

Representation Criticism of Digital Technology Abuse in @rahma_toons Cartoons: A Semiotic Analysis of Charles Sanders Peirce

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Abstract

Digital technology is developing rapidly and undergoing continuous change. Instagram is used as an information center for writing about social issues through cartoon illustrations. Cartoons are a visual way to discuss social phenomena in a humorous or satirical manner. Cartoons contain visual elements that convey meaning. The purpose of this study is to uncover the meaning contained in the cartoons on Instagram @rahma_toons. The methodology used in this study is descriptive qualitative, to determine the representation of @rahma_toons cartoons using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, which focuses on three trichotomy concepts. First, identifying relevant cartoons from the Instagram account and additional data from scientific literature sources. Second, presenting data grouped by icons, symbols, and indexes. Next, the results of the analysis are presented in detail. The findings show that cartoons from @rahma_toons convey social criticism of the negative impacts of digital technology through clear visual representations. This study emphasizes the importance of visual media literacy skills to understand critical messages in today's digital era. For further research, it is recommended to expand the object of study, not only on caricatures, and it is also recommended to use approaches from other semiotics, to enrich the perspective of visual meaning analysis.

Keywords: Caricature, Charles Sanders Peirce, Digital Technology, Semiotics

ملخص

تتطور التكنولوجيا الرقمية بسرعة وتشهد تغيرات مستمرة. ويُستخدم تطبيق إنستغرام كمركز للمعلومات لطرح القضايا الاجتماعية من خلال الرسوم الكرتونية. وتُعدّ الرسوم الكرتونية وسيلة بصرية لمناقشة الظواهر الاجتماعية بأسلوب فكاهي أو ساخر، كما تحتوي على عناصر بصرية تحمل دلالات ومعاني. يهدف هذا البحث إلى الكشف عن المعاني الكامنة في الرسوم الكرتونية المنشورة على حساب إنستغرام @rahma_toons. وقد استخدم البحث المنهج الوصفي النوعي لتحديد تمثيلات الرسوم الكرتونية في @rahma_toons بالاعتماد على نظرية السيميائيات لتشارلز ساندرز بيرس، التي تركز على ثلاثة مفاهيم ثلاثية. وتتمثل خطوات البحث في: أولاً، تحديد الرسوم الكرتونية ذات الصلة من حساب إنستغرام، إلى جانب البيانات الإضافية المستمدة من مصادر الأدبيات العلمية. ثانياً، عرض البيانات وتصنيفها وفق الأيقونات، والرموز، والمؤشرات. وبعد ذلك، تُعرض نتائج التحليل بشكل تفصيلي. وتُظهر النتائج أن الرسوم الكرتونية في حساب @rahma_toons تنقل نقدًا اجتماعيًا للتأثيرات السلبية للتكنولوجيا الرقمية من خلال تمثيلات بصرية واضحة. وتؤكد هذه الدراسة على أهمية مهارات محو الأمية البصرية في وسائل الإعلام لفهم الرسائل النقدية في العصر الرقمي المعاصر. وبالنسبة للأبحاث المستقبلية، يُوصى بتوسيع نطاق موضوع الدراسة وعدم الاقتصار على الرسوم الكرتونية فقط، كما يُقترح استخدام مقاربات سيميائية أخرى من أجل إثراء منظور تحليل المعاني البصرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التكنولوجيا الرقمية، السيميائية، الكاريكاتير، تشارلز ساندرز بيرس



Introduction

Along with the rapid advancement of digital technology, various forms of technology abuse have also increased. Digital technology abuse often occurs due to unwise use, causing various forms of complex polemics in various fields. In the field of information and communication, technology abuse has led to the emergence of various hoaxes. In the field of education, it can be seen in students' addiction to artificial intelligence, which reduces their critical thinking skills. Worse still, the misuse of technology reduces direct social interaction among people, increasing individualism.¹ This continues because people do not realize that they are actually being controlled by digital technology.²

On the other hand, various groups who are wise in using technology criticize this phenomenon while also pointing out the benefits of its use. This is what Fahd Bahady does, who often uses social media such as Instagram as a medium for criticizing the misuse of technology and various other polemics. The mass media is effectively used as a means of conveying criticism because it is affordable and accessible internationally, and serves to expand the reach of information and increase public understanding of crucial issues.³

The weapon Fahd Bahady uses to convey his criticism is caricature. Caricature is a form of opinion presented through distinctive images. Caricature is a visual method designed to attract attention or discuss social phenomena using analogies between images and actual issues in a humorous or satirical manner, as caricatures can be accompanied by text and verbal subtext to convey messages directed at specific social objectives.⁴ Caricatures employ exaggeration, symbolism, and satire to deliver sharp social criticism.⁵ Satire is a form of metaphor within syllogistic reasoning that relates to moral and immoral issues based on phenomena surrounding society, containing humorous satire and criticism in accordance with the norms prevailing in society.⁶ Initially, caricatures served only as supplements or illustrations, but as they evolved, they became a means of conveying criticism.⁷ This work serves as a medium for conveying criticism in an entertaining way,

¹ Muslimin Muslimin and Rahmatan Idul, "Pengaruh Budaya Literasi Digital Terhadap Pembentukan Sikap dan Karakter Masyarakat dalam Pembatasan Sosial Akibat Pandemi Covid-19," *Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Budaya* 10, no. 3 (2020): 21–36. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37905/JBSB.V10I3.10540>

