

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF GIBRAN'S RESPONSE TO PANDJI'S *POLITICAL SATIRE*

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Abstract

This study explores stand-up comedy as a medium for expressing socio-political issues and examines how political figures respond to such satire in digital media. This study scopes the discourse and power relations in Gibran Rakabuming's response to Pandji Pragiwaksono's satire in his *Mens Rea* show, which was recorded and published on Netflix and Tretan Universe YouTube channel. Previous studies of political satire have focused mainly on the construction of humour. This study fills the gap by examining the strategic responses of targeted politicians. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study analyzes micro-level linguistic features through Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) metafunctions, ideational, interpersonal, and textual and examines how language constructs meaning and sociocultural practices through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), drawing on Fairclough's framework of representation, relations, and identity. Gibran's composed demeanor functions discursively as a strategy of political deflection. His serenity, laughter, and simple language transform political criticism into harmless biological humor framed as natural and innocent. This strategy exemplifies 'soft hegemony,' whereby politicians employ humor and self-deprecation to diffuse critique and maintain authority. This study greatly advances the field of political discourse by broadening the scope of application of SFL and CDA frameworks to informal digital multimodal interactions, which are usually dismissed as trivial entertainment but are in fact highly complex and sophisticated sites for ideological negotiation and power reproduction.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis; Gibran Rakabuming; metafunctions; Pandji Pragiwaksono; political satire; stand-up comedy*

1. Introduction

The tension between citizens and authorities during the periods of Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka represents a notable phenomenon in political communication warranting further investigation. As digital democratic spaces grow, people are no longer limited to traditional institutions when it comes to dealing with problems like leadership succession, dynasty politics, and changes in the rules of governance (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010). These dynamics now extend into popular culture, particularly through stand-up comedy. Stand-up comedy has evolved from mere entertainment into a significant medium

for social critique and political discourse to being a key way to criticize society and a key place to talk about politics (Saleem et al., 2022). Comedians use political satire in a very planned way. They use delivery techniques like comedians employ techniques such as set-up and punchline, hyperbole, and contrast to expose contradictions in political actions and rhetoric in politicians' policies or actions. By making a situation seem worse than it is (hyperbole) or comparing politicians' unfulfilled campaign pledges to the harsh reality on the ground (Nizar & Aesthetika, 2024). spreadAudience laughter signifies agreement and recognition of political and social problems, reinforcing satire as a discourse of resistance; it's laughter of agreement that shows that something is wrong with the current political and social situation (Surahmat et al., 2024; Tesnohlikova, 2021; Windisch & Simi, 2022). Thus, resistance discourse circulates widely in the public sphere, amplified by social media, especially when social media amplifies these satirical exchange between Pandji and Gibran and they are seen by millions of people (Kwong, 2024).

This use of sharp political satire is very connected to Pandji Pragiwaksono's past work, especially his stand-up comedy special "Mens Rea." There is a reason why this title was chosen. *Mens rea* is a Latin term that means "criminal intent" or the "guilty mental state" behind an act in criminal law (Abrar et al., 2025). Pandji's title establishes the central premise of his comedy performance. According to Romandona and Yasin (2025), *Mens Rea* emphasises not only observable actions (*actus reus*) but also the hidden intentions and motives (*mens rea*) that underlie them, thereby exposing political hypocrisy and strategies of power preservation. From the perspective of political satire, uncovering the rulers' *mens rea* constitutes a form of resistance, as it reveals the concealed ambitions and self-serving interests often disguised through populist rhetoric and public displays of concern. Within this framework, Gibran Rakabuming, as a young political figure, becomes one of the primary targets of Pandji's satire. Through the performance, Pandji attempts to expose the underlying "intentions" behind Gibran's political image and positioning. Political discourse in the digital age extends beyond comedians' jokes, as responses from targeted figures often reveal strategic communication that the comedian tells (Sari & Triyono, 2023). Pandji made fun of the youthful political persona Gibran Rakabuming in a way that was very specific. But the way people talk about politics in the digital age goes beyond the jokes the comedian makes (Rahman et al., 2021). It is much more interesting and important to look at what happens when the subject of the satire is in the public place, as shown in a vlog on the Tretan Universe YouTube channel. Responses from the criticized political figure are often not just random reactions; they often include hidden communication strategies that are meant to keep their image of power in the public eye.

One part of his comedy routine clearly shows how he is trying to break down political reality. Pragiwaksono (2025, [00:43:30]) gives a harsh criticism of how shallow Indonesian voters are by saying, "Ada yang milih presiden berdasarkan tampang. Ganjar, ganteng ya, Anis, manis ya, Prabowo, gemoy ya atau atau wakil presidennya, Gibran, ngantuk ya?". This punchline not only contrasts candidates' appealing traits with Gibran's perceived passivity but also metaphorically critiques his political image as disengaged or lacking initiative. This joke uses a very clear contrast technique in its structure. While other candidates have physical traits that are seen as good or at least cute as political gimmicks (handsome, sweet, cute), Pandji puts Gibran at the end of the sentence with the word "sleepy" as the punchline. This word choice is not just a physical observation; it is also a satire that cleverly breaks down Gibran's public image. The word "sleepy" is a metaphor that makes fun of how people

often think he is not very interested in politics, doesn't have many ideas, or is too passive. Pandji uses a single short sentence to show how leadership contests are often only about looks, while also making the person he is targeting look less competent. Previous studies on political satire in Indonesia have focused on the linguistic construction of humour by comedians and the reception of this humour by the general audience (Kulkarni, 2017; Song et al., 2021; Sunarso et al., 2022). However, the opposite dynamic of this phenomenon, which includes how targeted political figures strategically react to such scathing satire through discursive negotiation in digital media, has received less attention. The present study addresses this crucial gap by moving the analytical gaze from a monologic critique to a dialogic interaction, exploring the defensive linguistic strategies used by a political figure. This research contributes novelty in the context of capturing the present political climate in 2026, which is the much-talked about incident between comedian Pandji Pragiwaksono and Vice President Gibran Rakabuming. In this particular context, we see a modern strategy of "discursive hegemony," where modern-day politicians use casualness, deflections, and digital vlogs to defuse incisive political criticism, as opposed to the traditional authoritarian censorship. This study proposes a new integrated framework in theory and method by combining Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). This methodological approach, through the multimodal transcription of different digital platforms (Netflix and YouTube) permits a granular, micro-level analysis of metafunctional language choices accompanied by non-verbal cues, which are then elevated to a macro-level critique of sociocultural power relations, representation and political identity construction.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Political Satire and Digital Political Communication

