

## Cultural violence in Indonesian ethnic humor: A critical discourse analysis

### Budaya kekerasan dalam humor etnis Indonesia: Analisis wacana kritis

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#### ABSTRACT

This study proposes to explain that Indonesian ethnic humor show cultural violence on the target group, in addition, to establishing an interethnic dialogue. Cultural violence is defined as the entire cultural aspect that can be used to legitimize violence, whether direct or structural. Forms of cultural violence can include religion, ideology, language, empirical sciences, formal science, and cosmology. The problems questioned are (1) how cultural violence is depicted in the language structure of Indonesian ethnic humor and (2) how are the forms of cultural violence in the discourse of Indonesian ethnic humor. Data on ethnic humor were from books, magazines, websites, and social media. All were analyzed using critical discourse analysis. The results show that the potential for cultural violence in ethnic humor can be traced by its content and context. The content relates to the expressed substance and language, while context is under users' social and historical formation. Ethnic humor in Indonesia targets ethnic minorities such as Chinese and Madurese. When it comes to racist circumstances, ethnic humor can normalize structural discrimination and violence against the referred ethnicities. Cultural violence includes stigmatization, normalization of discriminatory policies, and social exclusion. This finding suggests that nonserious discourse, such as humor, has a severe social impact, therefore it must be used wisely.

#### KATA KUNCI

dialog  
 antar-etnis;  
 kultur  
 kekerasan;  
 humor etnis

#### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan bahwa humor etnis Indonesia menunjukkan kekerasan budaya pada kelompok sasaran, selain itu, untuk membangun dialog antar-etnis. Kekerasan budaya didefinisikan sebagai seluruh aspek budaya yang dapat digunakan untuk melegitimasi kekerasan, baik langsung maupun struktural. Bentuk kekerasan budaya dapat mencakup agama, ideologi, bahasa, ilmu pengetahuan empiris, ilmu pengetahuan formal, dan kosmologi. Pertanyaan yang diajukan adalah (1) bagaimana kekerasan budaya digambarkan dalam struktur bahasa humor etnis Indonesia dan (2) bagaimana bentuk kekerasan budaya dalam wacana humor etnis Indonesia. Data tentang humor etnis berasal dari buku, majalah, situs web, dan media sosial. Semua dianalisis menggunakan analisis wacana kritis. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa potensi kekerasan budaya dalam humor etnis dapat dilacak melalui konten dan konteksnya. Konten terkait dengan substansi dan bahasa yang diekspresikan, sedangkan konteks berada di bawah pembentukan sosial dan sejarah pengguna. Humor etnis di Indonesia menargetkan minoritas etnis seperti Tionghoa dan Madura. Dalam situasi yang rasial, humor etnis dapat memperkuat diskriminasi struktural dan kekerasan terhadap etnis yang disebutkan. Kekerasan budaya mencakup penstigmaan, normalisasi kebijakan diskriminatif, dan eksklusi sosial. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa wacana yang tidak serius, seperti humor, memiliki dampak sosial yang serius, oleh karena itu harus digunakan dengan bijak.

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## **Introduction**

Humor discourse has been widely used in several circumstances, such as education, trade, health, and politics. In addition to possessing many advantages, humor turns out to have negative impacts when it comes to establishing and promoting prejudice against the target groups. At some points, certain humor even can loosen tolerance for discriminatory behavior toward the groups (Borgella et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2019). Racist and sexist messages are relatively easy to spread through humor since their nature triggers a less-critical response from their hearers.

Among many, one type of potentially-harmful humor is ethnic humor. This humor is based on scripts using certain ethnicities' language, traits, and habits (M. L. Apte, 1985; Raskin, 1985). It departs from the fact that the target ethnicities are often negatively represented. Representation of ethnic traits, habits, and beliefs is a risky form of representation. According to Hall (1997), representation does not merely display reality but shows the intention to construct a new one.

Ethnic stereotypes applied in humor can create unfair social practices. For the target group, demeaning ethnic humor can trigger identity threats (Ford et al., 2020), leading to social exclusion feelings. On the other hand, for the out-groups, exposure to discrediting ethnic humor can generate and reinforce ethnic prejudice. Prejudice and exclusion can be breeding grounds for direct and structural violence (Gómez, 2013). Allport (1954) identified five stages of violence triggered by intolerance: anti-locution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attacks, and extermination.

In societies that openly declare themselves color-blind, humor acts as one of the discourses to transmit ethnic hatred (Pérez, 2022) since it is relatively safe to use. The humor framework facilitates racist messages to become more acceptable, specifically regarding prejudice and dehumanization. Dehumanization is employed to justify inhumane actions against certain groups. Portraying individuals or other groups as less than human leads to discrimination, violence, and in extreme cases, genocide (Sakki & Castrén, 2022).

Previous studies demonstrate that ethnic humor negatively impacts psychological, social, and political matters. Studies with the socio-psychological approach show that discriminative assumptions in ethnic humor reinforce and perpetuate ethnic prejudice (Fave & Mannell, 1976; Ford, Richardson, et al., 2015; Ford & Ferguson, 2004; Mendi-buro-Seguel & Ford, 2019). This condition aligns the target group socially and attacks their identities (Ford et al., 2020; McGhee & Duffey, 1983; Miranda, 2017; Vucetic, 2004).