² Kendy Saputra and Nunik Hariyanti, "Analisis Semiotika Peirce pada Sampul Majalah Tempo Edisi Berebut Anak Abah Tanggal 15 September 2024," *JJKOMDIS : Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi dan Media Sosial* 5, no. 1 (2025): 1–10. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36709/bastra.v9i3.539>

³ Cristina M. Pulido et al., "Social Impact in Social Media: A New Method to Evaluate the Social Impact of Research," *Plos One* 13, No. 8 (2018): 1–20. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0203117>

⁴ Kawakib Al-Momani, Muhammad A. Badarneh, and Fathi Migdadi, "A Semiotic Analysis of Political Cartoons in Jordan in Light of the Arab Spring," *Humor* 30, no. 1 (2017): 63–95. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/humor-2016-0033>

⁵ Martin J Medhurst and Michael A Desousa, "Political Cartoons as Rhetorical Form: A Taxonomy of Graphic Discourse," *Communication Monographs* 482009, 37–41. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03637758109376059>

⁶ Tamim Mulloh, Ade Destri Deviana, and Muhammad Ridho Naufal, "Satire : Sindiran Humor Dalam Naskah Drama," *Mantiqū Tayr: Journal of Arabic Language*, 4, no. 1 (2024): 21–36. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25217/mantiqutayr.v4i1.4000>

⁷ Mudarman, "Bentuk dan Fungsi Karikatur Karya Mg. Suryana Dalam Surat Kabar SoloPos (Kajian Pragmatik)," *Innovative: Journal of Sosial Science Research* 3, no. 1 (2023): 477–87. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31004/innovative.v3i1>

aiming to satirize while also providing a warning.⁸ Caricatures have become an alternative medium for expressing opinions amid restrictions on freedom of expression. The visual language used makes the message easier to understand for various groups, without the need for lengthy narratives. As an exaggerated visual representation or distortion of an object, caricatures can highlight certain aspects with a humorous yet profound approach, thereby facilitating the audience in observing the message being conveyed.⁹ Therefore, caricatures are often used by the mass media and artists as an effective means of social criticism.

Fahd Bahady is a Syrian cartoonist and lawyer born in 1983. He is a leading Syrian cartoonist who began his career in art in 2005. Fahd Bahady's cartoons are regularly published on various social media platforms, including the official websites of Cartoon Movement and Cartooning for Peace, as well as his personal Instagram account @rahma_toons. Fahd has collaborated with various Arab and international media outlets such as Al Jazeera Net, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, Al-Sharq Qatar, and Al-Quds Al-Arabi. He is also an active member who participates in various world-class cartooning activities. Fahd Bahady is a Syrian cartoonist and lawyer born in 1983. He is a leading cartoonist from Syria who began his career in the arts in 2005. Fahd Bahady's cartoons are regularly published on various social media platforms, including the official websites of Cartoon Movement and Cartooning for Peace, as well as his personal Instagram account @rahma_toons. Fahd has collaborated with various Arab and international media outlets such as Al Jazeera Net, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed, Al-Sharq Qatar, and Al-Quds Al-Arabi. He is also an active member participating in various international cartooning activities.

Fahd Bahady has also won many awards and achievements, including first place in the Federation of Cartoonists Organisations Africa cartoon competition held in Morocco in 2025, a special award at the Federation of Cartoonists Organisations Africa cartoon competition in Morocco in 2024, inclusion in the list of best works at the European Cartoon Contest in 2023, a nomination for the Mahmoud Kahil Award 2023, and his work has also been featured on the front page of the French newspaper Le Monde. Fahd's works have been exhibited at various international events and published in numerous prestigious publications. Through his cartoons, he highlights the human side of global political dynamics, while maintaining a balance between social criticism and the humor characteristic of caricature art.

In addition, Bahady also includes cartoons that contain strong moral messages about the misuse of digital technology. In his various cartoons, he depicts how technology, which should be a tool for progress, has instead become a weapon that oppresses, controls, and even deceives society. Bahady uses simple but meaningful visual language to voice his concerns about the modern digital world. He highlights how social media can incite hatred, how algorithms shape false perceptions, and how humans are slowly losing control over the technology they themselves have created. Therefore, this study attempts to analyze several of Fahd Bahady's cartoons that highlight criticism of the misuse of digital technology in order to uncover the hidden meanings behind the series of symbols and elements constructed in Bahady's cartoons as a depiction of social reality due to the development of digital technology.

⁸ Thooyib Ash Shiddiqie, Hakim Syah, and Heri Setiawan, "Makna Karikatur dan Kalimat Satire dalam Kolom 'Si Doengil' pada Harian Kalteng Pos," *Wacana: Jurnal Ilmiah dan Ilmu Komunikasi* 24 no. 204 (2025): 15–32. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32509/wacana.v24i1.3979>

⁹ Harahapand Zahra, "Karikatur Digital Mengungkap Kritik Sosial," (Surakarta: Tahta Media, 2023), hlm. 2.

Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign,¹⁰ where signs refer to something outside themselves, namely objects.¹¹ Charles Sander Peirce's semiotics is a process involving actions, influences, and cooperation between three elements: Sign, Object, and Interpretant),¹² The interaction between the tree is referred to by Peirce as 'semeiosis'.¹³ which serves as a reference and limitation for researchers in conducting research. If the process of understanding signs goes well, then recognition of the ground is very important. In Peirce classifies the elements that form a sign according to the existence of the sign (ground) into sinsign, qualisign, and legisign.¹⁴ Sinsign is a representation of the current situation or event that is taking place in the sign. Qualisign refers to the visible characteristics of the sign it self. Legisign relates to the values or norms contained in the sign.¹⁵

Signs can be divided into index, icons, and symbols.¹⁶ An index is a sign that has a cause and effect relationship with the object it represents. Indices are characterized by similarities between the sign and the real object. Icons are real objects that resemble the form they represent, with this resemblance characterizing the representation. Examples include photographs, sculptures, paintings, and others. Fundamentally, icons show a relationship between symbols and objects that have similarities; in other words, icons are understood as symbols that have similarities between the original object and what it represents.¹⁷ Symbols represent the relationship that society has agreed upon between signs and the objects they represent.¹⁸ Furthermore, speaking of the interpretant aspect, signs can be distinguished into dicisigns, which describe signs according to their reality; rhemes, which indicate differences in the meaning of signs that have the potential to differ; and arguments, which refer to the meaning of signs based on reasoning related to those signs.¹⁹

As a basis for understanding Fahd Bahady's works, which are full of social criticism of the misuse of digital technology, there is previous research that outlines several important concepts relevant to this study. The first study, entitled "Representation of International Criticism of the Middle East Conflict in Arab Cartoons on Instagram," uses semiotics theory, but its object is caricatures that focus on the Middle East conflict.²⁰ In the second study entitled "Construction of Political Reality in The Caricature Entitled Qiblatul Maut and Ittabi'uni By Osama Hajjaj: A Semiotic

¹⁰ Eco Umberto, *A Theory of Semiotics*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), hlm. 16.

¹¹ Michael Jibrael Rorong, *Semiotika*, (Yogyakarta: Deepublish, 2024), hlm. 20.

¹² Siddik Firmansyah, "Pemikiran Filsafat Semiotika dalam Pemahaman Charles Sanders Peirce dan Contohnya," *Al-Kauniyah* 3, no. 2 (2022): 81–91. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.56874/alkauniyah.v3i2.877>

¹³ Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics the Basics, Second Edition*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), hlm. 30.

¹⁴ Alex Sobur, "Analisis Teks Media", (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2006), hlm. 97.

¹⁵ Charles Sanders Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), hlm. 98–119.

¹⁶ Saputra and Hariyanti, "Analisis Semiotika Peirce pada Sampul Majalah Tempo Edisi Berebut Anak Abab Tanggal 15 September 2024," *JKOMDIS* Vol. 5, no. 1 (2025): 1-10. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47233/jkomdis.v5i1.2502>

¹⁷ Novia Asri Romadhoni, Aulia Hamdi, and Anugerah Bagus Wijaya, "Analisis Semiotika Icon dalam Perspektif Charles Sanders Pierce," *Jutisi: Jurnal Ilmiah Teknik Informatika dan Sistem Informasi* 12, no. 1 (2023): 116. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35889/jutisi.v12i1.1035>

¹⁸ Puji Santoso and Syaputra Andhika, "Analisis Semiotika Karikatur Konferensi Tingkat Tinggi Asean ke 24 pada Postingan Akun Instagram Jokowi," *Jurnal Kesejahteraan Sosial, Komunikasi dan Administrasi Publik* 2, no. 3 (2023): 183–88. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30596/keskap.v2i3.17508.g10407>

¹⁹ Muhammad Hasyim et al., "Analisis Semiotika Peirce pada Karikatur Sampul Majalah Tempo Edisi Tanggal 22-28 Januari 2024 Berjudul Omon-Omon Bansos," *Jurnal Bastra* 9, no. 3 (2024): 704–13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36709/bastra.v9i3.539>

²⁰ M Khozinatul Asror and Ahmad Ghuril Muhajjalín, "Representation of International Criticism of the Middle East Conflict in Arab Cartoons on Instagram Arabi: Journal of Arabic Studies," *Jurnal Arabi* 10, no. 1 (2025): 26–38. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24865/ajas.v10i1.939>

Study of Roman Jakobson,” which reveals the political reality that Ossama Hajjaj wants to convey through his caricatures using Roman Jacobson's semiotics.²¹ The third study, entitled “The Murder of Palestinian Journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in the Instagram Account @hajjaj_cartoons (A Peirce Semiotics Study),” discusses the types of signs and reveals the meaning in caricatures that discuss the conflict in Palestine.²²

Previous research on Charles Sander Peirce's semiotics has been conducted on covers and caricatures in the media, namely.²³ entitled “Semiotic Analysis of the Cover of Tempo Magazine Edition 4 June 11, 2018”; research entitled “Semiotic Analysis Pierce on the Cartoon Cover of Tempo Magazine, January 22-28, 2024 Edition, titled Omon-Omon Bansos,” which concluded that the January 22-28, 2024 edition of Tempo, titled “Omon-Omon BANSOS,” featured a controversial cartoon on the magazine cover.²⁴ Drawing conclusions from the January 22-28, 2024 edition of Tempo magazine, titled “Omon-Omon BANSOS,” a picture on the front cover sparked discussion. The illustration depicts a figure resembling Jokowi dancing while carrying four sacks, while Prabowo lies relaxed on top of him. This image reflects opposition to Jokowi's political moves regarding the distribution of social assistance, showing Jokowi supporting the policy.