Satirical humor has become increasingly significant in political communication studies, especially in today's polarized environment. Satirical humor in political communication is different from pure entertainment-oriented comedy that intends to amuse audiences with, for example, humor based on physical comedy or everyday observations to create humorous sense (Enarsson, 2025; Nita et al., 2021). Satirical or critical humor, as used in political satire, is a purposeful use of irony, sarcasm, repetition, and hyperbole intended to expose weaknesses, hypocrisy, and abuse of power in various segments of society, particularly the political arena (Möller & Boukes, 2022). In a rigid, bureaucratic, and obscure environment of formal politics, satire can function as a "bridge" to the broader and more open society that has developed expectations about greater political transparency and accountability (Kaur & Puyok, 2021). Many comedians are employing their star power as part of the emerging role of the non-formal political actor. Comedians strategically deploy satire as a rhetorical weapon to challenge authority and erode public trust in political figures (Abdullah, 2012; Rahman et al., 2021). That a comedian's choosing a politician as the subject of his or her jokes can serve to effectively erode that satire erodes politicians' cultural immunity, challenging the perception that they are beyond criticism (Sari & Triyono, 2023).

2.2 Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Language grammar systems are often described in a number of ways. The traditional description outlines the structural rules for English clause-wording, including information about subject, predicate, object, objects of object, indirect objects, gerunds, clause juncture and so on (Nabiyeva, 2025). Sometimes grammar is treated as if it were a simple truth/falsity matter: correct or incorrect. An alternative, more detailed, perspective on language grammar provides a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) description, viewing language as a social semiotic system whether words, phrases, sounds, written forms, or gestures, all exist as potential options with social purpose (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Words and words together are never chosen randomly or mistakenly for effective language use. According to Lola & Emilia (2025) in their research, every instance of language is used for three metafunctions simultaneously: the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions can be examined within multimodality. This study draws on the three SFL metafunctions, ideational, interpersonal, and textual, as tools for micro-linguistic analysis within Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Using SFL as a semantic resource, the study moves beyond surface features to reveal how lexical choices encode ideology and negotiating power (Farhanita & Kurniawan, 2024).

2.3 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) transcends conventional linguistic confines and investigates the intricate web of power dynamics and ideologies inherent in discourse (Salih, 2021). Within the expansive framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, notable scholars present divergent viewpoints: Van Dijk (2008) examines the socio-cognitive dimensions of discourse's impact on mental models and the reinforcement of ideological polarisation, whereas Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach emphasises the importance of historical and institutional contexts in shaping political language (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This study acknowledges these fundamental perspectives and establishes the primary framework utilising Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model. Fairclough (1995) asserts that a comprehensive examination of the broader social context of the text is essential for a meaningful understanding of a communicative event.

The first dimension is the text, where language or semiosis is analysed. This study examines the textual dimension through Halliday's metafunctions. In addition, this digital political interaction is beyond the spoken words, therefore this study adopts Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) proposed by Ledin & Machin (2020) to carefully analyse the non-verbal semiotic resources, including gestures and relaxed facial expressions, in addition to the linguistic text (Situmorang et al., 2025). The integration of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a robust analytical framework for examining political discourse (Adegbenro & Olayemi, 2025). CDA provides a comprehensive macro-level framework for understanding the discursive reproduction of power, ideology, and hegemony (Hariyanti & Yustitia, 2020). Nonetheless, it is occasionally criticised for its absence of a textual foundation. This empirical necessity is effectively met through the micro-level analytical framework of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. It suggests how social realities are methodically formed through the selection of lexicogrammar, structured around the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions (Alameda-Hernández & Jiménez-Briones, 2025). This methodological unification eliminates the dialectical separation between text and context. It offers social scientists the opportunity

to examine how nuanced linguistic and multimodal elements of informal political discourse are strategically utilised to negotiate power dynamics, build ideologies, and legitimise political identities (Zeb et al., 2025).

3. Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the meaning behind political satire (Creswell, 2009). The primary subjects were Pandji Pragiwaksono, the comedian who critiques political figures, and Gibran Rakabuming, the politician who responded to the satire. The primary data sources were drawn from two different digital media platforms: the stand-up comedy special "Mens Rea" on Netflix and a reaction vlog video on the Tretan Universe YouTube channel. To ensure data accuracy, the researcher employed a purposive sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling was used to select video clips focusing on segments related to the 'sleepy' satire.

The data gathering approach in this study involved meticulous observation, systematic note-taking, and targeted sampling. The encounter between Pandji and Gibran was intentionally chosen as a representative dyadic conversation showcasing incisive political satire met with immediate political reactions on prominent digital platforms. This selected discourse is analytically important as it offers a unique, clear microcosm of current ideological negotiation, effectively demonstrating the contemporary political transition toward "soft hegemony," wherein political leaders mitigate criticism through deliberate nonchalance instead of conventional authoritarian suppression. The analysis focused on the multimodal communicative act, integrating both verbal and non-verbal elements, such as facial expressions and gestures, which were documented through a comprehensive multimodal transcription. The data analysis progressed in two phases: the first employed Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) metafunctions to dissect language use within the discourse, while the second utilized Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the socio-cultural dimensions of representation, relation, and identity in political satire (Cheng, 2024; Purwaningrum & Harmoko, 2025; Sumari, 2024). By integrating these frameworks, the study aims to clarify the dynamics of ideology and power in comic interactions within digital public spheres.