Meanwhile, the social approach demonstrates that the use of racist humor is not limited to the fringes of society but is currently also practiced and disseminated widely in various contexts and institutions (Pérez, 2016; 2017). Humor operates as a cultural instrument in the racialization, dehumanization, and criminalization of people of color, particularly Black individuals, by reinforcing and popularizing ideas of racial superiority and inferiority. Racist ethnic humor is more dangerous as it is equipped with rhetorical tools such as the statement "It's just a joke" to conceal its ideological intentions. The claim that racist humor is harmless strengthens the ideology that racism is no longer a severe social issue (Weaver, 2011).

Racist ethnic humor might use animalistic metaphors, offensive language, and conspiratorial beliefs to justify dehumanizing individuals to certain ethnicities (Sakki & Castrén, 2022). This operation way represents certain ethnicities as dangerous monsters. Humor can increase the acceptance of prejudice against such vulnerable groups, specifically minorities (Mendiburo-Seguel & Ford, 2019). Although it is not an absolute deal, the contribution of ethnic humor in building ethnic prejudice cannot be ignored.

Previous studies done by scholars (Ford, Richardson, et al., 2015; Ford, Woodzicka, et al., 2015; Gibson, 2019; Martin, 2014; Martineau, 1972; Mendiburo-Seguel & Ford, 2019; Pérez, 2016) exemplify that humor delivers psychological and social impacts. These studies indicate that, as one of the discourse genres, humor possesses textual specificities that influence the perception and behavior of individuals exposed to it. However, they have limitations as they employ a social psychology approach to demonstrate the psychological and social impacts of humor, particularly at the individual level. Furthermore, all do not elucidate the broader implications of ethnic humor usage as a form of cultural violence.

This study takes a different perspective (perhaps a broader one) by explaining that ethnic humor can also be a form of cultural violence. In a concept proposed by Galtung (1990), cultural violence is defined as the entire cultural aspect that can be used to legitimize violence, whether direct or structural. Cultural violence does not kill or physically harm like direct or structural violence but legitimizes one or both forms of violence. Galtung sees a relationship between cultural, natural, and structural violence. They form a violent triangle and can transmit to one another.

Ethnic humor's potential to become cultural violence is significant since it is an ideological discourse and a social and cultural practice. Ethnic humor can construct knowledge, transmit values, and shape attitudes and behaviors, possibly giving rise to violence (Ford et al., 2020). The subject of this research is ethnic humor in Indonesia, especially humor about the two minority ethnic groups, namely Chinese and Madurese. Even though humor and ethnicity are still debated over time, scholars on humor relatively agree to define ethnic humor as a type that puts behavior, appearance, personality, and traits of a group or its member as the source for jokes (M. Apte, 1985). Meanwhile, Raskin (1985) defines ethnic humor as a category built using specific scripts. In Indonesia, ethnic humor is among the most popular humor (Lesmana, 2016).

In the multicultural society of Indonesia, ethnic humor is employed by various parties, manifested in diverse forms, and utilized for various purposes. Majority ethnic groups often use ethnic humor to reinforce their superiority (for example, Javanese ethnic group over the Madurese ethnic group). However, ethnic humor is also frequently expressed by targeted ethnic groups as a means to enhance internal solidarity. Martineau explains that the social formation of humor users will determine the type of social impact it will generate. Ethnic humor in Indonesia is used in daily oral conversations but is also reproduced through books, magazines, and websites, disseminated through social media. In the current multimedia era, ethnic humor has also been transformed into audiovisual forms. This study aims to (1) explain the forms of potential violence in ethnic humor and (2) determine whether violence in the discourse of humor constitutes cultural violence. This study will benefit from understanding more comprehen-

sively the nature and impacts of ethnic humor. Furthermore, it can also be used as a reflection medium in the use of humor among multicultural societies in Indonesia.

### *Ethnic humor*

Ethnic humor operates by using several scripts that have been internalized as part of the knowledge of humor makers and connoisseurs. The most commonly used scripts in ethnic humor are oddly strung possible-impossible and actual-nonactual narratives. The humor is usually done by denouncing or belittling (Raskin, 1985) other groups. Four scripts are most commonly used: the language distortion script, the stupidity script, the stinginess script, and the cunning script (Attardo, 1994, 2001; Attardo & Raskin, 2017).

Language distortion in ethnic humor is done by utilizing sounds, words, or utterances pronounced or used differently from how they are typically used in the language or dialect where the joke is told (Raskin, 1985). Meanwhile, stupidity is usually constructed by juxtaposing the in-group, consisting of the speakers and listeners portrayed as intelligent, rational, and normal, with the target group depicted as foolish, nonsensical, irrational, or overly naive. In Indonesia, the Madurese ethnic group is often targeted in such scripts (Herlianto, 2019, 2020; Lesmana, 2016; Wijana, 2015).

Furthermore, the stinginess script places the target group as stingy while the speaker and listener groups are not. In the Indonesian context, Chinese people are often stereotyped as stingy and greedy *tamak* (Irena & Rusadi, 2019; Setyaningsih, 2013; Suryaningtyas & Setyaningsih, 2020). Humor in this script usually describes a target group member doing something unusual to achieve their goal (Raskin, 1985). This humorous formula helps reinforce or perpetuate certain ethnic stereotypes. Ethnicities often targeted with this script are Jews and Chinese.

