutally modifies the conventions of the conventional children's cartoon as a means of challenging the oversaturation and exposure of optimistic and encouraging feelings in children's cartoons. There is one episode in *The Ren & Stimpy Show* that can attest to this aestheticization of violence. Capitalizing on this kind of aesthetics, Kricfalusi's cartoon became forceful in manipulating emotions and censorship—elements that were conventionally found in traditional cartoons. The episode is titled *Stimpy's Invention*. In this episode, we see Stimpy creating a happy helmet that will make the wearer happy. Stimpy forces his friend Ren to wear this helmet leading to his eventual insanity. Kricfalusi markedly aestheticizes the disruption that the audience witnesses as there was clear and robust employment of mechanical sounds and violent images and parodying of

conventional music of children. In light of the modernist discourse of Sheehan, this genre subversion becomes successful and convincing in presenting the danger of children's cartoons neglecting all violent emotion.

When the happy helmet was first used in this episode, we hear the background music shifting from a light-hearted soft melody to menacing and portentous music. The scene becomes animated by a negative ambiance and tone. This is a clear violent departure from the happiness being affirmed by the titular "happy helmet." The music becomes suggestive that the helmet forces happiness. Such a happiness is a despicable kind of happiness. The user Stimpy activates the helmet, and it makes the head of Ren turn upside-down. The machine makes Stimpy's mouth viciously. The said machine also suddenly forces Ren to smile although there was an attempt on his end to resist such oppression by the helmet. While these actions were happening, viewers could hear different mechanical sounds such as bones cracking and ratcheting. A clear violent spinoff can be seen in the end. The happy helmet succeeds in forcing Ren to smile. The whole smile of Ren now dominates his face with his eyes dislocated in the process. The unsettling art, as complemented by the disturbing sounds that one can hear in the foreground, clearly conveys the anguish and cruelty that one can experience from forced feelings and emotions. Everything becomes markedly superficial. The happy helmet violently forces happiness, and the result is that viewers can see the faulty replication of genuine happiness. As Ren wears the helmet, it becomes evident that he is not in control of his movements. He is no longer in control of his movements and emotions.

It was also in Ren and Stimpy where the song "Happy Happy Joy Joy" became prominent. It was Michael John Kricfalusi who had revealed the unsettling repercussions of the positive vibes that one can get in children's songs. Ren finally reaches the point of breakdown as he continuously listens to the thoughtlessly happy song "Happy Happy Joy Joy." Having persistently listened to the music, viewers can see Ren violently removing the helmet from his head to regain control of his movements and emotions. The chorus of the song is merely the repetition of the title of the song with no clear rationale as to why it is being repeated. The first verse of the song goes "I don't think you're happy enough. That's right, I'll teach you to be happy. I'll teach your grandmother to suck eggs. Now, boys and girls, let's try it again" (Reccardi & Kricfalusi, 1991). The first verse is delivered in a convincing and furious tone. There is a contradiction because happiness is originally inherent and it does not need to be taught at all. The song also has a troubling quality to it that it also has an attendant "or else" implication if the listener is not a willing participant in being taught how to be happy. The song gives an implication that happiness is forced on the children—the kind of happiness that they do not desire. The lyrics' crescendos further affirm the violent nature of the song. To cite the verse from the song: If'n you ain't the granddaddy of all liars! Think of the little critters of nature... They don't know that they're ugly! That's very funny! A fly marrying a bumblebee! I told you I'd shoot! But you didn't believe me! Why didn't you believe me? (Reccardi & Kricfalusi, 1991) With these lines, the song is now animated with a much darker theme. The singer was murdered concerning the threat that he did not intend to keep. Instead of addressing his guilt, he decides to move towards it concealing it further through the blind and mindless repetition of happiness and joy to further divert his thoughts from reality. In the music video, the

actions and lyrics are markedly conflicting as happiness and joy are not the feelings associated with violently hitting one’s head with a hammer.

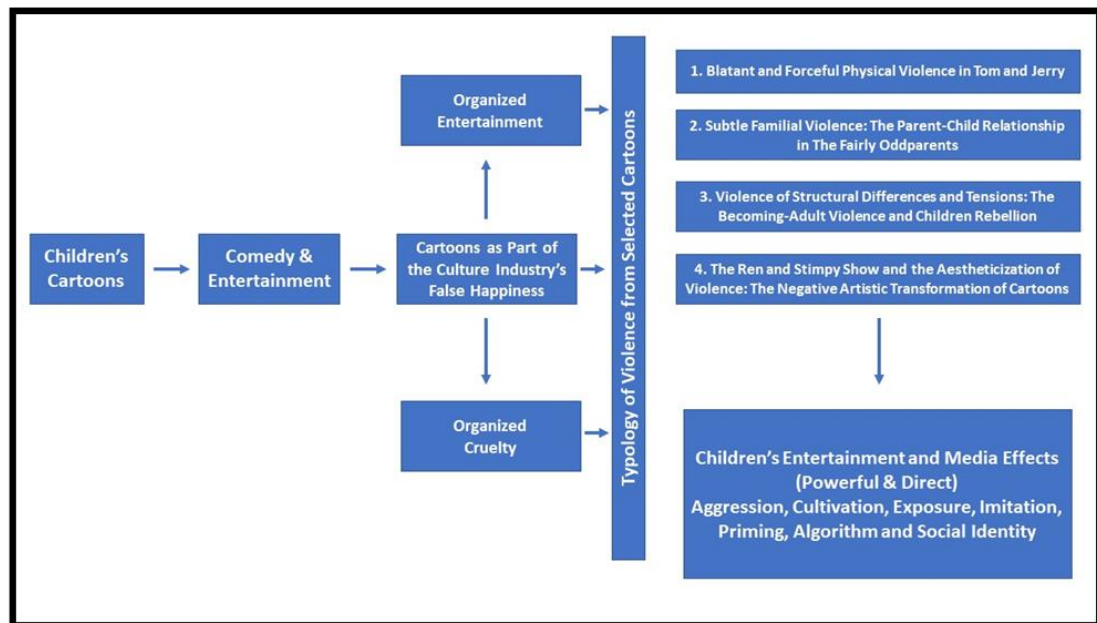


Figure 1. The typology of violence from selected cartoons: Tom and Jerry, the fairly oddparents, codename: Kids next door, and the Ren & Stimpy show

With these scenes incorporated in Ren and Stimpy, it becomes clear that violence has crystallized into a certain kind of aesthetics. Such is the kind of aesthetics and tactics as well that become compelling in corrupting complete unrelenting happiness found in typical children's cartoons from the 90s. The corruption that was done had successfully rendered Ren and Stimpy’s cartoon aesthetics into something disconcerting and excruciating. Ren and Stimpy have provided a strong avenue to reevaluate and question positive and family-centered tropes from past cartoons.

Conclusion

This paper is an attempt to recognize that there are patterns and operations of violence in selected cartoons namely Tom and Jerry, The Fairly Oddparents, Codename: Kids Next Door, and The Ren and Stimpy Show. Taking the cue from Adorno’s discourse on the culture industry, we recognize that in these cartoons the “organized amusement” that they have to offer can be markedly translated into an “organized kind of violence” that can and irrevocably affect the dispositions and impressionable juvenile minds of its viewers. With the presence of the forceful tenors of slapstick comedy present in Tom and Jerry, the weight of the themes of child labor and rebellion against adults in Codename: Kids Next Door, the more subtle violence as seen in the theme of absent parents and the dissolution of the family in The Fairly Oddparents, and the aestheticization of violence in The Ren and Stimpy Show, the entertainment that one can deduce from the experience of these cartoons can lead to the experiencing of a false kind of happiness as they had animated entertainment with the scenes and tenors of the painful, disconcerting,

troubling and unnerving. With the reception of the children and their attendant impressionable juvenile minds, the critical concept of false happiness can be essentially realized from the experience of the cartoons as the comedic and entertaining modes of representation in the cartoons do not just make the audience laugh but can also possibly penetrate their minds, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and affects. In communication theory, these can be examined in the light of media-violence effects (Huesmann, 2007).