3.1 Analytical Procedure Table

Table 1.

Analytical Procedure Table

Stage	Research Procedure	Action Taken
Data Collection	Multimodal Transcription	Transcribing both verbal utterances and non-verbal cues (laughter, gestures, tone) from Netflix and YouTube platforms.
Data Condensation	Purposive Sampling	Extracting segments related specifically to the "sleepy" (<i>ngantuk</i>) political satire and applying the alphanumeric coding framework.

Micro-Analysis	SFL Metafunctions Analysis	Dissecting the coded clauses using Halliday's framework to identify Ideational (transitivity), Interpersonal (mood), and Textual (theme/rheme) meanings.
Macro-Analysis	CDA 3-Dimensional Analysis	Elevating the linguistic findings into sociocultural practices to examine how they construct Representation, Social Relations, and Political Identity based on Fairclough's model.
Data Synthesis	Conclusion Drawing	Synthesizing the micro and macro findings to formulate a comprehensive conclusion regarding the "strategic pacification" tactics used in digital political discourse.

3.2 Coding Framework

Upon compiling the multimodal transcription, a systematic coding methodology was employed to classify the utterances and non-verbal cues prior to the primary analysis. Each data segment was encoded utilising a distinct alphanumeric format: [Speaker/Platform/Datum Number]. [PAN/NF/1] denotes a particular speech by Pandji (PAN) on the Netflix platform (NF), identified as datum number 01. Likewise, [GIB/YT/2] denotes Gibran's (GIB) comment on YouTube (YT) as data point number 02. Subsequent to this preliminary identification, the data were classified according to their linguistic orientation into the three metafunctions of SFL (Ideational, Interpersonal, Textual) and thereafter aligned with Fairclough's dimensions of CDA (Representation, Relation, Identity). This approach guarantees that the data reduction process is both traceable and methodically structured for micro and macro-level analysis.

3.3 Validity Strategy

The rigorous strategies used in the study enhanced the trustworthiness and validity of the qualitative findings. It uses Theory Triangulation, which combines Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics to analyse text at the micro-level and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis to critique the macro-level social context, thereby reducing the bias of a single theoretical approach. Integrates multimodal elements like facial expressions and tone to accurately and contextually represent communicative events. A systematic validation process is adopted that includes iterative use of peer debriefing and expert validation, which allows for a thorough examination and reconciliation of analytical discrepancies. Researcher reflexivity reveals the interpretive subjectivity inherent in Critical Discourse Analysis such that claims are based on verifiable lexicogrammatical and multimodal evidence, thus transforming subjective insights into systematically validated academic research.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Ideational Metafunction Analysis

In SFL, clauses are split into three parts: who is involved (Participant), what is done or happens (Process), and what the situation is (Circumstance). Omitting verbs (ellipsis) is

common in spoken language, like stand-up comedy, but the reason for doing it is not always clear (Parasian et al., 2025; Putra et al., 2024).

Table 2.*Transitivity Analysis of Pandji's Discourse*

Clause / discourse	Partisipants	Process	Circumstance
[PAN/NF/1] "Ada yang milih pemimpin berdasarkan tampang" (Some choose leaders based on looks)	Actor: <i>Ada yang</i> some) Goal: <i>pemimpin</i> (leader)	Existential process: <i>Ada</i> (some) Material process: <i>milih</i> (choose)	Manner: <i>berdasarkan tampang</i> (based on appearance)
[PAN/NF/2] "Ganjar ganteng, ya?" (Ganjar looks handsome, doesn't He?)	Carrier: Ganjar	Attributive relational: is [implicit]	Manner: <i>ganteng</i> (handsome)
[PAN/NF/3] "Anis manis, ya?" (Anis looks sweet, doesn't He?)	Carrier: Anis	Attributive relational: is [implicit]	Manner: <i>manis</i> (sweet)
[PAN/NF/4] "Prabowo gemoy, ya?" (Prabowo looks cute, doesn't He?)	Carrier: Prabowo	Attributive relational: is [implicit]	Manner: <i>gemoy</i> (cute)
[PAN/NF/5] "Atau Wakil Presidennya, Gibran ngantuk, ya?" (or The Vice President, Gibran looks sleepy, doesn't He?)	Carrier: <i>Wakil Presiden, Gibran</i> (The Vice President, Gibran)	Attributive relational: is [implicit]	Manner: <i>ngantuk</i> (sleepy)
[PAN/NF/6] "Salah nada maaf." (wrong tone, sorry)	Carrier: <i>nada saya</i> (my tone) [implicit]	Verbal process: Pandji as sayer [implicit]	Contingency: <i>salah</i> (wrong)
[PAN/NF/7] "Gibran ngantuk, ya?" [<i>Nada heran</i>] (Gibran looks sleepy, doesn't He?) [surprised tone]	Carrier: Gibran	Attributive relational: is [implicit]	Manner: <i>ngantuk</i> (sleepy)
[PAN/NF/8] "Yakan dia kayak orang ngantuk kan, ya?" (Right, he looks like a somnolent expression, doesn't he, yeah?)	Carrier: <i>dia</i> (He) [Gibran]	Mental process: <i>kayak</i> (looks like)	Manner: <i>orang ngantuk</i> (a somnolent expression)

Source: Mens Rea – Netflix (Pragiwaksono, 2025) [00:43:30]

Through Halliday's ideational metafunction lens, the reality construct by Pandji Pragiwaksono in the "Mens Rea" segment is highly structured and linguistically manipulative. Transitivity analysis shows that the discourse opens with a Material Process in clause 1 "Some choose leaders based on looks". The use of the action verb "to choose" [to choose] paired with

the circumstance "*based on looks*" serves as the foundation for the premise. Pandji straightforwardly represents the sociopolitical reality of voters in Indonesia as superficial entities, where crucial actions like choosing a leader are reduced to mere aesthetic or visual assessments. In SFL, transitivity structures represent experiential meaning through Participants, Processes, and Circumstances, which together encode how reality is construed.