Not every ethnic humor is problematic (Cundall, 2012), yet its contribution to producing and reproducing ethnic prejudice and hatred cannot be ignored. Ethnic humor does not strictly state hostility. However, it produces and reproduces bad stereotypes about the target ethnicity. Stereotype itself is one of the triggers for the emergence of prejudice, in addition to realistic and symbolic threats and anxiety between groups (Christian, 2003).

The persuasive nature of ethnic humor, like other types of humor, is related to the textual and cognitive properties that make it relatively acceptable (Lyttle, 2011; Schnurr & Plester, 2016). Its ability to evoke pleasure and the rhetoric of "This is just humor" puts the implicit messages undeniable. Such humor is not always expressed by individuals who harbor hostile motives towards the target ethnic group; sometimes, it is even delivered by members of the target ethnic group themselves. The formation and social context in which such humor is presented will result in various social impacts (Martineau, 1972).

### *Cultural violence*

Galtung (1990) defines cultural violence as "aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence -exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics), that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence". The emphasis on the phrase "aspect of culture" denotes

that not every culture possesses violence—only on some aspects. On the other hand, a cultural product might contain even more than one violence.

Cultural violence has significant implications as it makes direct and structural violence appear justified or, at the very least, not morally wrong (Cassaignard-Viaud, 2021; Kaufhold & Reuter, 2019). Cultural violence allows for the legitimization of direct and structural violence, making it socially acceptable. It operates by shifting moral judgments from "prohibited" to "permissible," and even to "necessary" or "obligatory." Another way is by obscuring facts to make them less visible or apparent (Galtung, 1990; Kaufhold & Reuter, 2019).

Galtung (1990) identified four basic human needs as the basis for developing a typology of direct and structural violence. The four needs are survival needs, well-being needs, identity needs, and freedom needs. All conditions that allow the violation of the four need to be considered as violence.

Violence variance does give birth to several cultural violence. The six types proposed by Galtung are religion, ideology, language, empirical sciences, formal science, and cosmology.

Religion can be a form of cultural violence through "chosen" and "unchosen" narratives (Galtung, 1990; Springs, 2015; Vuong et al., 2020). The "chosen" are portrayed as having qualities that align with or are desired by God, while the "unchosen" are depicted as having qualities similar to that of the devil. Similarly, ideologies shape beliefs that create a distinction between the identified Self and the identified Other. A steep gradient is then constructed to separate the two.

Language becomes cultural violence because it can make something hidden and others visible (Bourdieu, 2020; Galtung, 1990). There are more subtle aspects of language where violence is less obvious or more implicit. Empirical sciences, for example, neo-classical economics, also become cultural violence by justifying themselves and blaming those outside themselves. Even mathematical thinking can become cultural violence because it contains binary assumptions, for instance, valid and invalid (Abtahi & Wagner, 2016).

Furthermore, cosmology can be cultural violence because it is designed to collect basic assumptions about reality. It works at the collective unconscious level, which is difficult to reveal. Cultural violence is massively produced at this point (Galtung, 1990).

## **Method**

### *Approach*

This study applied the critical discourse analysis (CDA) method to achieve the research objectives. CDA was employed to elucidate the relationship between the micro-structures of language and the broader social context. It can reveal that language expression that may appear normal and customary harbor ideological intentions contributing to social injustice.

### *Data*

In this study, primary data were 156 ethnic humor discourses on two minorities in Indonesia, namely Chinese (64 senses of humor) and Madurese (92 senses of humor).

All data were taken from books, magazines, websites, and social media. In more detail, these sources of humor include:

Table 1. List of humor sources

| No. | Types of Source | Name of Source   | Source   |
|-----|-----------------|--|--|
| 1   | Book            | <i>Humor China Lintas Generasi</i> (Cross Generational Chinese Humor)              | Dada. (2006). <i>Humor Cina lintas generasi</i> . Jakarta: Kombat Publishers   |
| 2   | Magazine        | <i>Humor Magazine</i>  | 1. Humor from 22 June 1996 edition<br>2. Humor from 13-26 November 1991 edition<br>3. Humor from 9-22 December 1995 edition  |
| 3   | Website         | <i>Ketawa.com</i><br><i>Detiklife.com</i><br>NU Online                             | <a href="https://www.ketawa.com/">https://www.ketawa.com/</a><br><a href="https://detiklife.com/tag/cerita-humor-cina/">https://detiklife.com/tag/cerita-humor-cina/</a><br><a href="https://www.nu.or.id/humor">https://www.nu.or.id/humor</a>  |
| 4   | YouTube         | SUCI <i>Kompas TV</i>  | <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IDVvsLSzqo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IDVvsLSzqo</a><br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enlpcvT7mo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enlpcvT7mo</a><br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taLEtudezqc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taLEtudezqc</a><br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQgJbviSFI0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQgJbviSFI0</a> |
|     | Facebook        | <i>Humor Madura</i><br>Facebook Group “Majalah Humor”<br><i>Pusat Humor Madura</i> | <a href="https://web.facebook.com/groups/473730515976021">https://web.facebook.com/groups/473730515976021</a><br><a href="https://web.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100066378175052">https://web.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100066378175052</a>   |
|     | Instagram       | <i>Madura Receh</i>  | <a href="https://www.instagram.com/madura.receh/?hl=en">https://www.instagram.com/madura.receh/?hl=en</a>  |
|     | Tiktok          | Steven Wongso  | <a href="https://www.tiktok.com/@stevenwongso?lang=en">https://www.tiktok.com/@stevenwongso?lang=en</a>  |

### *Analysis technique*

This study used critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the analytical technique. According to Baxter (2010), CDA examines the use of language units with political and ideological interests behind them. Compared to other study approaches, CDA is unique since it departs from concrete problems in society. It also has apparent alignments by placing discourse as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 2001; van Dijk, 1993).