The cartoons and their salient violent features can be a fertile springboard to engage various media effects which can include aggression, agenda-building, cultivation, direct effects, imitation, priming, and social identity (Laughey, 2007). In the end, these cartoons were perused for how they had dynamically rendered the notion and images of violence. The changing images and presentations of violence in children's entertainment are an affirmation and validation of the critical dictum that violence can be subtly internalized and organized in these cartoons. With these scenes of violence being a powerful enlivening element in the cartoons, it is certainly possible to witness "the breaking down of individual resistance"—a concept espoused in the critical tradition. In the more specific area of communication theory and studies, this can be further intellectualized in the light of media effects. The individual can succumb to the comic and dynamic representation of violence in the cartoons and further assimilate the messages in real-life experiences. A cognitive media effect can be seen occurring as the human mind absorbs the messages and representations of violence through familiarization and memorization. Going beyond memorization, the information can even be transformed into knowledge, or in the case of these cartoons, into distinctive patterns and operations that can make these cartoons forces to be reckoned with in directly and subtly inculcating violence in the impressionable minds of the children.

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATING RECOUNT TEXTS BY USING GOOGLE TRANSLATION MACHINE

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<https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i2.7924>

received 5 January 2024; accepted 28 March 2024

Abstract

The research aims to find out the process of translating recount texts by using Google Translation Machine. This study integrated a qualitative phenomenological approach of a group of 18 tenth-grade students at MA Miftahul Jannah, Palangka Raya. Online questionnaires via Google Forms and unstructured follow-up interviews were employed. The 15-question questionnaire, featuring both open-ended and closed-ended formats, explored aspects ranging from general usage of resources, such as Google Translation Machine, to specific processes in translating recount texts. The result of this research showed the students' process in translation began with comprehensively reading the text to gain full understanding. Following this initial step, they mentally process their translation before writing it down. In the translating phase, Google Translate was an essential tool. Some students used it directly, while others employed it as a guide for their translations. The focus here was on the accurate selection of words, phrases, and sentences. Once the translation was complete, the majority of the students cross-checked their work against the original text to maintain fidelity. However, a small number skipped this critical revision step. This highlighted the necessity of reinforcing the importance of evaluation and revision stages in the translation process.

Keywords: analysis, Google Translation Machine, recount text, translation process

Introduction

New technology has changed the world in many aspects, especially in education. The inventions of technology in producing helpful tools facilitate the instructional and learning tasks for students and teachers in particular. Moreover, the tools also help the students make learning more comfortable to learn new things. One of its functions also helps to learn languages better. Therefore, the



influence of modern tools that used to be complicated has been a great help in learning a new language (Nelson et al., 2009).

One of the modern tools that contributed mainly to learning a new language is machine translation, and one is Google Translation Machine. The Google Translation Machine has become an essential tool for learning. Many people use it because it makes learning new languages easier. This tool gives fast translations of words, sentences, or even big pieces of text, which helps to break down the barriers that can make learning a language hard. It is beneficial for students who are trying to gain proficiency in a new language. This tool can help them understand more challenging parts of the language and discover what new words mean (Dash, 2022).

Having to learn a new language could not be separated from translation. Translation refers to the method of transforming text from the source to the intended language. It became a general activity for education practitioners. For instance, teachers have used it to aid teaching and learning since the advent of the Grammar Translation Method (Herlina et al., 2019), while students usually used it for the tasks' needs. The students translated many texts in their classroom, and one of them included a recount text. Recount text became a text that existed gradually from when the students rolled into elementary school to a higher level of education.

Previous studies about translating recount text have shown various results. First, analysis of students' errors in which they often found themselves in a problematic situation of translating a recount text begins by translating the text from English to Indonesian (Shalichah, 2021; Suri, 2023). Second, the result indicated that some students still need to ask their teachers to translate the words they will write in translating Indonesian recount text to English despite using translation tools to translate word by word (Erviona et al., 2019). Linguistic factors also influence the student's ability to translate the recount text. After thoroughly conducting the research, some students go through the translation process, such as analyzing, transferring' and restructuring (Simanjuntak, 2020).

Despite using modern translation tools such as Google Translate, it has been proven that the tool increased the students' vocabulary (Simanungkalit, 2020). Moreover, the students recognized Google Translate can be utilized as an alternate mechanism for translating literary references. They claimed it benefits them when doing the self-learning assisted by the tool (Herlina et al., 2019). When converting procedural and narrative text, the precision of Google Translate is identified to be 79.57% and 86%, which means it is in high regard among students (Sumiati et al., 2022).

Based on the previous studies results, the student's errors and difficulties analysis is shown in the target language's translation product. Suri (2023) stated that students had trouble translating recount materials because they needed more learned vocabulary in English, while Shalichah (2021) indicated that the main cause of the students' inaccuracies in recount text translation was the poor English vocabulary they mastered. However, it only takes one study that discusses the process of translating it and what translation tools the students used to assist their work (Simanjuntak, 2020). Thus, the researchers have taken a strong preference towards further exploring a topic on how the translation process of translating recount text using the Google translate machine as the translation tool.

Therefore, seeing how the students use Google Translation Machine as a translation tool in translating recount texts was a phenomenon that underlies this study. Each student might use the tool differently. The previous study stated that the precision of Google Translate in translating procedural and narrative content text shows a high result (Sumiati et al., 2022). It could be because of how well they know English, how good they are with computers or phones, and how well they tell their stories. The different ways they use the translation tool might come from their experiences and skills, creating various results. Therefore, using translation tools also influenced the translation process of the recount text.

This research aims to find out the students' process in translating recount text by using Google Translation Machine. The result of this research is expected to provide valuable insight into the application of technology in the realm of language learning. The insights could lead to identifying and addressing challenges and areas of improvement in students' translation skills, thereby informing the design of better educational resources and instructions.

Translation

Translation is a critical task in linguistics, involving the transition of verbal or textual content from one language to another (Baker & Saldanha, 2009). It acts as a communication facilitator, bridging the gap between different languages and cultures (Al-Sofi & Abouabdulqader, 2019). However, the process of translation extends beyond mere word or sentence substitution. It demands a profound understanding of the structures, nuances, and cultural contexts of both the source and target languages (Venuti, 2004).

The foremost objective of translation is to communicate the same meaning and emotional depth found in the original text (Aguion, 2021). This requires the translator to possess a high level of linguistic expertise, cultural knowledge, and creative skills (Hatim & Munday, 2019). These competencies are particularly important for professional translators whose task extends to improving comprehension and collaboration among various populations, aiding in the distribution of information, and supporting international trade and diplomacy (Bassnett, 2005).

The practice of translation, as described by Munday (2016), involves a comprehensive understanding of the content and the structure of the source language. This is then followed by a careful reconstruction of these elements using appropriate and grammatically accurate structures in the target language. Djelloul and Neddar (2017) also emphasize the need for practical proficiency in the source and target languages, as well as an in-depth understanding of the subject matter being translated. Thus, adequate training and an extensive knowledge base are crucial for translators (Robinson, 2003).

Recount text

Recount text is an English material taught at Junior and Senior high schools in Indonesia, so the second year of Senior high school students is expected to produce this text. Harris et al., (2014) define "recount text" as a narrative that systematically retells past events to describe previously occurred incidents. Similarly, Mustafa (2021) asserts that a recount involves narrating past events to inform or entertain readers about the occurrence and its timing. According to these

theories, a recount typically originates from the author's direct experience but could potentially be inventive or outside their personal experience. Recount text entails the writer narrating their personal experience or other's experiences to the reader. Simply put, a recount text is a narration of past events or experiences.

When composing recount texts, learners must be familiar with the text's general structure and linguistic characteristics. According to Mustafa (2021), the typical organization of recount text comprises orientation, events, and re-orientation. Moreover, Hasanah and Said (2020) state that the recount text's structure consists of an orientation, followed by a series of events, and occasionally concluding with evaluation or re-orientation. Generally, recount texts start with an orientation that establishes and supplies the background information required for guiding readers' comprehension of the succeeding narrative portions.