After this premise is established, Pandji's sentence construction predominantly shifts to using Attributive Relational Processes repeatedly (parallel repetition). Clauses 2, 3, and 4 attribute attributes to senior political figures (Ganjar, Anis, Prabowo). The attributes attached (handsome, sweet, cute) are adjectives representing political gimmicks with positive, entertaining, or visually appealing connotations. This sequential selection of relational processes builds an audience expectation regarding contemporary political campaign patterns that rely on superficial charm.

The satirical climax (or punchline) occurs in clauses 5 and 7, when Pandji positions Gibran in the exact same syntactic structure as the previous three candidates. However, there is a sharp semantic anomaly in the attributes assigned. While other figures receive aesthetic attributes, Gibran is represented with the attribute "sleepy." Lexically, "sleepy" is not an aesthetic quality that can be used as a campaign gimmick, but rather a physiological condition indicating a lack of vitality, lethargy, or intellectual/physical unpreparedness. Through this relational process, Pandji deconstructs the authority of the position of "Vice President"; he does not attack Gibran's policies, but rather his outward appearance, which does not reflect the energy of a leader.

Furthermore, this analysis is reinforced by multimodal elements (tone of voice and gesture). In clause 6 "*Salah nada maap*", Pandji theatrically breaks this pattern. The shift from a "gentle tone" (symbolizing the public's blind admiration for political gimmicks) to a "surprised and questioning tone" when repeating the phrase "*Gibran looks sleepy, huh?*" is a form of ideological affirmation. Pandji uses language to highlight the absurdity. The closing phrase "*He looks like he's about to fall asleep, doesn't he?*" seals the representation. Pandji constructs a premise that leads the audience (including Gibran as an object) to acknowledge the reality that despite all his political maneuvers, the most prominent identity or attribute attached to Gibran in the eyes of the critical public is lethargy (sleepiness). This discursive attack then becomes a powerful stimulus and appears to Gibran to engage in defensive maneuvers when responding on the Tretan Universe YouTube channel.

Table 3.
Transitivity Analysis of Gibran's Response

Clause / discourse	Partisipants	Process	Circumstance
[GIB/YT/1] "Ya kita ucapkan selamat lah ke Bang Pandji ya." (Well, let's just congratulate Bang Pandji)	Actor: <i>kita</i> (us) Goal: <i>Selamat</i> (congratulate)	Verbal process: <i>ucapkan</i> (saying)	Recipient: <i>ke Bang Pandji</i> (to Pandji)
[GIB/YT/2] "...ngalahin Jujutsu Kaishen, ngalahin apa, Stranger Things. Ikut bangga." (...beating Jujutsu Kaisen, beating... what was it, Stranger Things. I'm proud too.)	Senser: <i>saya / kita</i> (I / us) [implicit]	Mental affection: (<i>merasa bangga</i> (feels proud) [Implicit])	Contingency: <i>ikut</i> (feels proud)

<p>[GIB/YT/3] <i>"Oh, iya sih. Ya gapapa, dibuat lucu-lucuan aja. Santai."</i> (Oh, yeah. It's fine, it's just for laughs. Take it easy)</p>	Goal: that critique [implicit]	Material process: <i>dibuat</i> (make it)	Cause: <i>lucu-lucuan aja</i> (just for fun)
<p>[GIB/YT/4] <i>"Ya dari lahir bentuk matanya seperti ini, mau gimana lagi."</i> (Well, I was born with eyes like this, what can you do?) [gesture pointing his eyes]</p>	Carrier: <i>bentuk matanya seperti ini</i> (this my original eye shape)	Relational attributive: <i>(adalah)</i> [implicit] <i>seperti ini</i> (like this)	Time: dari lahir
<p>[GIB/YT/5] <i>"Ga masalah, di-roasting siapapun ga masalah."</i> (It's no problem, I don't mind getting roasted by anyone)</p>	Target/goal: <i>(saya) di-roasting</i> (I was roasted) [implicit] Actor: <i>siapapun</i> (anyone)	Material process: <i>di-roasting</i> (being roasted)	Matter: <i>ga masalah</i> (no problems)
<p>[GIB/YT/6] <i>"Tapi gapapa sih... untuk menghibur orang lah."</i> (But it's no big deal... it's just to entertain people anyway)</p>	Goal: that critique [implicit]	Material process: <i>menghibur</i> (cheering someone up)	Cause: <i>orang lah</i> (someone)
<p>[GIB/YT/7] <i>"...yang disampaikan Pandji di Mens Rea ya, itu kan kritikan, masukan untuk kita semua lah..."</i> (...I mean, it's a critique, it's feedback for all of us...)</p>	Carrier: <i>yang disampaikan Pandji itu</i>	Verbal process: <i>disampaikan</i> (delivered)	Contingency: <i>kritikan, masukan</i> (critique, suggestion) Recipient: <i>untuk kita semua</i> (for all of us)
<p>[GIB/YT/8] <i>"...gak usah saling mem-bully, gak usah saling melaporkan."</i> (...there's no need to bully each other, and no need to report one another)</p>	Actor: (netizens / supporter) [implicit]	Material process: <i>mem-bully, melaporkan</i> (bullying, reporting)	Contingency: <i>saling</i> (mutual respect)

Source: Tahan Sabar – (Tretan Universe, 2026) [00:00:43 – 00:02:55]