### *Analysis stages*

Analysis was done in three stages- description, interpretation, and explanation—as Fairclough (2001) stated. At the description stage, the researchers focused on examining the formal aspects of humor discourse, which were indicated to have the potential to become violent. Formal elements include vocabulary, grammar, and discourse structure.

At the interpretation stage, the researchers examined how ethnic humor is consumed and generates interpretations that contain violence. The interpretation stage is necessary because the relationship between text and social structure is indirectly mediated by common-sense assumptions that give textual features their meanings, such as experiential, relational, and expressive meanings.

At last, the explanatory stage was applied to explain how the interpretation of discourse relates to the social and historical aspects of Indonesia's multicultural society. This stage is necessary because the value of a text becomes evident only when it is connected to social, historical, and institutional contexts. Here, the researchers explain how the cumulative impact of using ethnic humor affects the social condition, either by maintaining or transforming it.

## Results

This section consists of three parts: description, interpretation, and explanation. The description part presents forms and structures of ethnic humor texts. The interpretation part provides the process of text interpretation. Meanwhile, the explanation text elaborates on the use of ethnic humor in the social context of Indonesia.

### *Cultural violence in text: Description*

Ethnic humor is created with a script which puts two opposite standing positions in specific meanings. The most commonly used scripts in ethnic humor are oddly strung possible-impossible and actual-nonactual narratives (Raskin, 1985). Discourse on ethnic humor is written in several scripts that make the target ethnic group face negative stereotypes. The Chinese ethnic group, for instance, is stigmatized as a stingy, greedy, atheist, and not very nationalist. Meanwhile, the Madurese ethnic group is represented stereotypically as stupid, ignorant, and uneducated. These stereotypes can be seen in the following examples of humor.

#### Humor 1. Economical

The notion that Chinese people are stingy might have some truth to it. How can you not be thrifty, right? Being so economical, you can simply save money.

#### Humor 2. Rebuking Habibi

A group of Madurese boarded a plane manufactured by Habibi CN 235, which relies on a propeller. As they settled in, one of the Madurese passengers started feeling warm inside the plane. He leaned over and whispered to the person next to him.

Madurese: Habibi doesn't get it when it comes to airplanes.

Passenger: Why do you say that, sir?

Madurese: Because people who feel hot inside get blown outside! (while pointing at the airplane's propeller on the wing).

In humor 1 above, stereotypes about the thrifty characteristics of the Chinese ethnic group are employed. This is linked to the physical feature of the Chinese, specifically the narrow eyes. The actual traits of frugality and narrow eyes are unrelated, but they are correlated through a form of comparison that makes them seem interconnected. As for Humor 2, it portrays the Madurese ethnic group as ignorant, suggesting that they lack awareness about the function of propellers located outside an airplane. The individual in the humor equates these propellers with a fan, mistakenly believing that their purpose is to cool the room temperature.

### *Wording*

Negative stereotypes of the Chinese ethnic group as being stingy, less religious, and less nationalistic are depicted in the text through wording and rewording. Based on data from 64 humor discourses, several words were semantically clustered in the stingy or greedy category. These words include “*pelit*” or “stingy” (frequency: 5), “*duit*” or “money” (5 words), “*irit*” or “skimpy” (4), “*kikir*” or “miserly” (1 word), “*laba*” or “profit” (2 words), “*return*” or “untung” (5 words), “*amplop*” or “envelop” (1 word), “*uang*” or “cash” (frequency: 18), and “*harta*” or “properties” (frequency: 4). The less religious nature is depicted through characters who prioritize wealth over religious matters. Additionally, the less nationalistic nature is defined through the lack of understanding of Chinese characters of national symbols.

Distinctive to the Chinese, Madurese is stereotyped as a stupid, ignorant, and rude ethnic. Such stereotypes are built using semantically word choices in the stupidity and rudeness cluster. Those words are *stupid*, *killing battle*, *hit by sickles*, and so on.

### *Sentence*

The sentence is an essential component in representing certain ethics in humor. A sentence might portray how the target group thinks, behaves, and acts abnormally in various circumstances. The representation of the Chinese ethnicity as a stingy and greedy ethnic group is mainly shown through negation. The negation contrasts the financial condition of those who are well off but are reluctant to spend their wealth and even wish to continue to obtain more. The critical role of sentences can be observed in some humor below.

#### Humor 3. Business Instinct

European consumers tend to prioritize the quality of a car over its model when making a purchase decision. In contrast, the Japanese favor the latest car models to enhance their prestige.

However, the Chinese have a different approach. They opt for robust and stylish cars but also focus on ensuring that the chosen vehicle can be resold at a higher price than its initial purchase.

In a humor entitled "Business Instinct", there is a sentence "They opt for robust and stylish cars but also focus on ensuring that the chosen vehicle can be resold at a higher price than its initial purchase". This sentence depicts the attitude of a Chinese individual who does not want to incur losses. On the one hand, they want to acquire a good-quality item, but on the other hand, they still want to profit from it.