In addition to the generic structure, students must be aware of the language features associated with recount text. Mustafa (2021) elucidates the language features of recount text, spotlighting key aspects such as a focus on particular participants, the use of material processes (action verbs), references to circumstances of place and time, utilization of past tense, and an emphasis on chronological sequences. Further extending this understanding, Elita et al., (2013) state that the language features of recount texts also include personal recounts, the use of emotive language to describe events, the implementation of action and mental verbs, and the consistent use of past tense. In creating recount texts, writers commonly utilize action verbs expressed in past form.

In addition, Harris et al., (2014) state that there are characteristic language features in recount texts. They employ proper nouns and pronouns to distinguish individuals, creatures, or items. Given their aim to narrate past incidents, these texts are typically composed in past tense. Authors have the liberty to use a variety of action verbs and adjectives to convey feelings. Also, authors should incorporate adverbs and adverbial phrases to sequence events and identify locations. Furthermore, the proper usage of conjunctions to amalgamate clauses and connectives to arrange events is crucial. Concluding various expert perspectives, the language traits unique to recount texts focus on distinct participants, usage of simple past tense, incorporation of action and linking verbs, and application of chronological conjunctions.

Process of translation

In this context, the translation process signifies a model that seeks to shed light on the inner workings of the human mind when engaging in translation activities. In the past, people interpreted that translation occurred automatically and occurred in one direction. This process is often described in the following picture (Suryawinata & Hariyanto, 2016).



Linear translation process

Suryawinata and Hariyanto (2016) tries to clarify the translation process scheme by borrowing the concept of inner structure and outer structure of Generative Grammar Transformation. Thus, there is a process as follows:

1. Analysis or understanding stage. In this stage, the structure (or existing sentences) is analyzed according to grammatical relationships, according to the meaning of a word or combination of words, textual meaning, and even contextual meaning. This is a reverse transformation process.
2. Transfer stage. In this stage, the material has been analyzed and the meaning was understood, the translator processed it in his mind and moved from SL to TL. It has not yet been produced at this stage series of words; everything only happens in the mind of the translator.
3. Restructuring. In this stage, the translator tries to find equivalent appropriate words, expressions, and sentence structures in the TL so that the content, meaning, and message in the SL text can be conveyed completely in TL.
4. Evaluation and revision. After getting the translation results in TL, the results are evaluated or re-matched with the original text. If you feel it is still not suitable, then a revision is carried out.

Use of Google Translation machine in education

Machine Translation (MT) represents the endeavor to computerize the task of translating text or voice from one language into another, and today, it occupies a prominent position in the sphere of information technology. As the demand for learning a new language becomes the need to face the change in how the world goes on, the need for translation has increased tremendously. Google Translate is currently a widely favored machine translation service that is used by people from around the world. Its functions for education then generate the better idea of assisting the students to translate the new language especially its quick process in translating the text. However, the result of translating paragraphs using Google Translate was not in favor of the students regarding its accuracy (Khotimah et al., 2021).

Google Translate facilitates user input of the source language through multiple avenues, such as virtual keyboards, voice recognition, handwriting, whole documents, or uploaded files. Moreover, students can translate text featured in images or photographs. These features greatly affected the students' process while translating and learning the new language in particular. As education is growing significantly by fusing technology, Google Translate as a tool in the teaching-learning process met the conditions for it. Several research concluded that students have a positive perspective toward the machine (Khotimah et al., 2021; Pham et al., 2022). However, the omnipresence of Google Translate as a machine translation raised concerns among the teachers. According to Merschel and Munné (2022), since students prefer to use it often within the learning process, it results in unhealthy dependency. It affected the pedagogical implications such as moral issues, motivation, and academic growth.

Method

Research design

The researchers used a Qualitative method; specifically, the Phenomenological approach to explore the processes the tenth-grade students at one of the high schools in Palangka Raya utilized Google Translation Machine for their recount text work. The Phenomenological approach was chosen as it is particularly effective at revealing specific personal experiences (Castro, 2023), making it suitable to explore the process or steps students undertake in translation. This approach provides rich, detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2010), enabling researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of how students did the translation by employing Google Translation Machine on their assignment.

Research subject

The participants of this study were the tenth-grade students consisting of only one study group of 18 students at one of the high schools in Palangka Raya who relied on Google Translate for their recount text assignments. These participants were selectively chosen as they can directly provide the necessary information to fulfill the research objectives.

Research setting

The location of this study was at MA Miftahul Jannah in Palangka Raya, exactly at Pantai Cemara Labat 1 Street, Pahandut Seberang district, Palangka Raya City, Central Borneo, Indonesia. The school is located on the bank of the Kahayan River, where the majority of the people who live there are the Banjar tribe (South Borneo). Thus, the students mostly use the Banjar language in daily conversations but use Indonesian or English in classroom learning.

Data collecting technique

For this research, two primary methods of data collection were employed; they were questionnaires and unstructured interviews. The questionnaire aimed to identify and understand the process students followed when using Google Translate for their assignments. In contrast, the unstructured interview was utilized for more in-depth explorations of the subject under study. An unstructured interview, as described by Nuriyati et al., (2022), involves open-ended conversations without a strict interview guide. Instead, it relies on an outline highlighting key discussion topics, promoting flexibility and adaptability during the interview process.

Research instrument

In this research study, the researchers utilized a combination of data collection strategies, including online questionnaires and unstructured interviews to gain a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of students' translation processes. The first part of the data collection took place on 14 November 2023 and used an online questionnaire, which consisted of 15 questions disseminated via Google Forms. These questionnaires featured a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions, catering to different response styles. Closed-ended questions offered predefined answers for students to select, allowing for quick and direct responses. Open-ended questions, on the other hand, required students to elaborate on their perspectives and function as short essay prompts to yield more

informative answers. Each question within the questionnaire addressed a particular topic that the researchers aimed to explore, ranging from the general use of tools like the Google Translation Machine to more specific questions about students' process in translating recount texts.

After the analysis of questionnaire responses, unstructured follow-up interviews were conducted on 22 November 2023 to delve deeper into specific areas indicated by the initial questionnaire results. This approach provided a natural conversational flow and led to in-depth feedback, allowing the researchers to gain insight into the students' perspectives on their translation processes. By integrating the aforementioned methods, the researchers could adopt a multifaceted approach to their investigation. This, in turn, solidified a comprehensive understanding of the students' translation process, contributing valuable insights to the field of study.

Data analysis

The data collected underwent a systematic analysis, employing a series of methodical methods to ensure accurate and reliable outcomes. Chavan and Desai (2022) assert that the analytical procedures encompass two key stages: data condensation and conclusion drawing/verification. During the condensation stage, the gathered data is broken down into a process of translation that aligns with the translation theories outlined in the framework. The data are thereafter subjected to thorough examination and integration to answer the research question. During the final phase of analysis, a definitive conclusion was derived, accompanied by the provision of supporting information. The analysis additionally examines the extent to which the students adhered to the notion of the translation process.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Analysis Stage

In this stage, insights were gathered from 18 students by the researchers. It has been observed that all students initiated their translation process by examining the whole text. This establishes the importance of understanding the entire content before commencing the translation. Additionally, the researchers investigated what particular sections of the text students paid more attention to. The findings are as follows:

Grammar

16 students emphasized that, initially, their primary concern was the grammar utilized within the text. In essence, these students examined the text based on sentence structure, verb usage, and the tense for recount texts, which is typically past simple (verb 2). They also considered the inclusion of adverbs of time.

Word combinations

For 15 students, their focus was on the way words were combined or arranged to form phrases in the text. This involved understanding basic and sophisticated word pairings, colloquial expressions, idioms, and how they

contribute to the overall meaning of the text. This approach is particularly beneficial in retaining the essence of the original text when translated.

Textual meaning

Textual meaning refers to the literal interpretation of the text. According to 15 students, their main objective was to comprehend the explicit meaning of every word, sentence, and paragraph. In doing so, they ensure that the context and intention of the original author are maintained throughout the translation process.

Contextual meaning

14 students opted for contextual meaning. They focused on how to convey their emotions and nuances through their writing, thus exploring the text's various layers of meaning beyond its literal interpretation.