Another study entitled “Pierce's Semiotic Analysis of the Cover of Tempo Magazine's Jokowi Edition and Pinocchio's Shadow” also applied Pierce's semiotic analysis and utilized Peirce's Triangle of Meaning Theory, which includes three main components, namely interpretant, representamen, and object.²⁵ Peirce also classified signs into three types based on their properties, including icons, indices, and symbols. In this study, it was revealed that the controversial cover of Tempo magazine for the September 16, 2019 edition featured an image of a man with a sour expression, who closely resembled Jokowi, along with a long nose shadow similar to Pinocchio's. This symbolized dishonesty, with Jokowi's face reflecting an unpleasant situation.

This study is similar to previous studies in that there are three studies that use caricatures as their object and use Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory. The difference lies in the two previous studies that used magazines as their object and Roman Jakobson's semiotic theory. Therefore, this study focuses on caricatures as the object of analysis to criticize the misuse of digital technology by employing the theoretical framework of Charles Sanders Peirce. This is considered important because the misuse of digital technology often occurs as a result of unwise usage and gives rise to various social polemics.

This study is motivated by the phenomenon of the increasing misuse of digital technology resulting from unwise utilization of technological advancements. Such conditions have triggered various social problems, including a decline in direct social interactions, which ultimately fosters the growth of individualistic attitudes within society. Therefore, this research is based on the urgency to

²¹ Melinda Raswari Jambak, “Construction of Political Reality in the Caricature Entitled *Qiblatul Mant and Ittabi'uni* by Osama Hajjaj: A Semiotic Study of Roman Jakobson,” *Mayada* 2 (2023): 434–44. <https://conferences.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/mayada/article/view/2527>

²² Risalatul Fadillah Dien Chotimah, “Pembunuhan Jurnalis Palestina Shireen Abu Akleh Dalam Akun Instagram @Hajjaj_Cartoons (Studi Semiotika Peirce),” *Interaksi* 13, No. 2 (2024): 241–62. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14710/interaksi.13.2.241-262>

²³ Nugroho Akbar, “Analisis Semiotika Pada Cover Majalah Tempo Edisi 4 - 11 Juni 2018,” *Jurnal Spektrum Komunikasi* 6, no. 1 (2018): 61–66. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37826/spektrum.v6i1.55>

²⁴ Hasyim et al., “Analisis Semiotika Peirce pada Karikatur Sampul Majalah Tempo Edisi Tanggal 22-28 Januari 2024 Berjudul Omon-Omon Bansos,” *Bastra* 9, no. 3 (2024): 704–13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36709/bastra.v9i3.539>

²⁵ Theodora Edra Pramaskara, “Analisis Semiotika Peirce pada Sampul Majalah Tempo Edisi Jokowi Beserta Bayangan Pinokio,” *Jurnal Kajian Jurnalisme* 5, no. 2 (2022): 209. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24198/jki.v5i2.36251>

examine and understand the messages of social criticism conveyed through caricatures on social media platforms, particularly Instagram, by employing a scientific approach using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory.

Pierce's semiotic concept is considered more relevant to examining the construction of signs in caricatures on social media. There are research results that use Pierce's semiotic approach in analyzing previous caricatures. By understanding the relationship between signs, signifiers, and signifieds, readers of caricatures can understand the criticism of society, sarcasm, or ethical messages that are conveyed more deeply. Sign semiotics serves as a crucial means of reading and interpreting meanings that are not apparent in caricatures. Peirce's theory states that something can be called a sign if it represents something else.²⁶ Therefore, the researcher aims to explain how digital technology is represented in @rahma_toons cartoons and its impact on society, to analyze the meaning contained in @rahma_toons cartoons using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach, and to identify visual and verbal signs in @rahma_toons cartoons that represent the impact of digital technology.

Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the representation of @rahma_toons cartoons using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, which focuses on three trichotomous concepts. In this study, the author focuses on the signs found in caricatures. This study attempts to reveal the deeper meaning behind signs, the relationship between signs, and create overall meaning. Semiotics was chosen because it allows for a deeper exploration of the meaning of signs found in caricatures, especially in the context of digital technology.²⁷

The research method in this study was structured through several stages, namely: (1) determining the research objects and data, (2) data collection, (3) identification of sign elements in the caricatures, (4) data analysis based on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, and (5) drawing conclusions. The division of these stages aims to ensure that the research process is carried out systematically and in a well directed manner in accordance with the research focus.²⁸

The object of this study is a cartoon from Instagram @rahma_toons by Fahd Bahady, a lawyer and cartoonist from Syria. This cartoon was chosen because it specifically addresses humanitarian and social issues, which is in line with the study's objective of analyzing the representation of the impact of digital technology on cartoons. This study employs two types of data, namely primary data and secondary data, Primary data refer to data obtained directly by the researcher from first parties who have direct knowledge of or firsthand experience with the phenomenon under investigation. Meanwhile, secondary data are data collected by the researcher to

²⁶ Tiara Nur Mulyawati, Abdul Latif, and Achmad Yani, "Food and Drink Mini Short Story by 'Alaa Al-Deeb (Semiotic Structural Analysis) | Mini Cerpen 'Makanan dan Minuman' Karya 'Alaa Al-Deeb (Analisis Struktural Semiotik)," Mantiqut Tayr: Journal of Arabic Language Vol 3, no. 2 (2023): 151-167. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25217/mantiqutayr.v3i2.3793>

²⁷ Naida Rahma Tania, R. Myrna Nur Sakinah, and Dadan Rusmana, "Analisis Semiotika Charles Sanders Pierce Pada Karikatur Cover Majalah Tempo Edisi 16-22 September 2019," Jurnal Humaya: Jurnal Hukum, Humaniora, Masyarakat, dan Budaya 2, no. 2 (2022): 139-49. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33830/humayafhisip.v2i2.2578>

²⁸ Sobur, "Analisis Teks Media", (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosadakarya, 2006), hlm. 164.

support and complement the primary data.²⁹ Primary data was obtained from caricature objects found on online news sites, namely on Instagram @rahma_toons by Fahd Bahady. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from journal literature, articles, and books relevant to this study.