The transitivity analysis above shows that Gibran's response discourse uses a very advance linguistic strategy to stop political attacks. Instead of using defensive material processes like denial or anger, Gibran uses three structures ideational maneuvers: First, Deflection through Appreciation (Verbal and Mental Processes). In the first two parts of the conversation, Gibran doesn't directly respond to the criticism. He uses Verbal Processes "we

congratulate" and Mental Processes "*we share in the pride*" to change the subject of the conversation from "Gibran as the object of satire" to "Pandji as the subject of success on Netflix." Choosing "we" over "I" shows that he wants to be inclusive and not make himself seem like an enemy being attacked. Second, Substance Reduction and Biological Normalization (Relational and Material Processes). Gibran uses the Material Process to make Pandji's criticism seem like just something to "*make fun of*," and the important Attributive Relational Process to say, "my eyes were born like this." This statement may function as the political force of the satire. Gibran turns a harsh political criticism of his lack of energy or work ethic as a leader into something that is just biological fate and unchangeable physical anatomy "*what can I do?*". By normalizing the discourse, Gibran neutralizes Pandji's satirical power, reducing the critique to a depoliticized physical commentary devoid of political substance.

Third, the integration of criticism and the declaration of moral authority (relational process and material negation). Clauses 7 and 8 show the most important parts of Gibran's discourse strategy. He once more employs the Attributive Relational Process to recontextualize the content of "Mens Rea." Gibran doesn't see it as an attack; instead, he sees it as "*criticism, input for all of us*." This is a way of assimilating; he takes the criticism to show that he is open-minded and emotionally mature. In the end, Gibran uses a negated Material Process "*don't bully, don't report*". This clause, which doesn't have a clear subject, is basically an imperative sentence (a command). This is where he says he is in charge; he tells the people (netizens/his supporters) to stay calm and acts like a leader. This ideational analysis may reflect that Gibran's "an unruffled image" demeanor is not indicative of resignation, but rather a linguistic deflection. By choosing certain verbs, he was able to take away Pandji's mens rea (intent to attack), turn political criticism into simple physical entertainment, and come out of the conversation with the image of a tough, nonchalant attitude, and *anti-baper* new-generation political leader.

4.2 Interpersonal Metafunction Analysis

Halliday's Interpersonal Metafunction analysis divides sentences into Mood Elements (Subject and Finite/Auxiliary Verb) and Residues (Predicator, Complement, and Adjunct). The Mood type (Declarative, Interrogative, Imperative) tells you what the exchange is for (giving or asking for information or action) (Chen, 2025).

Table 4.

Interpersonal Metafunction Analysis of Pandji's Discourse

Clause / Utterance	Mood System Analysis	Mood Type & Exchange Function	Power Relation & Social Interaction (Speaker – Listener)
[PAN/NF/1] "Ada yang milih pemimpin berdasarkan tampang" (Some choose leaders based on looks)	Subject: <i>Ada</i> (existential) Finite: [present tense]	Declarative. Function: Giving information.	Pandji positions himself on an equal footing with the audience as a rational observer, establishing a premise or shared knowledge base.

[PAN/NF/2] "Ganjar ganteng, ya?" (Ganjar looks handsome, doesn't He?)	Subject: Ganjar / Anis / Prabowo Mood Adjunct (Tag): <i>ya?</i>	Declarative with Interrogative Tag. Function: Demanding agreement.	The use of the particle "ya?" functions interpersonally to draw the audience into agreeing with the premise. The gentle tone represents (mocking) the attitude of the public who blindly idolize politicians.
[PAN/NF/3] "Anis manis, ya?" (Anis looks sweet, doesn't He?)			
[PAN/NF/4] "Prabowo gemoy, ya?" (Prabowo looks cute, doesn't He?)			
[PAN/NF/5] "Atau Wakil Presidennya, Gibran ngantuk, ya?" (or The Vice President, Gibran looks sleepy, doesn't He?)	Subject: Gibran Mood Adjunct: <i>ya?</i>	Declarative with Interrogative Tag. Function: Demanding agreement.	Pandji builds an interactional trap. He maintains the same mood structure and tone to deceive the audience's expectations.
[PAN/NF/6] "Salah nada maaf." (wrong tone, sorry)	<i>Salah</i> (Minor Clause / Subject Ellipsis)	Minor Clause (Exclamative/Apolo gy). Function: Breaking the theatrical frame (breaking the fourth wall).	Pandji breaks down the authority distance between himself (performer) and the audience. He displays artificial "vulnerability" to create emotional intimacy and lower the audience's guard.
[PAN/NF/7] "Gibran ngantuk, ya?" [<i>Nada heran</i>] (Gibran looks sleepy, doesn't He?) [surprised tone]	Subject: Gibran Mood Adjunct: <i>ya?</i> (pronounced with rising intonation)	Interrogative (Polar). Function: Demanding confirmation.	The dramatic change in tone positions Pandji as a representation of a confused public. The power dynamic shifts: Pandji + the audience are now in a superior position (laughing at) the target object (Gibran).
[PAN/NF/8] "Yakan dia kayak orang ngantuk kan, ya?" (Right, he looks like a somnolent expression, doesn't he, yeah?)	Subject: <i>dia</i> (Gibran) Mood Adjunct: <i>Yakan, kan, ya?</i>	Declarative with Multi-Tag. Function: Forcing consensus.	The consecutive use of three emphasizing particles (<i>yakan, kan, ya</i>) indicates a high level of interpersonal pressure. Pandji compels the audience to form an alliance with him to validate the critique.

Source: Mens Rea – Netflix (Pragiwaksono, 2025) [00:43:30]

In the first part (Clauses 1 to 5), Pandji mostly uses a Declarative Mood ending with a question tag "ya?". This sentence structure is not just meant to give information; it is also a way to negotiate in an uneven way. Pandji says that politicians are elected based on how they look, and then he uses the word "ya?" as bait to get everyone to agree with him. He uses a "gentle" tone to show that he is being ironic in his interactions with others. He acts as if he is speaking for the many blindly fanatical supporters of politicians. This is how he gets his critical audience to agree with him. The manipulation of power relations reaches its zenith in Clause 6 "Sorry for the wrong tone". This is a minor clause that breaks the grammatical structure that was already in place. Pandji disrupts the performance frame, reducing social distance and fostering audience intimacy. The performer breaks down the social distance between himself and the audience by tapping his forehead, laughing, and saying sorry. Pandji stops being a "omniscient narrator" and becomes a friend who talks to the audience. This change in relationship is important because it makes the audience less on guard before the real attack.