In conclusion, most of the students adopt a comprehensive analytical approach, fulfilling Suryawinata and Hariyanto's (2016) translation theories that emphasize a thorough understanding of the source text before proceeding with the translation.

Transfer stage

The majority of students, specifically 18 out of the total surveyed, indicated that they actively engage in mental translation during the "Transfer Stage" of the recount text translation process. It means they will think about the translation text in their head before they write it on paper. This high proportion of affirmative responses reinforces the assertion that mental processing is a significant and common practice among students before they write down their translations. The emphasis on mental processing within the "Transfer Stage" suggests that it forms a crucial part of the overall translation process, aiding students in structuring their translation work.

In seeking further details about students' mental translation process, most responses centered on reviewing their work - rereading or rechecking their text - as a fundamental component. This practice suggests that the act of mental translation carries an inherent emphasis on diligence and accuracy, requiring students to review their work systematically before writing it down. The prevalence of this self-checking system among students underscores its importance in mitigating potential errors, ensuring alignment with the original text, and enhancing overall translation quality within the "Transfer Stage."

When students were asked what they preferred to do after reading the whole text – 1) think carefully in their head, or 2) start writing their translation right away – all students said they preferred to think carefully in their head. This shows that thinking about the translation before starting to write is an important part of their process. Every student choosing to think first before writing indicates that this step helps them do a better job at translating, understand the text more deeply, and ensure their work is accurate.

Restructuring stage

The "Restructuring Stage" represents the central part of the translation process in this study, where, according to the theory of Suryawinata and Hariyanto (2016), translators need to search for suitable meanings in the target language instead of solely relying on machine translations. In this stage, students use Google Translate to help them translate their recount texts. However, the responses indicate that not all students adhere to the recommended process from the theory. Of the total respondents, 8 students confirmed that they simply write what Google Translate displays, bypassing the crucial step of searching for a suitable meaning themselves. Based on the interview results, they gave a few reasons for skipping this stage. 2 students said they believed Google Translate was good enough and did not need to be checked. 3 students said that they were in a rush and wanted to finish their work quickly, so they did not take extra time to look for better words themselves. Others did not feel sure they could pick better words than what Google Translate gave them. These responses suggest a significant undervaluation of the 'Restructuring Stage', where students should seek more suitable translations rather than simply accepting Google Translate's suggestions. Ignoring this crucial step potentially lowers the quality of their translations, as they miss the chance to apply their understanding and interpretation of the source text.

Delving deeper into the translating process during the "Restructuring Stage," the researchers presented the remaining 10 students with a choice to identify which aspects they concentrate on when scribing the translation into their target language. They could select from four criteria: appropriate words, expressions, sentence structures, or all of them. A majority indicated 'all of them,' showing that they find each criterion crucial for yielding a precise translation. However, a couple of students leaned toward 'appropriate words and sentence structures,' marking their focus areas in the translation process. These responses underscore that students employ different strategies, with some focusing on specific linguistic features while others adopt a comprehensive approach, considering all components.

Evaluation and revision stage

Within the Evaluation and Revision Stage, it was found that a majority of students (13 out of 18) reported undertaking an evaluation process after translating their texts, demonstrating their understanding of the criticality of this phase. They appreciate the need to align their translated outputs with the original texts to ensure accuracy, as suggested by Suryawinata and Hariyanto (2016). Conversely, a subset of students (5 out of 18) acknowledged skipping this critical evaluation phase. From interviews, 1 student stated that she believed that her initial translation was accurate and did not require further evaluation. 3 students said that they prioritize speed over accuracy, wishing to complete their translations as quickly as possible, and the other felt a lack of confidence in his ability to make meaningful revisions to the translation. This deviation from the recommended process signals a potential risk of inaccuracies in their translations and underscores the need for strengthened emphasis on the importance and role of the Evaluation and Revision Stage in translation exercises.

To gain insight into the evaluation strategies employed by the 13 students who adhered to the Evaluation and Revision Stage, they were asked about their

specific methods. The analysis revealed that their techniques included reading the translated texts word by word, thoroughly rechecking their work, and verifying the textual meaning. By implementing these approaches, the students are actively adhering to the guidelines proposed by Suryawinata and Hariyanto (2016). This careful examination of their translations signifies that the majority of students understand the importance of a disciplined evaluation process. However, the fact that 5 students opted to bypass this crucial step indicates an opportunity for improvement in educating students about the significance of this stage in achieving accurate translations.

Discussion

The results of this study revealed that the students' translation process in translating recount text by using Google Translate goes through all the processes that have been stated based on the theory of Suryawinata and Hariyanto (2016). However, each stage contained various students' opinions on how they passed each stage. For instance, the results showed what particular sections of the text students paid more attention to in the analyzing stage were grammar, word combination, textual, and contextual meanings. They inferred that translating the recount text began by analyzing the whole text. This case was also found in the research conducted by Shalichah (2021) in which the students had difficulties with different language structures due to the lack of vocabulary after analyzing the text. The importance of the Pre-translation Text Analysis as a part of the translation process is supported by many works of Russian scholars as stated in Ayupova (2014). They suggest that PTA should consist of mainly the following activities: 1) considering factors external to the linguistic text; 2) establishing the style and genre of the text; and 3) designating the type of information represented in the text.

The second stage named the transferring process resulted in all the participants' students saying that they actively engaged in mental translation during that time. They stated that thinking the translation from source to target language carefully in their head before writing it. This aspect shares common ground with Kern's research, emphasizing mental translation's significant role in enhancing foreign language text comprehension. Interestingly, Falla-Wood (2018) further points out diminished dependency on mental translation with increased reading proficiency. Contrastingly, Sofyan and Tarigan (2019) adopt a holistic view, proposing a model encompassing minute problem-solving steps to the extensive landscape of translation strategies. On a different note, Yau (2011) underscores the importance of usage patterns during the "Transfer" and "Analysis Phase" to reduce the idiosyncrasy-induced ambiguities. Although each study recognizes specific strategies' crucial roles or aspects, their perception and interpretation vary. The initial study and Kern's (1994) work view mental translation as a facilitator for understanding and accuracy, while Lørscher (2005) treats strategies as initial solutions leading to either problem resolution or acceptance of its current insolubility. In contrast, Røvik (2016) places usage patterns as prime components to curb ambiguities. In terms of demographic focus, the initial study, Kern's (1994) and Lørscher's (2005) research primarily concentrate on student experiences, with Lørscher (2005) extending to professional translators. Røvik's (2016) research eschews a specific demographic, opting for a broader, more technical view of the translation process. Collectively,

these studies not only shed light on the intricate mechanics of translation but also emphasize its layered nature, suggesting a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of this complex cognitive activity.

After thoroughly analyzing and transferring the translated text, the students represented the restructuring process as a central part of the translation process in translating the recount text. In this stage, the majority of students were assisted by Google Translate as a translation tool. However, the phenomenon of unhealthy dependency of using the machine translation resulted in the student immediately writing what the machine translation displays without thinking of restructuring the translated sentences. Merschel and Munné (2022) indicated that machine translation has advantages from a practical perspective but learners should realize that even when words seem to have a direct correspondence between languages, the cultural ideas, products, customs, beliefs, and values they transmit are not necessarily identical. Nevertheless, other students stated that they also identify the aspects when scribing the translation into their target language such as the appropriate words, the expressions, and the sentence structures of the target language. In another case, the studies conducted by Wardani et al., (2019) discussed the student's ability in constructing paragraphs of recount text. They emphasize that students must be familiar with grammar to do well in the construction process. These responses underscore that students employ different strategies when it comes to the restructuring stage in the translation process. In addition, Google Translate as a translation tool plays a big role in translating the recount text for the student as they believe that machine translation has high accuracy in interpreting from source to target language (Faridah et al., 2023).

The last stage of the translation process, evaluation, and revision, contained various responses from the participant's students. The majority of the students felt the need to evaluate their translation output. They stated their techniques in revision included reading the translated texts word by word, thoroughly rechecking their work, and verifying the textual meaning. A study conducted by Lee (2022) concluded that the impact of machine translation positively influenced students' writing strategies during revision. By revising, students could avoid errors when translating the recount text. Several studies have researched the student's errors when translating the recount text (Padhila, 2021; Shalichah, 2021; Sari et al., 2021).

