MBAK PIA’S COMICS: REPRESENTATION OF STATISTICS INDONESIA ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE THROUGH VISUAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: Mbak Pia’s comic is a comic strip aired in Varia Statistik magazine, an internal magazine that published monthly within the Statistics Indonesia (BPS). Since it was first aired in 2012, Mbak Pia’s comic has now reached its 117th series. Mbak Pia’s comic depicts the world of daily work of BPS employees packaged in a funny and entertaining story. But on the other hand, this comic also conveys an important message in the form of internalizing core values in the BPS organization: professional, integrity, and trustworthy. The purpose of this study was to analyze the message conveyed in the Mbak Pia’s comic. The method used is an interpretive method with a qualitative approach. While the analysis used is the semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes. The results of this study show that Mbak Pia’s comics not only tell about the world of daily work of BPS employees and internalization of core values in the BPS organization, but are also loaded with criticism of work culture that is not in accordance with the core values of the BPS organization. Some of the things that are criticized in the comic story are those related to planning, employee performance, and employee competence. For this reason, BPS needs to emphasize a strong commitment to all its employees in upholding the core values of the BPS organization.

Keywords: comics; culture; organization; visual communication.

Introduction

The Statistics Indonesia (BPS) is one of the government agencies in Indonesia responsible for implementing basic statistical activities through censuses and surveys. This is based on Law Number 16 of 1997 concerning Statistics which regulates statistical activities in Indonesia.

In the BPS Strategic Plan document for 2015-2019, it is stated that the vision of BPS is “Trusted provider of statistical data for all”. The vision is outlined in

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three missions of BPS, namely: (1) providing quality statistical data through integrated statistical activities, national and international standards; (2) strengthening the sustainable National Statistics System (SSN) through guidance and coordination in the field of statistics; and (3) building professional, integrity, and trustworthy statistical personnel for the advancement of statistics (Statistics Indonesia, 2015).

In carrying out its vision and mission, BPS applies core values that are used as guidelines by BPS employees throughout Indonesia. These core values are Professional, Integrity, and Trustworthy. Professional values include Effective, Efficient, Systemic, Competent, and Innovative. Integrity values include Dedication, Consistent, Accountable, Disciplined, and Openness. While the value of Trustworthy includes Honest, Sincere, Fair, and Trust (Santika, 2020). These core values are expected to become work behavior and culture within the BPS organization.

However, the implementation of the core values of the BPS organization is not an easy thing. This is due to the large number of Human Resources (HR) in BPS that spread throughout Indonesia. In 2022, there were 16,034 BPS employees placed in Central BPS, Provincial BPS, to Regency/City BPS in Indonesia (Statistics Indonesia, 2022).

This conditions are certainly a challenge for BPS to internalize these core values to all BPS employees throughout Indonesia. One of the efforts made is through the medium of a comic strip called “Mbak Pia”, which means “Sister Pia”. The name “Pia” itself is an acronym for the core values of BPS mentioned earlier, namely Professional, Integrity, and Trustworthy. In Indonesian, the core values written down as “Profesional”, “Integritas”, and “Amanah”.

One of the reasons why comics are used in conveying, disseminating, and internalizing the core values of BPS is because comics have the ability to provide iconic visual images (Negara, 2014). Comics also have the potential to appeal to some people who are underserved in certain information channels (Farinella, 2018). Thus, the information conveyed in a comic can be understood and easily accepted by all circles (Widyastuti & Prasela, 2010), in this case all BPS employees at all levels of position.

It is based on the concept of the comic itself. In general, comics are a series of images arranged in a certain order that is complemented by text so as to form a complete story (Patricia, 2018). In building a story, comics have various important elements. Elements of comics include: (1) image, which are illustrations of figures, objects, and colors that explain certain situations; (2) text, which is writing that describes a story or conversation figure; (3) panel, which is a boundary that contains a situation or story. In comics can also be inserted humor as spice in the story conveyed to the reader (Faris, 2022).