The language function changes a lot in Clauses 7 and 8. When Pandji says, "*Gibran is sleepy, right?*" again, his tone goes from pseudo-declarative to purely interrogative with a tone of surprise. The last part, "*Right, he looks like a somnolent expression, doesn't he, yeah?*" is full of stacked Mood Adjuncts (right, doesn't he, yeah). This buildup of particles shows a very high level of interpersonal insistence (high modality of inclination). Pandji is no longer just presenting a premise; he is almost forcing or "cornering" the audience to agree with the conclusion. By doing an impersonation of Gibran's somnolent expression, Pandji makes a clear social divide: on one side is the Rational Alliance (Pandji and the laughing audience), and on the other is the Target Object (Gibran, who is made to look ridiculous). By using this mood system, Pandji effectively undermines the Vice President's authority not with harsh political speeches, but by getting the audience to agree that the political figure looks weak.

Table 5.
Interpersonal Metafunction Analysis of Gibran's Discourse

Clause / Utterance	Mood System Analysis	Mood Type & Exchange Function	Power Relation & Social Interaction (Speaker - Listener)
[GIB/YT/1] "Ya kita ucapkan selamat lah ke Bang Pandji ya." (Well, let's just congratulate Bang Pandji)	Subject: kita (we) Finite: ucapkan [present]	Declarative. Function: Giving information (Appreciation).	Gibran uses the inclusive "kita" (we) and the respectful address "Bang" (Brother) to equalize social distance. He positions himself as a supportive peer rather than a defensive political target.
[GIB/YT/2] "Oh, iya sih. Ya gapapa, dibuat lucu-lucuan aja. Santai." (Oh, yeah. It's fine, it's just for laughs. Take it easy)	Subject: [The critique] Finite: [is]	Declarative / Minor Clause. Function: Giving evaluation.	The use of casual vocabulary (gapapa, lucu-lucuan, santai) interpersonally trivializes the impact of the satire. It projects an "unbothered" persona, diminishing the attacker's power.

[GIB/YT/3] "Ya dari lahir bentuk matanya seperti ini, mau gimana lagi." (Well, I was born with eyes like this, what can you do?)	Subject: bentuk matanya (the eye shape) Finite: [is]"	Declarative + Rhetorical Interrogative. Function: Giving explanation.	He frames a political critique as an unchangeable biological fact. The rhetorical tag "mau gimana lagi" asks for sympathy or shared helplessness, effectively neutralizing hostility.
[GIB/YT/4] "Ga masalah, di-roasting siapapun ga masalah." (It's not a big deal, I don't mind getting roasted by anyone)	Subject: [I] Finite: [have] ga masalah	Declarative. Function: Giving assurance.	By stating he is fine being roasted by "siapapun" (anyone), Gibran asserts a high level of psychological dominance and untouchability.
[GIB/YT/5] "...itu kan kritikan, masukan untuk kita semua lah..." (...I mean, it's a critique, it's feedback for all of us...)	Subject: itu (that) Finite: [is]	Declarative. Function: Giving evaluation.	He assumes the role of a wise figure who gracefully accepts input, maintaining a moral high ground over the comedian who mocked him.
[GIB/YT/6] "...gak usah saling mem-bully, gak usah saling melaporkan." (...there's no need to bully each other, and no need to report one another)	Subject: [You / Supporters] (implicit) Finite: gak usah (do not need to)	Negative Imperative. Function: Demanding goods & services (Commanding action).	A sudden shift in power dynamic. Gibran drops the casual peer persona and adopts the role of an authoritative leader commanding his followers to stand down.

Source: Tahan Sabar – Tretan Universe (2026) [00:00:43 – 00:02:55]

Gibran didn't use the word "I" at the beginning of the conversation (Clause 1). Instead, he said "we" and called Pandji "Bang." This is what linguists call an effort to close the gap between people. Gibran didn't stand up straight like a police officer under attack; instead, he acted performative egalitarianism. Gibran destroys Pandji's plan to attack (Mens Rea) by praising the success of Pandji's Comedy Show on Netflix. It's easy to see why: it's hard for people to keep hating a politician who responds to insults with compliments. Gibran uses declarative sentences with casual words like "it's not a big deal," "it's just for laughs," and "take it easy" in Clauses 2 and 4. When someone is attacked and says things like "take it easy," they are showing that they are stronger or more mentally stable than the person who attacked them. Gibran discursively positions Pandji's satire as lacking the requisite political weight to undermine his authority. He turns sharp political criticism into nothing more than silly fun. Clause 6 is the most important part. He uses casual, everyday language throughout the video, but at the end of his answer, he switches to a commanding tone: "don't bully each

other, don't report each other." Even though he sounds calm, this sentence structure makes him sound like an authority figure. Gibran goes back to being a political elite, whether he knows it or not. He is telling people on the internet and his fans what to do. This moment shows that even though he seems like an unperturbed, emerging political figure, he is still an authority figure who can move or hold back the people (Mariana & Husin, 2017).

4.3 Textual Metafunction

According to Halliday's theory, the Theme is the first thing the speaker wants to talk about in a sentence, and the Rheme is the rest of the sentence, which gives new information or the main point about that Theme (Kanwal et al., 2025).

Table 6.