Conclusion

The study provides crucial insights into students' processes and strategies when translating recount texts using Google Translate. Students were found to engage in a thorough translation process, primarily focusing on deep analysis of the source text, mental translation, and rigorous evaluation and revision process to ensure accuracy. During the analysis stage, students placed great emphasis on elements such as grammar, word combinations, and differentials between textual and contextual meanings. This indicates the need for students to possess a comprehensive understanding of the original text before commencing translation. The transfer stage showed a uniform preference among students for mental translation, confirming that students typically premeditate translations in their minds before penning them down. This solidifies the claim that mental translation is a crucial component of the translation process. However, the restructuring stage

highlighted a concern. Though students utilized Google Translate to assist with their translation, some showed an overreliance on the tool and skipped the critical step of finding suitable meanings in the target language themselves. During the evaluation and revision stage, a majority of students were found to perform thorough checks and corrections on their work. This illustrates the importance of careful review in the translation process to ensure the high quality and accuracy of the translated text.

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ECO-CDA AND COUNTER-DISOURSE: FROM EXOTIC LUXURY TO NONHUMAN ANIMAL EXPLOITATION IN CIVET COFFEE

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<https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i2.6592>

received 13 June 2023; accepted 28 March 2024

Abstract

Civet coffee, an exotic beverage produced through the unique involvement of the Asian palm civet, has garnered attention and controversy. The study emphasizes the importance of amplifying marginalized voices and advocating for animal liberation and ecological perspectives through counter-discourse. Specifically, the research aims to analyze the counter-discourse arising from a webpage that describes a tourist's visit to a civet coffee plantation. This article employs Eco-CDA, a framework grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis and ecolinguistics, to critically analyze the discourse surrounding civet coffee production. Through discourse and semantic analysis, the study exposes the failure of the prevailing discourse to address ethical concerns and promote sustainable practices. In conclusion, this research aims to contribute to the transformation of societal norms by advocating for the recognition of animal rights. It calls for a comprehensive reevaluation of coffee production practices, emphasizing the need for ethical considerations in animal treatment.

Keywords: civet coffee, counter-discourse, eco-critical discourse analysis (eco-CDA)

Introduction

The global coffee industry has witnessed the rise of civet coffee (also known as luwak coffee or *kopi luwak* in Indonesian), renowned as one of the most popular and expensive coffees in the world. This unique beverage is produced from coffee berries that are consumed and excreted by the civet coffee, a cat-like animal. However, the production, consumption, and trade of civet coffee face numerous challenges, including issues of counterfeiting and the need for quality standardization. Recent research suggests the need for reevaluating coffee cultivation practices to address ethical concerns and preserve flavor diversity (Lachenmeier & Schwarz, 2021; Muzaifa et al., 2019).

The discourse surrounding civet coffee extends beyond its exotic luxury status to encompass ethical considerations, environmental impact, and the emergence of counter-discourses. Counter-discourses related to animal liberation, animal rights, and ecological concerns have challenged the exploitation associated



with civet coffee. These counter-discourses aim to foster harmonious relationships between human animals and other animals and address the ecological consequences of unsustainable practices (Stibbe, 2015). Hence, language also shapes consumerist identities focused on accumulation or search for status, but it can also motivate individuals to prioritize being over having. It is through language that we can inspire care for the natural world or reduce it to mere resources to conquer.

This article employed the framework of Ecological Critical Discourse Analysis (ECDA) to examine the underlying power relations, ideologies, and social practices embedded in the discourse. The discourse of ecology offers a transformative perspective that encourages us to envision equitable relationships based on mutual interdependence, symbiosis, and a rejection of hierarchical notions among all species within larger ecosystems (Stibbe, 2005). Meanwhile, Critical Discourse Analysis, guided by the principle of solidarity with marginalized groups, seeks to address their pressing concerns and advocate for a more just society (Van Dijk, 1993). In this case, the critique reveals that the production process of civet coffee relies heavily on animal exploitation, which is essential to the production process. This calls for a reevaluation of our attitudes and actions, challenging the conventional belief that humans have the inherent right to dominate and exploit other species, as argued by Aristotle (Singer, 2015). Instead, embracing an inclusive perspective that recognizes the intrinsic value of all species is essential for fostering a harmonious coexistence within our shared ecosystems.

The goal of this article is to critically examine the discourse surrounding civet coffee production, with a specific focus on the counter-discourse emerging from a post on a webpage about a tourist's visit to a civet coffee plantation. The article aims to analyze and challenge the prevailing narrative of exotic luxury associated with civet coffee and highlight the issue of animal exploitation inherent in its production. By utilizing the framework of Eco-Critical Discourse Analysis (Eco-CDA), the article seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the ecological and ethical implications of the civet coffee industry, thereby promoting awareness and encouraging a more sustainable and responsible approach to coffee consumption and production.

Counter-discourse

Counter-discourse refers to the practice of challenging or contesting dominant narratives, ideologies, or power structures within society. It involves presenting alternative perspectives, critiques, or dissenting opinions to challenge the prevailing discourse and offer alternative ways of understanding or interpreting a particular issue.

Foucault (1970) and Moussa and Scapp (1996) expanded on the idea of counter-discourse, which emphasizes the transformational force of marginalized people speaking up for themselves. It is a powerful act of resistance against oppressive power systems when people who have historically been spoken for and about taking the initiative to express their own experiences and viewpoints. The existing norms and narratives that have excluded and silenced them are contested by this counter-discourse act. Individuals engaged in counter-discourse deliberately challenge and disrupt the structures of power that have historically

oppressed and disenfranchised them by recovering their agency and voice. It becomes a tool for them to affirm their presence, refute prevailing viewpoints, and fight for their recognition and rights in society. Through counter-discourse, marginalized voices gain visibility, agency, and the ability to reshape narratives, ultimately striving for social transformation and the dismantling of oppressive power dynamics. Just as marginalized individuals reclaim their voice and challenge oppressive power structures, counter-discourse in the context of animals involves giving voice to the voiceless and challenging the dominant narratives that justify the exploitation and mistreatment of animals. When animals are typically spoken for and spoken about by human animals, their own agency and perspectives are disregarded. However, the emergence of counter-discourses such as animal liberation, animal rights, and ecological movements allows for the recognition and amplification of animal voices. It becomes an act of resistance against the oppressive power dynamics that objectify and exploit nonhuman animals for human animal purposes.

Individuals that challenge authority and push for improvement in the ecological sphere can be compared to what Latjuba (2014) refers as rebels, rogues, intellectual aristocrats, intellectual youth of the city, and characters in the nationalist movement. Just as these individuals challenge power structures in various domains, they also play a vital role in addressing ecological concerns. They resist power directly through physical actions, such as engaging in environmental activism or conservation efforts, while others employ indirect means, utilizing critical thinking expressed in speeches and writings to promote ecological awareness and sustainable practices.

Factors supporting the existence of a counter-discourse of power, as noted by Latjuba (2014), are the political and security situation, increasing public knowledge, and the awareness of the need for equality. These factors are highly relevant in the fight against nonhuman animal abuse within the ecological context. The political and security situation plays a significant role, as it sets the stage for resistance and change. In the case of animal abuse, this includes advocating for legislation and policies that protect animals from cruelty and exploitation. Increasing public knowledge about the suffering animals endure, the ethical implications of their mistreatment, and the urgent need to address these issues are other critical factors. Awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and public discourse contribute to a growing understanding of the importance of animal welfare and conservation. Moreover, as highlighted by Stibbe (2005), counter-discourses in the fight against animal abuse call for a broader ecological perspective. This perspective recognizes that human impact, encompassing political, economic, and ecological factors, significantly affects the relationship between humans and other animals. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living beings and the need to consider the wider ecological implications of our actions. By adopting this perspective, counter-discourse seeks to promote a more compassionate and sustainable relationship with nonhuman animals.