The research began by selecting caricatures from the Instagram account @rahma_toons that addressed the theme of digital technology abuse. The researcher observed and read the caricatures in their entirety to capture the context and visual messages they conveyed. Then, the researcher marked various sign elements such as icons, indices, and symbols in accordance with the semiotic theory proposed by Charles Sanders Peirce. The analysis process was carried out repeatedly to ensure accuracy in interpreting the meaning in each cartoon. Data collection was done by gathering data on the cartoon representations found in @rahma_toons to be analyzed and linked to the issue of technology abuse. The steps taken were to observe and understand the cartoon images, dissect the objects to examine each part so as to obtain the meaning and message contained in the cartoon images, identify data in accordance with the research objectives, and analyze and classify the data in accordance with the research objectives.

The collected data was then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three stages.

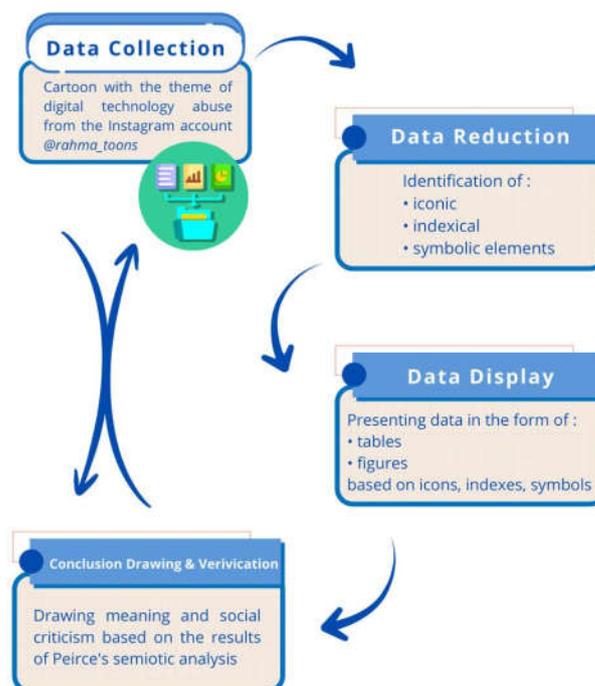


Figure 1. Miles and Huberman Model of Qualitative Data Analysis

Based on figure 1 this section explains that the collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model of qualitative data analysis, which consists of interrelated components, namely data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. This analytical process was conducted continuously throughout the research, starting from data collection until the final conclusions were drawn.

²⁹ Nurul Melani Haifa et al., "Identifikasi Variabel Penelitian, Jenis Sumber Data Dalam Penelitian Pendidikan Pendidikan Bahasa Arab / Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol Padang Berubah Tergantung Situasi Tertentu, (Arib, M. F., dkk, 2024)," *Dinamika Pendidikan: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Bahasa* 2 (2025). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62383/dilan.v2i2.1563>

The first stage was data collection. At this stage, the data were collected from Instagram posts on the account @rahma_toons. The second stage, data reduction, involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying the data in accordance with the research objectives. At this stage, the researchers identified and selected relevant caricatures from the specified Instagram account based on the research focus. The third stage, data display, aimed to organize the reduced data into a systematic form to facilitate interpretation. The data were grouped and presented based on semiotic elements, namely icons, symbols, and indices, allowing patterns and relationships among the data to be clearly observed. The final step was drawing conclusions, which was done based on data analysis and interpretation in accordance with the research focus.³⁰

Result and Discussion

Peirce classified the elements that make up a sign through representamen into sinsigns, qualisigns, and legisigns.³¹ Caricatures are images created not only with a focus on humor, but also serve as a medium for conveying social criticism.³² Based on the results of the analysis of the icon, index, and symbol sign groups, criticism of the misuse of digital technology is represented through caricatures that depict human characters in extreme or satirical situations. The presence of elements such as AI robots, large cell phones, primitive humans, and camel skeletons reinforces the critical meaning in @rahma_toons caricatures, where technology visually functions as a symbol of a new force that has a negative impact on human life.³³ This explanation falls under the category of social criticism of technology issues, as it depicts a society that has lost control over technology. Problems can arise if technology is not used wisely, and the satire in this cartoon serves as a visual warning sign about the adverse effects of digital progress on social interaction.³⁴ Representations present in caricatures themed around criticism of the misuse of digital technology can be found in @rahma_toons account.

Table 1. Analysis of Cartoon 1 Criticism of the Threat of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Sign	Elements	Descriptions
Icon	Robot AI with futuristic design	This robot resembles the general image of artificial intelligence in popular culture, which is often depicted with a glowing blue digital appearance.

³⁰ Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, New York: Sage Publications, (New York: New York: Sage Publications, 2019), hlm. 70.