Mbak Pia’s comics is aired every month in BPS’s internal magazine, namely Varia Statistik. This magazine is made in print version and distributed directly to all employees at the level of Central BPS, Provincial BPS, and Regency/City BPS throughout Indonesia.
In general, Mbak Pia’s comics depict the daily work of BPS employees which is packaged in funny and entertaining stories. In addition, this comic is also used as an internalization media for all BPS employees throughout Indonesia regarding the implementation of BPS’s core values, namely Professional, Integrity, and Trustworthy.

Along the way, Mbak Pia’s comics received a positive response from BPS employees throughout Indonesia. Since it was first aired in 2012, currently Mbak Pia’s comics have reached the 117th series. Of these, the entire story refers to the core values of BPS with percentages as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Percentage of BPS’s core values in Mbak Pia’s comics
(Source: processed research data, 2023)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Values</th>
<th>Number of Series</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sum</strong></td>
<td><strong>117</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 1, it can be seen that the most highlighted story in Mbak Pia’s comics is related to the value of Integrity. There are as many as 50 series (42.74 percent) of Mbak Pia’s comics related to the value of Integrity. As for the Professional value, there are 39 series (33.33 percent) and the Trustworthy value there are 28 series (23.93 percent).

This shows that the most interesting and frequent issues in the BPS daily work are matters related to the value of Integrity which includes Dedication, Consistency, Accountability, Discipline, and Openness. While the value of Professional and Trustworthy is not more intense than the value of Integrity.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the messages conveyed in the Mbak Pia’s comics. By using semiotic analysis from Roland Barthes, the messages in Mbak Pia’s comics can be excavated and revealed as evaluation material as well as monitoring in the implementation of the core values of the BPS organization in the future.

Methodology

The method used in this study is an interpretive research method with a qualitative approach. Interpretive research methods are attempts to seek explanations about social or cultural events that are based on the perspectives and experiences of the person under study. This study interprets behavior in detail and detail and sees a fact as something interesting in understanding social meaning (Neuman, 1997).

The qualitative approach was chosen because it aims to understand phenomena about what is experienced by the research subject such as behavior, perception, action, and others. The phenomenon is described holistically and descriptively in the form of words and language by utilizing various natural methods (Moleong, 2017).

Semiotic analysis was used in this study because researchers wanted to know the message and meaning contained in the Mbak Pia’s comics. The semiotic analysis used is Roland Barthes semiotics, where a message or sign can be interpreted through two stages of signification (Sobur, 2004). In the first stage, researchers will interpret the meanings that appear in Mbak Pia’s comics, both in the form of denotative and connotative meanings.
Furthermore, analysis was carried out in the second stage in the Mbak Pia’s comics, namely myth. Thus, the meaning contained in Mbak Pia’s comics can be fully expressed.

The data sources used in this study are primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source was obtained from Mbak Pia’s comics that published in BPS’s internal magazine, namely Varia Statistik. The comic strips chosen are the 79th series of Mbak Pia comics entitled “Consequence”, the 99th series entitled “End of the Year”, and the 116th series entitled “Big Data”. The three comics were chosen because each represents three core values in the BPS organization, namely Professional, Integrity, and Trustworthy.

In addition to collecting data sourced from primary data, researchers also use some secondary data that can later strengthen primary data that has been obtained previously (Arikunto, 2013). These secondary data are obtained through various literature through books and national and international journal articles related to semiotic analysis of comics. The collected data is then analyzed interpretively to obtain a comprehensive picture of the meaning that appears in a comic.

In the context of the research that researchers are currently conducting, Roland Barthes semiotic analysis not only explains the message conveyed in Mbak Pia’s comics, but also seeks to uncover the hidden messages of the comic strips (Jaufarry & Utami, 2022).

Result

Mbak Pia’s Comics Character Identification

A comic can display an event that includes characters along with their background (Park, 2022). There are several characters that appear in Mbak Pia’s comics, but the main character is Mbak Pia herself. The name “Pia” is an acronym for the core values of the BPS organization, namely Professional, Integrity, and Trustworthy. This name is also a consideration why the main character in this comic strip is female.