In the realm of relationships between the human animal and other animals, counter-discourse emerges as a powerful tool to challenge oppressive ideologies, as emphasized by Stibbe (2005). These counter-discourses encompass various movements such as animal liberation, animal rights, ecology, and the broader environmental movement. Their collective objective is to disrupt and transform

the dominant narratives surrounding our interactions with animals. By doing so, they strive to foster a paradigm shift in how we perceive and engage with other species. Counter-discourses challenge the prevailing ideologies that perpetuate exploitation, subjugation, and disregard for animal welfare. They aim to dismantle hierarchical power structures and promote alternative frameworks based on compassion, ethical consideration, and ecological harmony. These counter-discourses advocate for the liberation of animals from oppressive systems, the recognition of their inherent rights, and the integration of ecological perspectives in our understanding of human-animal relationships. Through their challenging and transformative nature, counter-discourses contribute to the ongoing evolution of societal norms, inviting individuals and communities to reflect upon and reconfigure their attitudes, practices, and beliefs towards animals.

Eco-critical discourse analysis

Ecological Critical Discourse Analysis is a multidisciplinary approach that combines the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis with a focus on ecological issues and sustainability. Arran Stibbe (2015) mentions that how we treat one another is the link between ecology and linguistics, and the natural world is influenced by our thoughts, concepts, ideas, ideologies, and worldviews, all of which are shaped by language. These linguistic aspects in relation to the environment are named ecolinguistics. Bang and Døør (1993), defined ecolinguistics as a branch of critical and applied linguistics that focuses on the role of language and linguistics in relation to the ecological crisis. It is a critical theoretical framework that examines the interconnections between language and the environment. Ecolinguistics takes a perspective that is both subjective and objective, acknowledging its advocacy for change while maintaining an objective analysis of linguistic phenomena. Stibbe (2014) refers to it, explaining that, essentially, ecolinguistics involves critically examining the narratives that support our current unsustainable society, revealing the flaws in those narratives that contribute to ecological harm and social inequity, and seeking out alternative narratives that are more compatible with the challenges of our world. Since how we think affects how we act, language can motivate us to destroy or preserve the ecosystems that support life.

Hence linguistics provides tools to analyze the texts that surround us and shape our society. These techniques help uncover hidden stories within the text. Once we understand these stories, we can evaluate whether they encourage harm or preservation of ecosystems from an ecological standpoint. Harmful narratives should be opposed, while helpful ones should be supported. This process profoundly affects how we treat life-supporting systems and perceive narratives about economic growth, technological progress, and our relationship with nature. Language plays a crucial role in creating economic systems, and through language, new systems can be formed when existing ones cause ecological damage. According to ecolinguistics, people's perspectives on language, culture, and the environment are shaped by the tales they experience, and language plays a key role in both telling and retelling these stories (Ali, 2019). The relationship between language and the underlying stories that civilizations, cultures, and people's lives are founded on is extremely complicated and the subject of intense dispute in linguistics and philosophical literature (Stibbe, 2015). Hence, language

and culture are intertwined in that they both affect and are affected by cognition. The words and ideas that are available in a given language can influence how its speakers think and experience the outside world. In addition, language use and the words people use to express their experiences can be influenced by cultural norms and values.

Arran Stibbe (2015), in his book *"Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories we live by"*, explains the idea of these form of "stories" and how media discourse affects people's way of living, as well as the appreciation that is developed toward particular things as well as toward nonhuman animals. One of their most important qualities is the manner these stories are written, which frequently enables the manipulation to go unnoticed.

"The stories we live by are different, however. We are exposed to them without consciously selecting them or necessarily being aware that they are just stories. They appear between the lines of the texts which surround us in everyday life: in news reports, advertisements, conversations with friends, the weather forecast, instruction manuals, or textbooks. They appear in educational, political, professional, medical, legal, and other institutional contexts without announcing themselves as stories" (Stibbe, 2015, p.14).

According to Stibbe, the majority of people forget that these stories are just that—fiction—making them even more harmful. In these stories, the consequent conviction that this is how things are stems from the time of birth and is taken for granted. Because these stories are not instantly recognized as such, the notion of conducting analytical investigations is advocated, and it is even suggested that stories involving instances of injustice and environmental harm be rejected and required to expose them. The course of events in a story might provide information about the characters, and vice versa, the character types may hint at the plot. Due to our knowledge of prior narratives, we can also predict future events. The way that narratives affect us emotionally, though, is what matters most (Forte, 2018a). This is how ecolinguistics has progressed from the analysis of ecological discourse to the ecological analysis of discourse (Chen, 2016).

Critical discourse analysis and cognitive linguistics excel at unraveling the linguistic mechanisms that produce and perpetuate such narratives, revealing the ideologies, metaphors, and framings they embody. Studies of language diversity and interaction, research on endangered languages or dialects, studies of outdoor signpost discourse, and analyses of texts about the environment or topics related to the environment, such as energy, animals, natural resources, advertising, ecotourism, or climate change are all examples of studies that fall under this category (Ali, 2019). By integrating linguistic approaches with environmental insights, ecolinguistics emerges as a discipline that explores the influence of language on our beliefs (Stibbe, 2017). Hence, this interdisciplinary approach bridges language and environmental studies, enabling a comprehensive and transformative approach to address ecological challenges.

Unveiling power dynamics in discourses on nature and animals

According to Dash (2019), the best branch of linguistics to study discourses that protect or harm nature in order to adequately address the problem of sustainability is ecolinguistics. Arran Stibbe introduces, among others, a method

called "*erasure*" to analyze discourse, which addresses the disappearance and neglect of animals not just in terms of extinction but also from our consciousness (Stibbe, 2012). The term erasure signifies the overlooking or sidelining of important aspects within a text or discourse that deserve attention. It involves various textual elements such as abstraction, exclusion, and emphasis, where certain participants or aspects of life are omitted in favor of prioritizing other ideas. In their research, Croney and Reynnells (2008), a USDA Extension Service employee and an animal scientist, respectively, utilized ecolinguistics to gain insights into the language used by the farm animal industry regarding farm animal production. Their findings, as highlighted by Le Vasseur (2014), revealed that industry discourses and language use incorporate power dynamics that obscure certain aspects of animal production. Through the deliberate use of various grammatical structures and vocabulary, these discourses tend to mask the detrimental effects of animal production on both the animals themselves and the natural environment. This phenomenon was observed across a range of communication channels, including public advertising and internal documents (Ibid, 2008).

In this regard, John Yunker uses the opportunity to highlight the distinction between writing for animals and writing about them. In his review of the book "*Writing for Animals: An Anthology for Writers and Instructors to Educate and Inspire*", Forte (2018a) asserts that Yunker encourages considering and connecting with animals from a more comprehensive standpoint. He exhorts us to think of nonhuman animals as being a part of our own tales and lives and to approach them with the same inquiry and regard that an ethnographer could use while researching another culture. By taking the time to comprehend the world from a nonhuman animal's perspective, we can respect and comprehend animals rather than simply viewing them as resources or items to be utilized by human animals.

The hierarchical structure of human-animal relationships and animal exploitation

Animals and their relationship with human animals have always been the subject of Western thought (Forte, 2018b). Throughout history, nonhuman animals have played a variety of roles in society, including as sources of food, labor, transportation, and companionship. Regarding animal exploitation Regan (2003), claims that, frequently, we do make animals endure tremendous physical pain, frequently force them to live in appalling conditions, and in many, even most, cases, they pass away without ever having the chance to fulfill many of their most basic goals. Animal cruelty is commonly deemed acceptable in industries such as food production and various aspects of everyday life, where animals are involved on a large scale. It is important to remember that it has its roots in the interaction between human animals and nonhuman animals, which is founded on anthropocentrism and anthropocentric speciesism. Forte (2018b) also emphasizes that according to Western philosophy, we must first comprehend what sets human animals apart from other creatures in order to identify humanity as such in addition to designating them as nonhumans and, hence, "the others," which in turn help us to define our own humanity.

As a result, animals are arranged in a hierarchical structure, placing humans at the top of the pyramid. Following human animals, some animals are kept as pets, fostering deep emotional bonds with their human companions. Further, down the hierarchy, animals are viewed as tools or sources of productivity, serving human self-interest by performing demanding tasks. It is within this category that the focus of investigation lies—the civet, a creature often utilized for laborious purposes.