#### Humor 4. Extravagance

The only money wastage that Chinese people indulge in is when they burn hie-o (traditional Chinese incense) to worship their ancestors, and it doesn't bring any tangible benefits. Yet, they still consider it somewhat profitable because of the pleasant fragrance it produces.

In a humor entitled "Extravagance", there is a contradiction in the sentence ", Yet, they still consider it somewhat profitable because of the pleasant fragrance it produces". The contradiction reflects the attitude of the Chinese ethnic group who still want to gain profit from religious activities that should be done sincerely.

#### Humor 5. Borrowing Money

"Chow, could you lend me a million yuan."

"Unfortunately, I don't have that, you know?"

"In that case, how about a hundred thousand."

"I do have that much, but I don't want to lend it, you know?"

Then, in a humor entitled "Borrowing Money", there is a contradiction in the sentence ", I do have that much, but I don't want to lend it, you know". The sentence depicts how stingy Chinese people are by demonstrating their unwillingness to help others even though they have enough money.

Sentence structure also plays a significant role in portraying the Madurese ethnic group as unintelligent. This stereotype is achieved by contrasting Madurese individuals and elements considered sophisticated, such as aeroplanes, astronomy, and cities. When faced with complex and advanced elements, the Madurese ethnicity is depicted as stuttering and unable to comprehend them.



**Humor 6: Madurese on a Plane**

Once upon a time, Kamiluddin, a middle-aged man from Sumenep, wanted to visit his brother in Jakarta. He chose to fly to get there quickly, as he had never tried this mode of transportation before. It was Kamiluddin's first time flying, and he prepared everything, especially the ticket. He was a bit rushed as he had to check in 30 minutes instead of the usual 60 minutes before the flight.

In a hurry, he finally managed to board the plane. Without paying attention to the seat number on his boarding pass, Kamiluddin immediately sat in the front, although his seat was in the back. While relaxing after arranging his bag in the overhead compartment, Kamiluddin was suddenly approached by a young woman.

"Excuse me, sir, but that seat you're sitting in is mine," said the woman.

"Hey miss, don't be random; this seat belongs to the airline. Your seat is at home," replied Kamiluddin with his distinctive Madurese accent.

Seeing the commotion, a flight attendant approached Kamiluddin and the woman. The flight attendant checked their tickets and said, "I'm sorry, sir, this is the lady's seat. Your seat is in the back."

"Hey miss, who are you? My seat is at home, not at the back. These airplane seats are for all passengers," Kamiluddin insisted.

The commotion caught the attention of all passengers, including Fauzan, a man from Surabaya who understood the Madurese character. "Excuse me, sir, where are you headed?" asked Fauzan.

"I'm going to Jakarta," replied Kamiluddin coldly.

"Your seat is not for passengers heading to Jakarta; you might get lost. For Jakarta, the seats are at the back," explained Fauzan.

Without further ado, Kamiluddin eventually moved to the back, guided by the flight attendant to the correct seat number.

**Humor 7: Astronomer and Madurese Islamic Student**

During a presentation on science, a knowledgeable astronomer elaborately explained the conditions of outer space to Islamic students in Madura, East Java. The astronomer clarified that any material would burn if it landed on the sun. He went into great detail, emphasizing that, let alone landing, a spacecraft would start melting just from getting a few million kilometres close due to the heat. "That's an easy problem to solve, Sir," the student retorted. The astronomer was surprised, "Easy? How so?" "If you're worried about the spacecraft melting from the heat, just depart after Maghrib (evening prayer), it's already cool by then," joked the student.

In humor entitled "Rebuking Habibi" (Humor 2) and "Madurese on a Plane" (Humor 6), the Madurese ethnic group is contrasted with the aero plane. In "Rebuking Habibi," there is a sentence stating, "A group of Madurese boarded a plane manufactured by Habibi CN 235, which relies on a propeller". Meanwhile, in "Madurese on a Plane", there is a sentence saying, "In a hurry, he finally managed to board the plane". In a humor entitled "Astronomer and Madurese Islamic Students" (Humor 7), the Madurese ethnic group is again contrasted with an astronomer in a sentence, "a knowledgeable astronomer elaborately explained the conditions of outer space to Islamic students in Madura".

**Structure**

In Indonesia, ethnic humor is written using specific script oppositions. Script oppositions are constructed by placing some aspects in apparent contradiction with others. Data show that the targeted ethnic group is often positioned as the punchline. In the texts, they are placed schematically, indicating that their attitudes and behaviours are portrayed as abnormal compared to other ethnic groups depicted as normal.

Stinginess script used in most humor on Chinese ethnicity is organized systematically with the following scheme:

X (a member of the targeted ethnic group) behaves abnormally in maintaining his wealth → Other people, apart from X, do not behave like X in response to the same situation → The situation referred to is when someone has to spend or expend their wealth → The reason why X refuses to spend their money is their desire to hold onto it → The economic outcome obtained is not commensurate with their effort to preserve money → X is stingy.

Meanwhile, the stupidity script used in most humor on Madurese ethnicity is organized systematically with the following scheme:

X (a member of the targeted ethnic group) is portrayed as foolish or engaging in foolish actions committed by Y → It is deemed impossible for anyone (except X) to be or act like Y → Anyone (except X) would never become or engage in Y because they all know Z → Z represents an undeniable truth → Only exceptionally foolish individual would not know Z → Therefore, X is totally foolish.