Mbak Pia is described as a young woman with a beautiful but agile stature, short hair, and a face that is always cheerful. One of the characteristics of Mbak Pia is the red headband that she always wears in every story. The choice of red on the headband is interpreted as a brave attitude, which is daring to express an opinion.

In addition to Mbak Pia, there are also other characters who often appear in Mbak Pia’s comics. The character is Mr. Boss, a middle-aged man with a bald head and thick mustache who become the boss of Mbak Pia. The characteristics of the bald head and thick mustache represent a wise and charismatic character that is generally owned by the head of an agency.

Another character in Mbak Pia’s comics is Mas Bro, a young male figure who is the same age as Mbak Pia. This Mas Bro character is often described as the anti-thesis figure of Mbak Pia. This character is also often a trigger for problems that become stories from Mbak Pia’s comics.

Finally, the character who often appears in Mbak Pia’s comics is Mas Kri-
The character is described as a young male figure who is also the same age as the character Mbak Pia. The characteristic of Mas Kriwil is curly hair that represents a humorous character.

The four characters – Mbak Pia, Mr. Boss, Mas Bro, and Mas Kriwil – always wear gray clothes in each story. The gray clothes represent the official uniform of BPS employees. This is in accordance with the Regulation of the Head of BPS Number 186 of 2007 concerning BPS Employee’s Work Clothing. In the regulation, it is stated that the official uniform of BPS employees is dark gray (Regulation of the Head of BPS Number 186, 2007).

Value of Trustworthy

The 79th series of Mbak Pia’s comics is titled “Consequence” and was published in the January 2018 edition of Varia Statistik magazine. There are four panels in the series comic strips. For more details, the panels in the Mbak Pia series-79 comic can be seen in the following picture.

The panel descriptions in the 79th series of Mbak Pia’s comics can be described one by one. In the first panel, it was seen that Mr. Boss was holding a meeting with other BPS employees, which in this case was represented by three figures, namely Mas Kriwil, Mas Bro, and Mbak Pia.
They sat facing each other at separate tables. Mr. Boss said, “Thank God. At the beginning of 2018, we are increasingly trusted as a provider of quality statistical data”. The meeting participants seemed very enthusiastic to hear Mr. Boss’s words.

The second panel still depicts the atmosphere of the meeting between Mr. Boss and Mas Kriwil, Mas Bro, and Mbak Pia. Mr. Boss continued the words of the first panel by saying, “The evidence...”. However, the expressions of the meeting participants began to change. Mas Kriwil and Mas Bro looked anxious while Mbak Pia looked curious about the continuation of Mr. Boss’s words.

The third panel depicts a wider meeting room atmosphere than the previous panel. It turned out that next to Mr. Boss there was already a huge pile of documents. While showing the stack of documents, Mr. Boss said, “This year’s work is more than last year...”. This word was responded by Mas Kriwil, Mas Bro, and Mbak Pia with surprised expressions.

The fourth panel depicts something similar to the third panel. The difference lies in the expressions of each character. Mr. Boss was seen crying while bowing his head while saying, “Be patient, all colleagues...”. The same was pointed out by the other meeting participants. Mas Kriwil was seen crying with tears while expressing his feelings, “Huhuhu”, Mas Bro was only seen bowing his head as an expression of disappointment and sadness, while Mbak Pia looked tough while saying, “May we always be healthy, huh”.