³¹ Teuku Muhammad Rizal and Sari Maula, "Makna Nisyān Dalam Al-Qur'an Kajian Semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce," REVELATIA Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir 3, no. 1 (2022): 1–17. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.19105/revelatia.v3i1.5783>

³² Dicky Apdillah et al., "Teknologi Digital Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat," Selodang Mayang 8, no. 2 (2019), 101–7. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47521/selodangmayang.v8i2.247>

³³ Ayu Puspita and Anik Nur Handayani, "Dampak Teknologi Digital Terhadap Perilaku Sosial Masyarakat 5.0," Jurnal Inovasi Teknologi dan Edukasi Teknik 2, no. 10 (2022): 446–51. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17977/um068v2ilo2022p446-451>

³⁴ Pulido et al., "Social Impact in Social Media: A New Method to Evaluate the Social Impact of Research," PLOS ONE 13, no. 8 (2018): 1–20. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0203117>

B	Artists with graphics tablets	A realistic representation of a creative worker who uses digital technology in their work.	
	Index	The artist's sweat and fearful expression	Indicates anxiety or fear of AI, signaling a perceived threat to creative workers.
		AI robots appearing from the screen	Demonstrating how AI is now evolving and beginning to take on roles previously performed by humans.
Symbol		AI conversation balloon with a command tone	Signaling the dominance of AI, which is beginning to “rule” or replace artists in the art world.
		The letters “AI” on the robot's body	A symbol universally associated with artificial intelligence.
		Blue color and digital effects on AI	In the world of technology, blue is often associated with artificial intelligence, innovation, and the digital world.
		Sentences in Arabic: اجمع شملك... واعهد عهدك واكتب وصيتك	Symbolically, this sentence replacethe role of artists.

Based on table 1, it is found that the visual elements in Cartoon 1 consist of icons, indexes, and symbols that are interrelated in constructing a critical meaning toward artificial intelligence (AI). Icons are represented through the figures of humans and robots that are visually depicted to resemble real objects. Indexes are shown through the anxious facial expressions of the human character as well as body gestures that indicate tension when confronting technology. Meanwhile, symbols are represented through the use of colors, digital elements, and Arabic text that conveys a message of threat. Overall, this table provides a descriptive overview of the relationships among signs within the cartoon.



Figure 1. Analysis of Cartoon 1 Criticism of the Threat of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Based on figure 1, a visual interaction between a human figure and artificial intelligence is depicted, illustrating an unequal power relationship. The human character is portrayed in a pressured position, while artificial intelligence appears dominant. The Arabic text

"اجمع شملك...واعهد عهدك واكتب وصيتك"

It means “Gather yourself... renew your vows and write your will.” This message implies a threat or warning to artists, as if AI will replace their role in the art world. This caricature reflects the concerns of many artists about the advancement of AI technology in the creative industry, especially in drawing and design. The cartoon conveys a message of concern about the dominance of AI in the creative world. It helps tell the story in an easily recognizable way, such as futuristic robots and real artists. The index connects visual signs with emotional and social meanings, such as the fear of artists reflecting the threat of AI in the art world. Symbols reinforce the meaning of the cartoon by using widely recognized elements, such as the letters “AI” and the color digital blue. Through Peirce's semiotic approach, this cartoon depicts the tension that exists between digital creators and artificial intelligence. The icon shows a visual image similar to reality, the index shows the causal relationship between the existence of AI and the response of artists, while the symbol conveys a deeper meaning about the existential threat to the field of creativity.³⁵ This caricature reflects public anxiety about the effects of technology on the art world and creative jobs.

Amidst the advancement of various digital technology products aimed at resolving conflicts, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in identifying and handling social conflicts has begun to attract public attention. Several studies show that AI can offer analysis of social dynamics, recognize potential sources of conflict, and support the mediation process using data-based algorithms.³⁶ AI is also capable of recognizing hate speech on social media platforms, sorting out content that contains provocative elements, and providing suggestions on intervention measures to reduce tension in society.³⁷

The application of systems based on artificial intelligence or AI in decision-making that affects society can raise concerns about the possibility of abuse in the development of programs related to human rights. Therefore, an approach is needed that not only emphasizes predictive capabilities but also incorporates ethical and legal principles in the design, training, and implementation stages to ensure that the social benefits are commensurate with the enormous potential of AI.

Table 2. Analysis of 2 Caricatures Criticizing Social Media and Hate Speech

Sign	Elements	Descriptions
Icon	A giant cell phone that looks like a rock	This shows that social media can be a “primitive” communication tool if misused.

³⁵ Robingah, “*Pierce’s Semiotics Analysis on Benny’s Cartoons Related to Covid 19 Issues*,” *Journal of Language and Literature* 8 (January 1, 2020): 86–95. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.35760/jll.2020.v8i1.2564>

³⁶ Amruta Deshpande et al., “*Tech Facilitated Fairness: Examining the Impact of Technology on Perceived Fairness in Interpersonal Conflict Resolution*,” *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*, January 3, 2025. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-06-2024-0380>

³⁷ Ziaul Haque and Joseph G Bock, “*Are There Ways That Digital Technologies Break Down Walls of Communication During Conflict? Lessons from Leaders of a Women’s Movement in Egypt* BT - *Communication and Conflict Studies: Disciplinary Connections, Research Directions*,” ed. Adrienne P Lamberti and Anne R Richards (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019): 19–39. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32746-0_2

	Social media logos (Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.)	An icon of a social media platform that is widely known by the public.
Index	Angry and aggressive expressions (red face, teeth showing) Ancient man carrying a club	Showing frequent anger occurred in hate speech on social media. Indicates rude and uncivilized behavior on social media.
Symbol	Arabic text: “Those who spread racism and sectarianism on social media” A baton with a social media	Contains meanings that depend on linguistic conventions, conveying social criticism of the misuse of social media. A symbol of how social media is often used as a tool to verbally attack others.