Sollund (2011), drawing from Agnew (1998, p. 182), presents three explanations for animal maltreatment. The first explanation is when individuals are unaware of the negative consequences of their treatment of animals. The second explanation is when individuals do not recognize or acknowledge that their treatment of animals is morally wrong. The third explanation is when individuals derive personal benefits or perceived gains from their acts of cruelty towards animals. In the case of this study, the focus will go on the third reason, or as Regan (2003, p.12) mentioned “animal agriculture is a business, after all, whose object is to maximize financial return while minimizing financial investment.” This suggests that the welfare of the animal is not the primary concern and that the main objective is to obtain financial profit.

Method

This research employed a descriptive qualitative methodology, specifically utilizing the document or text study approach and incorporating elements of Ecological Critical Discourse Analysis (Eco-CDA). The document or text study approach involved analyzing and interpreting written materials, specifically social media posts on the webpage "The Planet Edit," within their respective contexts. This approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of the discourse presented in relation to environmental issues.

In this study, the primary source of data was the quoted discourse from the author's article on "The Planet Edit" website, which served as the focal point for analysis. The analysis of the discourse encompassed multiple stages, starting with a preliminary reading and a general analysis of the texts. This was followed by a more detailed sentence-level analysis, aiming to uncover the underlying meanings in the text. Secondary data sources, such as relevant books, articles, journals, and websites, were also utilized to support the research process, providing additional insights and contextual information. The combination of the document or text study approach and Eco-CDA methodologies allowed for a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the discourse surrounding environmental issues on "The Planet Edit" webpage, shedding light on the complexities of the environmental discourse, and offering potential avenues for positive change.

Findings and Discussion

From the discourse level understanding of the text, the coherence pattern of this is primarily informative and persuasive. The author begins by introducing the topic of civet coffee, explaining what it is and how it is made. Then, the author discusses the reasons why people choose to drink this coffee, emphasizing the unique taste, status symbol, exotic allure, and novelty factor. However, the author also challenges the prevailing narrative surrounding civet coffee by presenting a counter-discourse that tries to reveal the truth behind the civet coffee production.

The author raises ethical concerns about the exploitation of civets and provides evidence of the poor conditions and mistreatment they endure in the industry, citing a study and personal experiences. By exposing the unethical practices behind civet coffee, the author aims to counter the positive image and appeal of the beverage, urging readers to boycott it to avoid contributing to the suffering of these animals. In general terms, the text challenges the mainstream perception of civet coffee as a desirable and prestigious product and instead encourages a critical examination of its production and its impact on animal welfare.

The next analysis was made systematically and at the semantic level of syntactic units; therefore, involves examining the meaning and interpretation of individual sentences within a discourse. The focus is on the meaning and interpretation of words, phrases, and syntactic structures within a sentence that contributes to the overall meaning conveyed by that sentence. The semantic aspects of the text are examined by identifying and discussing specific language choices that convey meaning and contribute to the overall argument. A title was provided to summarize the main concept of each unit concisely.

Unique taste

"Not all civet coffee tastes the same, as the flavor can vary depending on the type of coffee cherries consumed, the civet's diet, and even the region where the beans are harvested."

The sentence highlights the unique taste of civet coffee, which can vary based on various factors. The description of the civet's natural digestive process often employs metaphors that liken it to a mechanical operation, emphasizing the production aspect and even specifying the time it takes to produce the desired outcome. These metaphors, such as "Nature is a machine" and "Nature is a storehouse," create a distinct division between human animals and nature, portraying nature as a passive entity that exists solely for human animal exploitation and use (Stibbe, 2015). However, the emphasis when talking about it usually mentions characteristics like great taste, uniqueness, and being "the most expensive coffee in the world", which is the most common statement in media when referring to this coffee. By using that language there is a shift in focus from the nonhuman animal and the process it undergoes to produce the coffee. The language used tends to prioritize the final product, positioning the civet as merely an object that produces this luxury commodity (Candra & Abadi, 2018). This can lead to an erasure of the nonhuman animal itself (Stibbe, 2015) and the ethical considerations surrounding its involvement in the production process. The emphasis on the coffee's qualities and luxury status can overshadow the nonhuman animal's well-being and the potential exploitation involved in the production of civet coffee.

Status symbol

"As one of the most expensive coffees in the world, luwak coffee is also seen as a status symbol."

Stories that portray people or the natural world as resources to be exploited, encourage the unequal distribution of resources, or promote extrinsic values like

profit maximization or status enhancement through the accumulation of material possessions are challenged (2015, Stibbe). This implies that the concept of perceiving the natural environment (in this case, the civet) as a resource to be exploited is challenged by highlighting the distinctive flavor and quality of civet coffee. It promotes a change in mindset from resource exploitation or profit maximization to valuing the inherent differences and intricacies that affect the flavor of the coffee.

Exclusivity

"This variability adds to the coffee's exclusivity."

Aran Stibbe (2015) explains by giving the following example: If individuals are repeatedly told that economic expansion is good, the idea may sink deeply into their thoughts and become a story that they live by. Once this myth has been ingrained in their consciousness, it affects how individuals behave and how they view the mechanisms that sustain life. This suggests that the myth or story surrounding civet coffee being exclusive and luxurious can become ingrained in individuals' consciousness, influencing their behavior and perception of the coffee's value.

Luxurious experience

"Many people seek it out to impress friends or clients, or simply to treat themselves to a luxurious experience."

In a normal setting civet coffee is promoted as the most expensive coffee in the world, the reader will imply that the purchase of a product is a convenient substitute for genuine satisfaction (Stibbe, 2015) and that this purchase will show status, power, and financial success. It implies that people may seek out this coffee not necessarily for the genuine satisfaction it provides but as a means of displaying their social standing or treating themselves to a luxurious experience.

Novelty

"The idea of drinking 'poop coffee' is interesting, and as a result, it's a bit of a tourist draw."

In this sentence, there is the reflection of the problematic nature of viewing civet coffee solely as an intriguing or exotic tourist attraction (*see analysis number 2*).

Civet conservation boost

"At first, this new industry was a blessing for the luwaks. It motivated the local people to protect them and no longer see them as pests."

The sentence highlights the initial positive impact of the civet coffee industry on the conservation of the civet species, as local people were motivated to protect them instead of considering them as pests (Deliana, Trimo, Fatimah, Fernando, & Djali, 2021). However, it also implies that the underlying motivation for this conservation is utilitarian, as the animals are being used as tools for coffee

production. While the intention to preserve the species is positive, the ethical implications of using animals for commercial purposes can still be questioned.

Ethical concerns

"The production of luwak coffee is not without controversy, as the methods used to obtain the beans have raised ethical concerns over the years."

The metaphors "Nature is a machine" and "Nature is a storehouse" establish a clear boundary between humans and nature, portraying nature as passive and available for human use (Stibbe, 2015, p.72). The concerns stem from the ethical implications of treating nature as a resource to be exploited for human-animal gain. The metaphors reinforce the need for a more balanced and sustainable approach to our interactions with the natural world.

Exploitation of civets

"However, as the demand for Luwak Coffee grew, wild luwaks were being captured and confined to cages, where they were force-fed coffee cherries and kept in appalling conditions."

According to Regan (2003), the goal of animal agriculture is to maximize financial return while reducing financial investment. This implies that obtaining financial gain is the major goal and that the welfare of the animal is not the main focus. This may explain the "need" to confine animals so that production under slavery conditions is more financially effective.

Lack of animal welfare

"All 16 plantations failed to meet basic animal welfare requirements: the luwaks were kept in tiny, urine-soaked cages; were very thin due to being fed a restricted diet of coffee cherries only; had no access to clean water and were constantly disturbed by loud tourists."