The preceding two scripts demonstrate the distinctive portrayal between the targeted ethnic group and others. Chinese people are depicted as abnormal due to their stinginess—at the time, other ethnicities were expected since they would like to give. Meanwhile, Madurese people are not normal due to their stupidity and naiveness—while others are just completely the opposite way with their intelligence.

#### *Violence in interpretation*

Analysis of data and the reporting of the results of those analyses are fundamental aspects of the conduct of research. Accurate, unbiased, complete, and insightful reporting of the analytic treatment of data (be it quantitative or qualitative) must be a component of all research reports. Researchers in the field of psychology use numerous approaches to the analysis of data, and no one approach is uniformly preferred as long as the method is appropriate to the research questions being asked and the nature of the data collected. The methods used must support their analytic burdens, including robustness to violations of the assumptions that underlie them, and they must provide clear, unequivocal insights into the data.

In the perspective of critical discourse analysis (CDA), the formal structure of language, as explained above, is seen to have a relationship with its social context. However, this relationship is not direct but mediated by social cognition (sociocognition). The formal structure of language only holds social significance in influencing social practices if it controls specific processes of interpretation. Interpreting texts involves cognitive elements such as memory, presuppositions, and socially produced and distributed assumptions. The interpretation of humor also relies on intertextuality, which refers to referencing or connecting with other texts in creating meaning.

The role of cognitive elements is crucial because ethnic humor discourse often relies on specific knowledge, assumptions, and stereotypes about the targeted ethnicity. The ambiguity that creates a humorous sensation is not solely generated through the text but also by evoking shared memories, knowledge, and assumptions. The types of memories, knowledge, and assumptions prompted to create the humorous sensation are ideologically selective choices.

An online humor entitled "Winning the Olympics" below uses collective knowledge in its interpretation process.

Humor 8. Winning the Olympics

For Chinese people, the Olympics are so easy that they can win gold with their eyes closed".

The humor utilizes the ambiguous phrase "with their eyes closed". Literally, closing one's eyes refers to the act of intentionally shutting one's eyelids because the task at hand is just effortless. However, the phrase becomes ambiguous as its interpretation also evokes the stereotype of Chinese ethnicity with narrow eyes, making it appear as if their eyes are closed.

Other humor narratives that represent Chinese ethnicity for its stinginess also apply certain presumptions and assumptions in their interpretation. The phenomena can be observed in humor entitled "Chinese Selling Martabak" as follows:

Humor 9. Chinese Selling Martabak

"Dude, martabak would be really good for tonight, wouldn't it?" said someone. His friend replied, "Agree, but don't buy it here. Martabak at X is better, so delicious—sold by Chinese."

"What? Why it must be? Does the cooking process use Tai Chi that it will be very delicious? No need to mention that it's made by Chinese."

"In fact, it would be irritating because Chinese are bloody stingy! They will count the sprinkle one by one. Definitely will take a very long time, and don't forget that they will use fake cheese!"

Martabak is a traditional food in Indonesia—similar to pancakes. In the humor above, the sentence "They will count the sprinkle one by one" serves as a punchline. Counting sprinkles when making martabak is an unusual activity that does not make sense to anyone. However, the setup done by a Chinese person makes the activity plausible. This occurs because the text is interpreted using collective memory that Chinese people are considered stingy. Thus, the humor affirms the stereotype of Chinese people being stingy and reinforces it.

The humor entitled "Skimpy" is also organized by exploiting collective memory or stereotypes of Chinese ethnicity for their stinginess.

Humor 10. Skimpy

As you can see, I am Chinese, but she is not. So my dad once disagreed with my decision because my mom wanted her daughter-in-law a Chinese too.

But I try my best to make sure. I said, "Mom, she is so careful, faithful, and most importantly a Sundanese. Yupsy, she is even fine eating raw leaves... One hundred percent economical!"

In the preceding text, the sentence "she is even fine eating raw leaves" activates the memory that some Sundanese people enjoy eating raw leafy vegetables. However, this memory is different from the information in the humor script about stinginess. The humor forms a stingy script by evoking the stingy nature of Chinese people. Schematically, it is constructed to depict Chinese people as being so stingy that even when choosing a son or daughter-in-law, they prefer someone who is skimpy—even willing to eat raw leaves.

Meanwhile, the stupidity script in humor about the Madurese ethnicity also utilizes similar cognitive elements. The use of collective memory is present, for instance, in the following humor entitled "The Plane Crash":

## Humor 11. The Plane Crash

On the Jakarta-Surabaya flight, the pilot reminded the passengers to wear seat belts because the plane would crash. Hearing this information, one of the passengers from Madura rushed to meet the pilot.

Madurese : Sir, where will the plane crash?

Pilot : Why?

Madurese : If the iron plane crashes later, it can be sold in kilograms.

In the preceding humor, the phrase "it can be sold it by kilograms" serves as the punchline. This text only correlates with the previous section if the reader activates their knowledge about the stereotype of some Madurese people working as scrap metal collectors.

The following humor, "Biodata", also applies the same stereotype to Madurese.

## Humor 12. Biodata

A Madurese applied for a job in a foreign company. Before entering the interview session, he was asked to fill out a biodata sheet. He began to fill it.

Name : Buruddin

Age : 35

Address : Pasongsongan, Sumenep

Sex : .....?

Up to the fourth column, Madurese was shocked. He was mumbling the question was about sex. Feeling that he had never had one, he immediately filled it with "never."