Based on table 2, this cartoon presents visual signs that represent the phenomenon of hate speech and social conflict on social media. Icons are shown through figures that symbolize social media users, while indexes are reflected in expressions and conflict-related symbols that point to social tension. The symbols in this cartoon are reinforced by textual and visual elements that refer to practices of racism and sectarianism in the digital space. This table functions to map the semiotic elements that construct the meaning of social criticism.



Figure 2. Analysis of 2 Caricatures Criticizing Social Media and Hate Speech

Based on figure 2, this cartoon visually presents a critique of the spread of racism and sectarianism through social media. The Arabic text;

"دعاة العنصرية والطائفية على السوشال ميديا"

Meaning:

“Those who spread racism and sectarianism on social media.” This cartoon depicts criticism of individuals who use social media to spread hatred, racism, and sectarianism. The man depicted as a

caveman symbolizes ignorance or primitivism in thinking, suggesting that spreading hatred on social media is a barbaric act. Overall, the cartoon criticizes how social media is often misused as a tool to spread hatred, using semiotic elements to convey this message visually and textually.³⁸ Icons are used to depict visual elements that resemble reality. Indices show the cause and effect relationship between elements in caricatures and phenomena in the real world. Symbols are used to convey critical messages that depend on social conventions and agreed upon meanings. The caricature integrates icons (mobile phones, ancient creatures), indices (angry faces as indicators of real anger on social platforms), and symbols (writing and social media logos) to provide sharp social criticism of the misuse of social media as a means of spreading hatred.³⁹ This simple representation highlights the decline in intellectual capacity in today's digital environment. Advances in technology have given rise to various types of cybercrime, such as data theft and hacking of personal accounts. Internet platforms and social media can also be used as tools to spread harmful information, such as fake news and violent content, which can have a negative impact on society, especially on children and young people.⁴⁰

Table 3. Analysis of the Third Cartoon, Criticism of Social Media Addiction and Loss of Responsibility

Sign	Elements	Descriptions
Icon	Men who are addicted to their cell phones	Similar to real people playing with their cell phones
	A camel that is just a skeleton	It still resembles a camel even though it is only bones.
	A board with writing on it "المهام اليومية" (Daily Tasks)	Resembling signboards in the real world.
	A bird perched on the man's head	Similar to a real bird perched on a branch.
	Empty desert	A realistic depiction of the barren desert landscape.
Index	The man bent over and was unaware of his surroundings.	Demonstrating the addictive effects of social media that make a person indifferent to their surroundings. As a result of neglecting duties and

³⁸ Santoso and Andhika, "Analisis Semiotika Karikatur Konferensi Tingkat Tinggi Asean Ke 24 pada Postingan Akun Instagram Jokowi," *Jurnal Kesejahteraan Sosial, Komunikasi dan Administrasi Publik* 2, no. 3 (2023): 183–88. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30596/keskap.v2i3.17508.g10407>

³⁹ Hasyim et al., "Analisis Semiotika Peirce Pada Karikatur Sampul Majalah Tempo Edisi Tanggal 22-28 Januari 2024 Berjudul Omon-Omon Bansos," *Bastra* 9, no. 3 (2024): 704–13. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36709/bastra.v9i3.539>

⁴⁰ Ahmad Arif Ulin Nuha and Bambang Subahri, "Deotoritasi Guru di Era New Media," *Bidayatuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Guru Mandrasah Ibtidaiyah* 3, no. 2 (2020): 185. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36835/bidayatuna.v3i2.616>

	Camels become skeletons	responsibilities.
	Bird on a man's head	Indicating that the man had been immobile for too long.
	Empty desert	Demonstrating isolation and loss of social interaction.
	Exclamation mark above the camel's head	Indicates a surprise or warning about the situation.
Symbol	The man focused on his cell phone	The symbol of social media addiction and its impact on humans.
	A camel that is just a skeleton	Symbolizes neglected duties or responsibilities.
	Writing "المهام اليومية" (Daily Tasks)!	Generally represents obligations and tasks that must be completed. A universal symbol that indicates a warning or something urgent.
	The barren desert	Symbolizes loneliness, isolation, and loss of social connection due to technology addiction.

Based on table 3, the visual elements in this cartoon show a representation of human dependence on digital media. The icons and indexes in the cartoon depict individuals' behavior that is focused on digital devices, while the visual symbols indicate the negative impacts of excessive social media use. This table presents a mapping of signs that helps to understand the moral message conveyed by the cartoon.



Figure 3. Analysis of the Third Cartoon, Criticism of Social Media Addiction and Loss of Responsibility

Based on figure 3, this cartoon visually presents a critique of social media addiction and its impact on the decline of social awareness. The image illustrates how the dominance of digital media can influence human behavior and social relationships in everyday life.