For more details, semiotic analysis for the story in the 79th series of Mbak Pia’s comics can be explained through the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denotation</td>
<td>The story of an early year meeting that is usually held by BPS. In the meeting discussed matters related to the types of work for the next one year. In the meeting, Mr. Boss stated that BPS is increasingly trusted by various parties as an agency providing quality statistical data. This is evidenced by the many activity documents that must be done over the next year. Mr. Boss’s statement was met with sadness by the meeting participants – namely Mas Kriwil, Mas Bro, and Mbak Pia – because it meant that their work was getting more and more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connotation</td>
<td>The description of the number of documents and work represents the amount of trust carried by BPS employees. Trustworthy is one of BPS’s core values, it is fitting that BPS employees accept the mandate – no matter how much – voluntarily. Although there may be many obstacles that will be faced by carrying out many trusts, it must still be resolved as a form of responsibility in implementing the core values of BPS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth</td>
<td>The first myth is that the leader’s order – or state duty – is something that cannot be rejected or denied by every civil servant. When a new job or mandate comes from the leader, especially authoritarian leader, no matter how much work and mandate it is, it must still be done and completed according to the specified schedule (Wahyuni et al., 2022). The second myth is that BPS has too many tasks and jobs related to censuses and surveys. On the other hand, BPS employees are required...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Value of Integrity

The 99th series of Mbak Pia’s comics was published in the November 2019 edition of Varia Statistik magazine. Similar to the previous series, Mbak Pia’s comic entitled “End of the Year” has four panels as shown below.

In the first panel, the BPS office building is depicted from the front. This BPS office represents the offices of Central BPS, Provincial BPS, and Regency/City BPS that spread throughout Indonesia. This is based on the fact that all BPS buildings in various regions have the same building design prototype.

The second panel depicts the character of Mbak Pia who is in one of the rooms in the BPS office building. The room looks empty, there are only two desks, which also have no people. Seeing the empty condition of the room, Mbak Pia said, “It’s really quiet here. Where are people going?”.

The third panel depicts a data processing room. This can be observed through a row of computer monitors on the table. This room is available in every office at Central BPS, Provincial BPS, and Regency/City BPS. Mbak Pia can be seen poking out from behind the wall saying, “The processing room is also quiet”.

The final panel depicts Mbak Pia fi-
nally sitting back in her chair saying, “Oh, I got it. This is a year-end phenomenon. The office is very quiet because all employees on official trips”. Next to Mbak Pia, there is a wall calendar showing the month of November 2019.

Semiotic analysis for the story in the 99th series of Mbak Pia’s comics can be explained through the following table.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Stage</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denotation</td>
<td>The story of Mbak Pia who is in the office. She looking for her colleagues in all the office rooms but she found no body there. It turned out that all her colleagues were on official trips out of town. Finally, Mbak Pia realized that this official trips often occurs near the end of the year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connotation</td>
<td>The number of Mbak Pia’s colleagues who doing official trips out of town is a form of dedication of BPS employees. In the core values of the BPS organization, dedication goes into the value of Integrity. No matter how busy and how much work is being done, but when there is an order to official trips, every BPS employee is obliged to follow the order. These values are important to be implemented in the work culture of the BPS organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth</td>
<td>The story depicted the traditions that occur within the government, one of which is BPS. Official trips activities out of town often occur towards the end of the year. This usually happens because there is still a lot of state budget left and must be spent before the budget year runs out. Official trips out of town is the easiest effort to accelerate budget absorption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Towards the end of the year. In certain cases, official trips carried out by these government agencies even reaches an unnatural stage. All employees trips marathonly until the end of the year to achieve high budget absorption (Helmiwan et al., 2022).

Value of Professional

The 116th series of Mbak Pia’s comics is titled “Big Data” and was published in the July 2021 edition of Varia Statistik magazine. For more details, the story in the following comic strip panel can be seen in the following image.

![Figure 6. Mbak Pia's 116th series of comics with the title “Big Data”.](Source: Varia Statistik, 2021)
The first panel depicts a conversation between Mbak Pia’s character and Mr. Boss. Mbak Pia was sitting at her desk holding a laptop that showed her at work. While Mr. Boss was standing in front of her. Mr. Boss said, “Are you busy, Pia?”. Mbak Pia replied, “No, Sir. What can I do for you, Sir?”. Mbak Pia’s expression seemed enthusiastic about Mr. Boss’s greeting.

The second panel depicted Mr. Boss closing his eyes while saying, “I just participated in a socialization about Big Data today. Well, I want to ask you for help, huh”. The expression of closing his eyes shows the seriousness of Mr. Boss.