The stupidity script above depicts an individual from Madura who cannot speak English well, thus unable to distinguish between "sex" as gender and "sex" as a sexual activity. The punchline in the humor only makes sense if it departs from the assumption that Madurese people are not educated, including in English. Therefore, the humor above reinforces the stereotype that people from Madura are foolish.

*Cultural violence in ethnic humor: Explanation*

## (1) Multiethnicity in Indonesia: Social context

Report any other analyses performed, including subgroup analyses and adjusted analyses, indicating those that were pre-specified and those that were exploratory (though not necessarily in the level of detail of primary analyses). Consider putting the detailed results of these analyses on the supplemental online archive. Discuss the implications, if any, of the ancillary analyses for statistical error rates.

We so far have seen that ethnic humor texts are organized with various cognitive elements. Humor discourse is meaningful due to collective memories, knowledge, and assumptions—instead of literal language expressions. By so, it can be concluded that humor discourse can activate and reinforce discriminative ideas in the target groups. Thus, this part will further elaborate on the impacts of those discriminatory and racist ideas on the target groups based on social and historical context in Indonesia.

Indonesia is a country inhabited by diverse ethnic groups. Statistics Indonesia estimates that there are 700 ethnic groups here. The actual number is likely to be even higher as these ethnic groups also have sub-ethnicities within. In practice, they interact and socialize in various fields such as trade, social activities, politics, education, and other areas. Ethnic diaspora has too resulted in certain ethnic groups not only residing in specific regions but also dispersed across various locations. The ease of transportation and communication has facilitated broader interethnic interactions.

This ethnic diversity was framed in “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” (Unity in Diversity) by the founding fathers. Indonesian people might come from various religious, ethnic, and social backgrounds, but they are one. This spirit is expected to encourage people to respect one another, live in harmony, and work together under the name of the Republic of Indonesia.

However, history shows Indonesia has experienced social upheaval through violence against specific ethnic groups. During these violent incidents, minority ethnic groups have been the most vulnerable and often become victims. For example, during the May 1998 riots, it was reported that thousands of people of Chinese descent experienced physical violence, including looting, rape, and even murder. Similarly, in the Sampit incident in 2001, thousands of Madurese people became victims of violence in inter-ethnic clashes. There have been various other forms of ethnic violence that have targeted and victimized minorities.

These events reflect unfortunate chapters in Indonesia's history, highlighting the need to address social issues, promote understanding, and protect the rights of all individuals regardless of their ethnic background. In Indonesian society, efforts continue to foster tolerance, harmony, and peace among different ethnic groups, ensuring a more inclusive and equitable society for all citizens.

Discrimination and violence against ethnic minorities in Indonesia result from various factors. According to Judge & Nel (2017), hatred is influenced by societal structures, both in terms of social organization and underlying knowledge structures. Hatred emerges from interactions between individuals or social groups (Fischer et al., 2018). In this context, the perpetuation of hatred towards ethnic minorities occurs through different forms of discourse. Biased news discourse (Thaniago & Jovanović, 2017) and reproducing prejudice and hatred towards the Chinese ethnic group are also facilitated by humor, including stand-up comedy (Aini et al., 2013; Irena & Rusadi, 2019). Such humor can be found in oral, written, visual, and audiovisual media.

Ethnic humor serves as a form of discourse that has the potential to produce and reproduce racist knowledge. As mentioned earlier, ethnic humor in Indonesia is not merely for entertainment purposes. Ethnic humor portrays the Chinese and Madurese ethnic groups in a negative light. The Chinese are depicted as stingy, while the Madurese are shown as foolish. These representations develop into stigmas as they are continuously produced and reproduced. Ethnic humor can activate and reinforce racist knowledge against these two minority ethnic groups.

The use of attributions such as “*Orang Cina*” (Chinese people) and “*orang Madura*” (Madurese people) to refer to characters in humor that fundamentally generalizes several stereotypes contribute to the production of racist knowledge. The use of these generic names implies that the Chinese and Madurese ethnic groups generally possess the characteristics depicted in the humor without exception.

## (2) Ethnic prejudice: Psychological context

Ethnic prejudice is an essential psychological element in social practice that can influence individuals' actions on specific subjects (Allport, 1954). Prejudice and discrimination can be connected and establish a negative cycle reinforcing each other. Prejudice

itself consists of cognitive and psychological components that can affect people's behavior.

In Indonesia, ethnic prejudice is an undeniable reality. Prejudice can arise and develop due to individual experiences but can also be socially constructed. Moreover, there are mechanisms of intergenerational transmission that allow prejudices from the past to persist until today. The preservation of negative sentiments towards the Chinese ethnic group, for instance, is so complex. It involves social, economic, political, and knowledge structures that are not easily simplified (Thaniago & Jovanović, 2017).

Prejudice against the Chinese ethnic group was revealed in a survey conducted by Setijadi (2017). The survey found that 60% of the respondents, who identified themselves as "indigenous", held the prejudice that the Chinese ethnic group had enjoyed privileges in the economic field, making them more likely to be wealthier than "indigenous" citizens. Such prejudice fosters hatred by fueling a sense of division between the Chinese ethnic group and the others. In the political realm, there is also a prevailing prejudice among "native" individuals that Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent are less nationalistic due to their divided loyalty to their ancestral country, the People's Republic of China. Ethnic prejudice contributes to perpetuating hatred towards the Chinese ethnic group.