Textual Metafunction Analysis of Pandji's Discourse

Clause / Utterance	Theme (Starting Point of the Message)	Rheme (New Information / Core Message)
[PAN/NF/1] "Ada yang milih pemimpin berdasarkan tampang" (Some choose leaders based on looks)	Topical Theme: <i>Ada yang</i> (Some people)	<i>milih pemimpin berdasarkan tampang.</i>
[PAN/NF/2] "Ganjar ganteng, ya?" (Ganjar looks handsome, doesn't He?) [Gentle/soft tone]	Topical Theme: Ganjar	<i>ganteng, ya?</i>
[PAN/NF/3] "Anis manis, ya?" (Anis looks sweet, doesn't He?) [Gentle/soft tone]	Topical Theme: Anis	<i>manis, ya?</i>
[PAN/NF/4] "Prabowo gemoy, ya?" (Prabowo looks cute, doesn't He?) [Gentle/soft tone]	Topical Theme: Prabowo	<i>gemoy, ya?</i>
[PAN/NF/5] "Atau Wakil Presidennya, Gibran ngantuk, ya?" (or The Vice President, Gibran looks sleepy, doesn't He?) [Gentle/soft tone]	Textual Theme: <i>atau</i> (or) Topical Theme: <i>Wakil Presidennya, Gibran</i> (The Vice President, Gibran)	<i>ngantuk, ya?</i>
[PAN/NF/6] "Salah nada maaf." (wrong tone, sorry) [Laughing, gesture of slapping forehead]	Topical Theme: <i>Salah nada</i> (Wrong tone)	<i>maaf.</i>
[PAN/NF/7] "Gibran ngantuk, ya?" (Gibran looks sleepy, doesn't He?) [Questioning & wondering tone]	Topical Theme: Gibran	<i>ngantuk, ya?</i>

[PAN/NF/8] "Yakan dia kayak orang ngantuk kan, ya?" (Right, he looks like a somnolent expression, doesn't he, yeah?) [Impersonation gesture]	Interpersonal Theme: <i>kayak orang ngantuk kan, Yakan</i> Topical Theme: <i>dia</i> (he/Gibran)	Rheme: <i>ya?</i>
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Source: Mens Rea – Netflix (Pragiwaksono, 2025) [00:43:30]

If we look at how these words are put together from start to finish, we can see that the attacking comedian and the defending politician are using very different ways to talk to each other. According to Pandji's table (Clauses 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7), he always puts the names of political figures (Ganjar, Anis, Prabowo, Gibran) at the beginning of the sentence as Topical Themes. In stand-up comedy, this is a way to get people to focus on that person's face by putting the spotlight on them. After the audience imagining the person, Pandji gives the Rheme as a punchline or an adjective (handsome, sweet, cute, sleepy). This repetitive way of organizing the message makes the audience's brain compare Gibran to the other figures, which makes the word "sleepy" at the end stand out and have a big effect. This textual analysis shows that the way Pandji writes his sentences is meant to be sharp to attack Gibran's visual identity.

Table 7.

Textual Metafunction Analysis of Gibran's Response

Clause / Utterance	Theme (Starting Point of the Message)	Rheme (New Information Core Message)
[GIB/YT/1] "Ya kita ucapkan selamat lah ke Bang Pandji ya." (Well, let's just congratulate Bang Pandji)	Textual Theme: <i>Ya</i> (Well) Topical Theme: <i>kita</i> (we)	<i>ucapkan selamat lah ke Bang Pandji ya.</i>
[GIB/YT/2] "Oh, iya sih. Ya gapapa, dibuat lucu-lucuan aja. Santai." (Oh, yeah. It's fine, it's just for laughs. Take it easy)	Textual Theme: <i>Ya</i> (Well) Topical Theme: (Implicit) [Kritikan itu]	<i>gapapa, dibuat lucu-lucuan aja.</i>
[GIB/YT/3] "Ya dari lahir bentuk matanya seperti ini, mau gimana lagi." (Well, I was born with eyes like this, what can you do?)	Textual Theme: <i>Ya</i> (Well) Topical Theme (Marked): <i>dari lahir</i> (since birth)	<i>bentuk matanya seperti ini...</i>
[GIB/YT/4] "Ga masalah, di-roasting siapapun ga masalah." (It's not a big deal, I don't mind getting roasted by anyone)	Topical Theme: (Implicit) [Saya]	<i>ga masalah, di-roasting siapapun ga masalah.</i>

<p>[GIB/YT/5] <i>"Tapi gapapa sih... untuk menghibur orang lah."</i> (But it's no big deal... it's just to entertain people anyway)</p>	<p>Textual Theme: <i>Tapi</i> (But) Topical Theme: (Implicit) [<i>Itu</i>]</p>	<p><i>gapapa sih... untuk menghibur orang lah.</i></p>
<p>[GIB/YT/6] <i>"...yang disampaikan Pandji di Mens Rea ya, itu kan kritikan, masukan untuk kita semua lah..."</i> (...I mean, it's a critique, it's feedback for all of us...)</p>	<p>Topical Theme: <i>yang</i> <i>disampaikan Pandji di Mens Rea ya</i> (what Pandji said in Mens Rea)</p>	<p><i>itu kan kritikan...</i></p>
<p>[GIB/YT/7] <i>"...gak usah saling mem-bully, gak usah saling melaporkan."</i> (...there's no need to bully each other, and no need to report one another)</p>	<p>Topical Theme: (Implicit) [<i>Kalian/Netizen</i>]</p>	<p><i>gak usah saling mem-bully, gak usah saling melaporkan.</i></p>

Source: Source: Tahan Sabar – Tretan Universe (2026) [00:00:43 – 00:02:55]