He is sitting on a skeletonized camel, but remains engrossed in his cell phone, oblivious to his surroundings. There are several important elements in this image. The main message of this caricature is a criticism of excessive dependence on social media, which causes people to neglect their real lives and responsibilities. This caricature effectively conveys social criticism of social media addiction. Icons are used to depict objects that resemble their original forms in the real world. The index shows the cause and effect relationship in the caricature.⁴¹ Such as the impact of social media addiction. Symbols convey broader meanings based on cultural agreements, such as exclamation marks as warnings. This caricature depicts dependence on social media as a worldwide phenomenon that causes individuals to lose their purpose, obligations, and social relationships. By using icons (visual similarities), indices (cause and effect relationships), and symbols (conventions),⁴² Cartoons provide sharp criticism of excessive digital lifestyles. Excessive use of digital technology can lead to dependence, which affects the mental and physical health of users, especially children and adolescents. It is important for the community to understand how to use technology wisely and responsibly in order to avoid any negative impacts that may arise. The role of parents and teachers is crucial in supervising the wise and responsible use of digital technology, especially for children and adolescents, in order to reduce the potential negative effects that may arise.⁴³

The cartoon conveys a message of concern about the dominance of AI in the creative world. It helps tell the story in an easily recognizable way, such as futuristic robots and real artists. The index connects visual signs with emotional and social meanings, such as the fear of artists reflecting the threat of AI in the art world. Symbols reinforce the meaning of the cartoon by using widely recognized elements, such as the letters "AI" and the color digital blue. Through Peirce's semiotic approach, this cartoon depicts the tension that exists between digital creators and artificial intelligence. The icon shows a visual image similar to reality, the index shows the causal relationship between the existence of AI and the response of artists, while the symbol conveys a deeper meaning about the existential threat to the field of creativity. This caricature reflects public anxiety about the effects of technology on the art world and creative jobs.

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⁴¹ Tania, Sakinah, and Rusmana, "Analisis Semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce pada Karikatur Cover Majalah Tempo Edisi 16-22 September 2019," *Jurnal Humaya: Jurnal Hukum, Humaniora, Masyarakat, dan Budaya* 2, no. 2 (2022): 139-149. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33830/humayafhisip.v2i2.2578>

⁴² Shofia Yasmine Muhamad and Erna Triswantini, "Makna Karikatur Tentang Pandemi Covid-19 pada Koran Daring *Stuttgarter Zeitung* dengan Perspektif Semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce," *Brila: Journal of Foreign Language Education* 2, no. 1 (2022): 1-15. <https://journal.unj.ac.id/unj/index.php/brila/article/download/27256/12589/73184>

⁴³ Dini Harianti, Sigit Sibawaihi, and Muhammad Faqh, "Peran Orang Tua Dalam Mengawasi Penggunaan Gadget pada Anak Usia Dini," *Kumaracitta: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* 2, no. 01 (2024): 1-7. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63577/kum.v2i01.25>

The application of systems based on artificial intelligence or AI in decision-making that affects society can raise concerns about the possibility of abuse in the development of programs related to human rights. Therefore, an approach is needed that not only emphasizes predictive capabilities but also incorporates ethical and legal principles in the design, training, and implementation stages to ensure that the social benefits are commensurate with the enormous potential of AI.

The man depicted as a caveman symbolizes ignorance or primitivism in thinking, suggesting that spreading hatred on social media is a barbaric act. Overall, the cartoon criticizes how social media is often misused as a tool to spread hatred, using semiotic elements to convey this message visually and textually. Icons are used to depict visual elements that resemble reality. Indices show the cause and effect relationship between elements in caricatures and phenomena in the real world. Symbols are used to convey critical messages that depend on social conventions and agreed upon meanings. The caricature integrates icons (mobile phones, ancient creatures), indices (angry faces as indicators of real anger on social platforms), and symbols (writing and social media logos) to provide sharp social criticism of the misuse of social media as a means of spreading hatred. This simple representation highlights the decline in intellectual capacity in today's digital environment. Advances in technology have given rise to various types of cybercrime, such as data theft and hacking of personal accounts. Internet platforms and social media can also be used as tools to spread harmful information, such as fake news and violent content, which can have a negative impact on society, especially on children and young people.

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The Miles and Huberman data analysis model was used in the data analysis stage, which follows the data collection process. This model was applied through data reduction by selecting relevant cartoons, presenting data through groupings of icons, indices, and symbols. Conclusions were then drawn based on the data interpretation.

Closing

Based on the analysis of three caricatures posted on the Instagram account @rahma_toons, it can be concluded that caricatures serve as an effective visual medium for conveying criticism of the misuse of digital technology. The first caricature shows anxiety about the dominance of artificial intelligence, which could threaten the role of human creators. The second caricature highlights how

social media is misused to spread hate speech and racism. On the other hand, the third cartoon depicts the effects of social media addiction, which results in a loss of responsibility and social alienation. Through the utilization of Peirce's semiotic elements namely icons, index, and symbols the caricatures are able to convey critical messages that are contextual and rich in meaning. This study demonstrates that Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach is effective in uncovering the implicit meanings embedded in visual signs within digital caricatures. These findings make a significant contribution to the field of visual semiotics by enriching the discourse on visual literacy and media criticism in contemporary digital culture. Furthermore, this research emphasizes that caricatures function not only as works of art but also as educational and critical tools that encourage public awareness and critical attitudes toward the influence of digital technology in everyday life. Future research is recommended to expand the scope of analysis by examining a larger number of caricatures, comparing works by different illustrators, or applying alternative semiotic frameworks to deepen the understanding of visual communication in digital media.

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