Prejudice against the Chinese ethnic group can be traced back to the colonial era under Dutch rule. The native prejudice is primarily attributed to economic jealousy resulting from the discriminatory policies of the Dutch East Indies government, which tended to favor the Chinese and disadvantage the indigenous population. The Chinese community held a solid economic position, while the colonial economic and political policies weakened the native population. Economic competition between the Chinese and the native population catalyzed anti-Chinese sentiment in Indonesia (Alfirdaus et al., 2016; Munhtolib, 2008). The Chinese, along with the Arab and Indian communities, relatively benefited from the discriminatory economic policies of the Dutch colonial government, which disadvantaged the native population (Danandjaja, 2003).

The stereotype of Chinese ethnicity as a stingy group cannot be separated from the prejudice that emerges and undergoes a metamorphosis. The stingy stereotype is also associated with other negative stereotypes such as greed, lack of nationalism, and lack of religiosity. These stereotypes have developed into stigmas that are used to normalize physical violence and structural violence against them. The direct violence against the Chinese ethnic group in May 1998 cannot be detached from the prejudice that the ethnic group is partly responsible for the poor economic conditions of the native population. Furthermore, discriminatory regulations such as land ownership restrictions in Yogyakarta are related to the stigma that the Chinese dominated land ownership during the Dutch colonial era (Maulana, 2021).

Prejudice against the Madurese ethnicity also cannot be separated from the historical context of interethnic interactions in Indonesia. Besides the stereotype of being "udik" (backwards), the Madurese ethnicity is associated with several other stereotypes. One portrayal is that Madurese people are depicted as spooky, lacking manners, rough, aggressive, and prone to violence (Murdianto, 2018). According to (Hidayat & Suryandari, 2022), Madurese people also face prejudice as a group characterized by

stubbornness, rigidity, temperamental behavior, vengefulness, difficulty in being controlled, lack of respect for others, quick to anger, loud-spoken, lack of manners, lack of education, and prone to violence. These prejudices correlate with discriminatory behaviors experienced by the Madurese ethnicity, such as rejection of their presence in Kotawaringin and Sambas (Liputan6.com, 2001) and Cempaka, South Kalimantan (Rahman, 2019).

### *Forms of cultural violence*

It is difficult to prove that humor directly impacts physical and structural violence on Chinese and Madurese ethnicities. This is due to humor's position as textual reality—while violence is a physical and social reality. However, by putting humor discourse as a discursive practice, we can observe the correlation between the ethnic stereotype in humor, prejudice against the target ethnic groups, and forms of discrimination against them. The correlation between those three variables can be seen below.

Table 2. Relationship between stereotypes, ethnic prejudice, and experienced violence among Chinese and Madurese ethnic groups.

| Ethnic Minorities | Stereotypes in Humor    | Ethnic Prejudice   | Forms of Cultural Violence  |
|-------------------|-------------------------|--|---|
| Chinese           | Stingy, greedy, cunning | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Get special privileges in the economic field so that they have the opportunity to be more prosperous.</li> <li>2. Less nationalist.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Looting of assets during the May 1998 riots.</li> <li>2. Prohibition of owning land.</li> </ol> |
| Madurese          | Stupid, naive, rude     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Need to learn manners.</li> <li>2. I love to steal.</li> <li>3. Rude.</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Physical violence.</li> <li>2. Refusal of their arrival in West Kalimantan.</li> </ol>          |

The table above demonstrates the alignment between negative representations of the Chinese and Madurese ethnicities in humor, the stigma attached to them, and the discriminatory actions they face. This alignment highlights the significance of ethnic humor and its role in perpetuating and maintaining stigma towards these two ethnic groups. As a form of discourse, humor is a discursive practice that influences knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors towards these ethnic groups. Humor plays a role in three levels of cultural violence: stereotyping, stigmatization, and discrimination.

Stereotyping is constructing beliefs about social subjects based on specific social identities. The outcome of the stereotyping process is the mistaken belief that all individuals with the same identity possess the same characteristics. In this context, stereotyping gives rise to the belief that traits such as being stingy, irreligious, and lacking in nationalism are inherent in all individuals of Chinese ethnicity. Similarly, the belief that being foolish and rude is synonymous with the Madurese ethnic group is also a result of stereotyping.

Stereotyping might rise along with or develop into stigmatization, namely the attitude of declaring rejection and exclusion of the target ethnic group. Stigmatization is more concrete because it is commonly expressed openly.

Stereotypes and stigmas ultimately serve as tools to normalize discrimination against targeted groups. Discrimination occurs because the perpetrators believe that the targeted individuals possess different characteristics and social positions from their own, thus necessitating differential treatment. Discrimination can take the form of individual actions or can be institutionalized through regulations that are perceived as legitimate.

## Conclusions

The data shows that humor about ethnic Chinese and Madurese is one of the most productive humors circulating in society. Humor about the two ethnic groups tends to present in a negative light. The Chinese ethnicity is represented as stingy, not religious, and not very nationalist. The Madurese ethnicity is represented as stupid, stealing, and rude. These negative representations can be traced through the formal language used in humor, including words, sentences, and discourse structures. Negative representations in humor reinforce negative stereotypes against these two ethnic groups. Meanwhile, stereotypes develop into prejudices that are used to normalize discriminatory actions against this ethnic group. Its function as a normalizing tool makes humor a form of cultural violence against the ethnic minorities it targets.

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