Figure 1. Civet kept caged for *kopi luwak* production (Pears, 2023)

Simotwo (2019) expresses that humans and animals are separated in this instance by semantically eliminating humans from the category of being animals. As a result, the human animal is viewed as belonging to a different category from

other animals (anthropocentric view), which is reflected in the way they treat animals. In this context, the separation between humans and nonhuman animals in the treatment of civets reflects an anthropocentric view, which is evident in the lack of animal welfare observed in the plantations. The mistreatment of civets, such as confining them to unsanitary conditions, providing a restricted diet, and subjecting them to constant disturbance, highlights the negative consequences of perceiving animals as belonging to a different category and not considering their well-being.

Physical discomfort

"Being forced to stand and sleep on wire flooring 24/7 causes severe pain and discomfort for any animal."

There is often an argument made regarding laying hens, veal calves, and dogs kept in cages for experimental purposes, suggesting that they do not suffer because they have never experienced different conditions (Singer, 2015). Nevertheless, the ability to suffer is not solely dependent on having experienced different conditions but rather on the capacity for physical and emotional pain, which is present in many animal species.

Detrimental to health

"Being force-fed caffeine-rich coffee beans is detrimental to their health, causing them to pass blood and eventually die."

According to Bhuiyan (2015), if we continue to maintain animal kingdoms or human-animal hierarchies based on their production and utility, this will appear arbitrary. By achieving a higher good, this scenario permits the extinction or annihilation of species. Therefore, it is important to consider nonhuman animals in the ethical context for the right reasons rather than just for their instrumental, or utilitarian, benefits to humankind.

Psychological distress

"Caged luwaks have even been known to gnaw off their own legs as a result of great distress."

According to Singer (2015), beings that experience suffering deserve moral consideration and should be considered. It is the moral responsibility of human animals to alleviate the suffering of these nonhuman animals.

Call for boycott

"Please do not contribute to the suffering of these animals. Boycott luwak coffee."

In the past, ecologists often disregarded the presence of humans and focused on studying untouched environments to avoid the complexities of human-animal affairs. This approach limited their political, economic, and ecological influence. However, more recent approaches to ecology, such as human ecology and ecological economics, aim to incorporate humans into the broader ecological context, acknowledging the importance of considering human interactions with

the natural world (Stibbe, 2005). The increasing awareness and advocacy for ethical and sustainable practices in the coffee industry prompt individuals to make conscious choices that prioritize nonhuman animal welfare and refrain from supporting harmful practices. Nevertheless, even though there is a huge need to emphasize the ethical concern surrounding the production of civet coffee, there is also a need to consider the reality of the human animals related to the production of coffee, namely workers or owners of coffee farms.

Conclusion

In the critical examination of civet coffee production, it becomes evident that the discourse surrounding this exotic beverage fails to address ethical concerns and promote sustainable practices. However, the power of counter-discourse emerges as a crucial tool for challenging oppressive ideologies and fostering compassionate and sustainable relationships between human animals and nonhuman animals. By amplifying marginalized voices, questioning dominant narratives, and advocating for nonhuman animal liberation and ecological perspectives, counter-discourse can contribute to transforming societal norms and recognizing nonhuman animal rights. Through the lens of Eco-CDA, grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis and ecolinguistics, we gain a comprehensive framework to analyze the interconnections between language, ecology, and sustainability, allowing us to dissect narratives, ideologies, and linguistic mechanisms that shape our treatment of the environment. Ecolinguistics, with its focus on studying discourses related to the treatment of nonhuman animals and the environment, uncovers power dynamics and language use that often obscure the negative impacts of nonhuman animal production and erases them from our consciousness.

By adopting a comprehensive perspective that acknowledges nonhuman animals as active participants in our narratives, we can foster a greater understanding, respect and ensure their well-being. This perspective exposes the hierarchical structure between human animals and nonhuman animals, driven by anthropocentrism and speciesism, which perpetuates nonhuman animal exploitation and mistreatment. It highlights the need to challenge this hierarchy and advocate for more ethical and compassionate treatment of nonhuman animals. It is strikingly ironic that civet coffee, which was discovered during a period of slavery and marginalization under Dutch colonists in Indonesia, is now replicating a similar pattern of exploitation, but this time, it is the civet being exploited. The conclusions drawn from this analysis emphasize the urgent need for a reevaluation of coffee production practices, ethical considerations in the treatment of nonhuman animals, and a shift towards a more inclusive perspective that recognizes the intrinsic value of all species for a harmonious coexistence within ecosystems.

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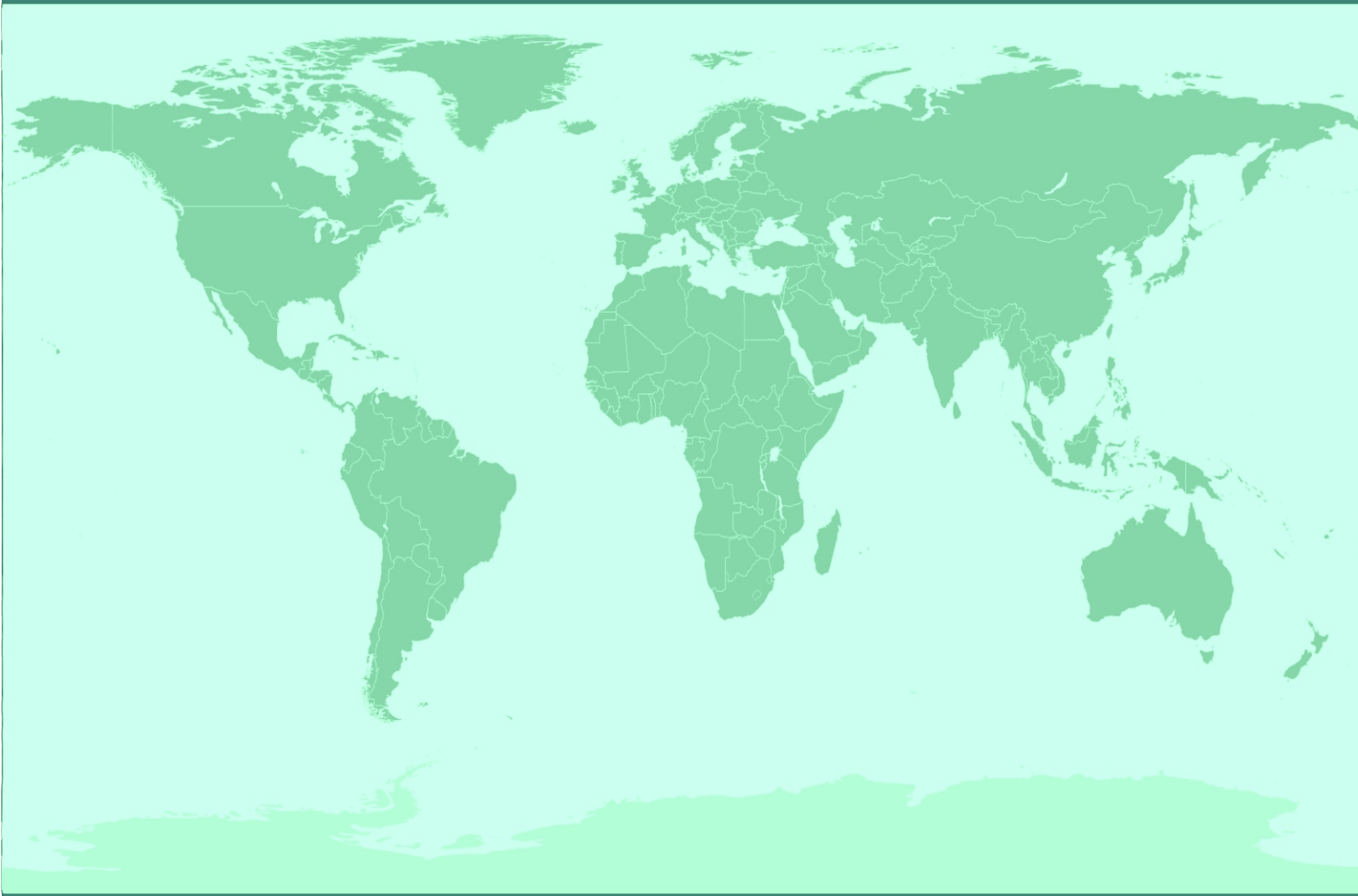
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 - f. Theory (literature review/theoretical construct) of the research.
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