Gibran's answers are much more cultivated nonchalance in terms of sentence structure, but they are very strategic. Textual Themes "Yes," "But" The word "Yes" or "But" starts almost all of Gibran's sentences. These are called continuatives (conversational connectors) in linguistics (Mikolov et al., 2013). Beginning a sentence with "Yes" gives you time to think and makes the conversation seem very natural, smooth, and not tense. Look at Gibran's Clause 3: "Yeah, my eyes were shaped like this from birth." People usually say, "My eyes have looked like this since I was born." Gibran, on the other hand, puts the time adverbial "from birth" at the very front as the main theme. This is a way to change the focus. The utterance directs audience attention toward to "fate/inborn traits" right away, instead of Pandji's political criticism. Gibran hides the words "I" or "You" at the start of sentences that are not very important, like "No problem" or "Don't need to bully." Even though the message itself (the Rheme) tells people to calm down, this makes it sound more universal and less like a direct order. This analysis of the text shows that Pandji's sentence or discourse structure was carefully made to be sharp in attacking Gibran's visual identity. In contrast, Gibran's sentence or response structure was made to Gibran's discourse exhibits fluid thematic progression, shifting focus from political critique to personal traits, which eased the tension and moved the conversation from politics to entertainment and even physical anatomy. This moment shows that behind the mask of a rising political actor who seems easy-going and an unfazed persona is a figure of authority who can move or hold back the masses.

4.4 Representation, Relation, and Identity

This paper analyses the potential effects of political satire on discourse by drawing on Fairclough's argument that discourse can operate upon three aspects of society: Representation, Relations and Identity. An in-depth analysis is conducted of two forms of political satire: a netflix comedy show where the comedian, Pandji, performs live in front of an audience and reacts to comments from vice-president Gibran to what they perceive as a

threat to their way of life from elements of the government and the media including Vice President Gibran. The representations of politics and democracy offered in the television comedy show and the blogs, as well as the relations and identities that are constructed, challenge the notion of the marginal impact of 'popular' or 'public' discourse.

4.4.1 Representational Analysis

Representation is how an issue is shown or "framed" so that people will believe it (Fairclough, 1995; Ogbo & Nuhu, 2016). In this situation, there is a very different framing battle. Pandji uses satire to show that Indonesian politics is shallow when voters only see visual gimmicks (Sentosa et al., 2024). He specifically calls Gibran "sleepy," which is a word that means weak, lazy, and unable to lead. On the other hand, Gibran works hard to break down this image when he responds. Gibran doesn't use performance data to prove the "sleepy" label wrong; instead, he says that it's just a natural biological trait "my eyes are just shaped like this". In terms of politics and society, this strategy reframes criticism as non-political, thereby deflecting substantive engagement. Gibran strategically disarms a harsh political critique by reframing it as a mundane somatic derogation. Gibran makes the criticism less dangerous by framing it as something silly and "just for laughs."

4.4.2 Relational Analysis

The relational dynamic shows who is in charge of the interaction (Fairclough, 1995). Pandji uses a "punching up" style of comedy on stage, which means he makes fun of people who are higher up. He gets the crowd to put the authority figure (Gibran) in a lower position so they can all laugh at him. But Gibran responds with a very modern way of relating to people. In the past, officials might have gotten angry when people criticized them, which would have made the gap between elites and the public bigger (Fretes et al., 2023). Gibran, on the other hand, chooses to lower his own position. Gibran uses the word "we," calls him "Bang Pandji," and praises his work in Netflix show to connect with him. He says he's a friend who also watches Netflix and hangs out with him. In the age of social media, the strategic relational move is not to fight back, but to embrace the critique as it discursively neutralizes the antagonistic premise of the satire (Ilham et al, 2022). But at the end of his comment "no need to bully", Gibran reaffirms his original role as a leader who controls his followers.

4.4.3 Identity Analysis

Discourse is ultimately utilized to construct identity in the public perception (Fairclough, 1995). Pandji's satire strengthens his image as protector of democracy by boldly speaking out against the people's unhappiness. Gibran's composed demeanor response on Tretan Universe's YouTube channel, on the other hand, is a very planned way of branding himself politically. In Indonesia's paternalistic political culture, where leaders are often strict, obsessed with respect, and don't like being criticized, Gibran is making a name for himself as a "Young Leader of the Digital Era." He gives off the impression that he is easy-going, not easily offended, and willing to take criticism. Young voters (Gen Z and Millennials) really like this identity because social media platform is a powerful counter-narrative (Oboko & Ukwueze, 2025). Gibran is using Pandji's criticism not as a threat, but as a chance to prove that his politically strong identity can withstand psychological pressure.

5. Conclusion

This study shows how the interplay between satirical comedy and political responses in digital media is a complex space of power struggles. At the micro-level, the application of Halliday's three metafunctions exhibits clear strategic differences. While Pandji delegitimises authority by weaponizing the political term "sleepy," Gibran turns this criticism into an innocuous biological fact "since birth" and a joke in his discourse. On an interpersonal level, Gibran acts like this is all just casual peer-level stuff to defuse tension, then puts his foot down, and manoeuvres the textual gaze away from political matters. Through Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, validated at the macro-level, sociocultural practices reveal Gibran contesting representation, relations, and identity. He discursively reduces ideological threats into mere biological reductionism and solidifies his persona as an unassuming, young politician. This indicates a change in the political communication of Indonesia: a shift to non-coercive power maintenance. This case suggests that contemporary politicians may increasingly employ self-deprecating humour and nonchalance as strategies to manage criticism.

The research adds to the field but is limited in its methodology to a dyadic interaction between Netflix and YouTube and the findings are based solely on multimodal interpretation without audience reception data to evaluate the real socio-political effects on voter behaviour. The implications for research are nonetheless significant. Theoretically, it extends the reach of SFL and CDA frameworks beyond formal political discourse, demonstrating that casual digital spaces are highly sophisticated sites of ideological negotiation. Practically it offers an important framework to deconstruct hegemonic co-optation masquerading as comedy. Future research should extend this by comparing discursive defensive strategies across different emerging political figures on sites such as TikTok or X. Furthermore, the addition of audience reception analysis (by measuring digital sentiment / netizen comments) will give a complete insight into how the modern-day electorate ultimately consumes, contests or confirms these mechanisms of soft power maintenance.

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