The third panel depicts Mr. Boss’s hand holding a green flash drive. While handing over the flash drive, Mr. Boss said, “Please download the Big Data and save it on my flash drive”.

The last panel depicts the character of Mbak Pia who looks confused at the request of Mr. Boss. With her eyes rounded, Mbak Pia said, “Uh, but that’s not the point, Sir.”

From this story, semiotic analysis of the 116th series of Mbak Pia comic stories entitled “Big Data” can be described through the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denotation</td>
<td>The story of Mr. Boss who has just participated in a socialization activity about the importance of Big Data. Then, Mr. Boss asked Mbak Pia for help to save the Big Data into a flash drive. Mr. Boss thinks that Big Data is a kind of data set that can be copied into a flash drive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connotation</td>
<td>What Mr. Boss did to Mbak Pia illustrates the competence of BPS employees in understanding various developing issues, including Big Data. As a BPS employee, they should have qualified competence in terms of statistical data. This is very important considering that competence is one of the elements in the core value of the BPS organization, namely Professional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myth</td>
<td>First, people have a stigma that employees in the government have less qualified competence (Mahardhika et al., 2021). This can be observed from the many public complaints against the services provided by the government. Second, this comic illustrates that competence is an absolute thing possessed by someone in doing their work. If a person is competent in his work, then the result will be optimal. Conversely, if the person is incompetent, then the result will be disappointing (Palembai et al., 2020). In the world of bureaucrats, competence is very important for every employee. The higher the position held, the better the competence (Johannes, 2019).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Semiotic analysis of Mbak Pia’s 116th series of comics “Big Data” (Source: processed research data, 2023)

Discussion

The entire story in the Mbak Pia’s comic, in this case the 79th series of Mbak Pia’s comics, the 99th series, and the 116th series does tell the daily work activities of BPS employees. In addition, this comic was also created as an effort to internalize the core values of the BPS organization to all BPS employees throughout Indonesia.
However, from the analysis of the myths that have been described earlier, it can be seen that Mbak Pia’s comic stories are full of criticism. This criticism is directed at BPS employees who do not apply the core values of the BPS organization, namely Professional, Integrity, and Trustworthy.

In the 79th series of Mbak Pia’s comics entitled “Consequences”, the criticism conveyed was related to poor work management. On the basis of BPS organizational values, in this case the Trustworthy value, all work is received and carried out on a tight schedule. This if not balanced with the addition of appropriate human resources and time, will have an impact on the quality of the data produced.

The 99th series of Mbak Pia’s comics entitled “End of the Year” is a story full of criticism about poor planning. Every government agency in Indonesia, including BPS, has almost similar employment patterns from year to year. This certainly facilitates planning activities in a government institution. Each budget at the beginning of the year should be sorted by activity items and carried out measurable and systematic scheduling. But strangely, activities will be crowded when towards the end of the year. In other words, there is massive spending ahead of the budget year. This clearly shows that job planning is poor.

Meanwhile, the 116th series of Mbak Pia’s comics story entitled “Big Data” is more critical of the competence of employees in carrying out their work. In fact, it is often found someone who holds a position as a leader or top management but does not have competence in carrying out his job. This can certainly have a negative impact on organizational performance.

Conclusion

In general, Mbak Pia’s comics depict the work daily activities of BPS employees in their offices. The message conveyed is inseparable from the core values of BPS organization, namely Professional, Integrity, and Trustworthy. This is an effort to integrate these core values to all employees throughout Indonesia.

In addition to the messages conveyed expressly, Mbak Pia’s comics also convey other messages implicitly. These messages are in the form of criticism of the work culture of BPS employees who are not in accordance with the core values of BPS. The criticism is related to poor planning, job management, and employee competence that is not in accordance with their field of work. This is certainly a big homework for BPS – as well as other government agencies – to improve these problems in the future.

For this reason, the advice that can be given to BPS as a government institution is to continue to strive to internalize the core values of BPS in the form of varied events such as regular meetings every week or also by setting a role model to all BPS employees throughout Indonesia.

References


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