



# STATE POWER AND LEGAL DISTRUST IN POLITICAL SATIRE: A GAMSON FRAMING ANALYSIS OF "MENS REA"

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyses how state power practices and the crisis of trust in legal culture are represented through political satire in Pandji Pragiwaksono's stand-up comedy performance *Mens Rea*. The study responds to the growing use of stand-up comedy as a medium for articulating political criticism in Indonesia's democratic public sphere. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method, using *Mens Rea* as the primary data and relevant literature on political communication, satire, and legal culture as secondary data. Data were collected through observation and documentation and analysed using William A. Gamson's framing model by identifying framing devices and reasoning devices. The findings show that *Mens Rea* frames state power through issues of taxation, unequal legal treatment, institutional criticism, criminalisation fears, and public distrust toward political communication. The study argues that political satire functions not merely as entertainment but as a reflective cultural space for questioning legal legitimacy and democratic accountability.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of public dissatisfaction with government performance is an inseparable dynamic of democratic practice. In recent years, the public sphere in Indonesia has shown an increasing expression of societal criticism toward state policies, power practices, and law enforcement institutions perceived as distant from public interests [1]. The development of communication technology and digital media has expanded the space for articulating such criticism, allowing public opinion to circulate rapidly and form collective discourse on the legitimacy of state power [2]. This situation indicates that criticism of power is no longer confined to formal political arenas, but also emerges through cultural and digital spaces that shape public perception of democracy, legality, and governance.

The administration of Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka has become one of the political contexts in which public criticism has intensified. Public narratives such as "Indonesia Gelap," "Kabur Aja Dulu," and debates surrounding the increase of Value Added Tax (VAT) to 12 percent illustrate collective anxiety toward the direction of state policy. Issues concerning law enforcement institutions and government programs such as the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) initiative have also triggered debates over policy priorities, institutional transparency, and public accountability [3]. These narratives show that public criticism operates not only as emotional reaction, but also as a symbolic expression of declining trust in the state's capacity to manage power and legal legitimacy.

Public criticism of state policies is also manifested through demonstrations organized by civil society groups, students, and social organizations. In a democratic context, demonstrations represent a legitimate form of political participation and function as an important indicator of democratic health [4]. The limited impact of public demonstrations on policy change has created collective frustration and political fatigue, especially when public demands are not adequately addressed by those in power [5]. This condition encourages society to seek alternative forms of criticism beyond formal political mechanisms, including cultural expressions that are more accessible, symbolic, and communicative [6].

Popular culture has an important capacity to represent social reality while conveying criticism in forms that are understandable to broader audiences. Satire is one of the cultural strategies frequently used to expose contradictions in social and political practices through humor, irony, exaggeration, and ridicule [7]. In political communication, satire functions not merely as entertainment, but also as a discursive practice that reveals power imbalance, questions institutional authority, and deconstructs political legitimacy [8]. Satirical comedy can therefore be understood as a form of symbolic communication that transforms complex political issues into narratives that are humorous, critical, and socially reflective.

Stand-up comedy occupies a distinctive position within this development because it combines performance, personal narration, social observation, and political criticism in a direct communicative encounter with audiences. One prominent Indonesian comedian who consistently uses stand-up comedy as a medium of socio-political criticism is Pandji Pragiwaksono. Through his performances, Pandji frequently raises issues related to democracy, citizenship, state policy, and political power in Indonesia [9]. His comedic style demonstrates that stand-up comedy can function as a popular cultural text that reflects the tension between state authority and citizens' lived experiences.

In 2025, Pandji Pragiwaksono launched a stand-up comedy tour titled *Mens Rea*. The title refers to a Latin legal term meaning "guilty mind," which in criminal law denotes the element of intent in a criminal act [10]. The performance addresses various socio-political phenomena related to democracy, power, law, and society in contemporary Indonesia. The *Mens Rea* tour was held in ten cities and culminated in a major performance at Indonesia Arena, Jakarta, on August 30, 2025, attracting approximately 10,000 audience members [11]. Its later distribution through Netflix on December 27, 2025 expanded the reach of the performance and positioned local political satire within a wider digital and global platform [12].

The controversy surrounding *Mens Rea* demonstrates that political satire is not a neutral cultural form. Some parties considered its criticism insulting toward public officials, leading to reports filed with law enforcement authorities [13]. This controversy reveals the contested boundary between political criticism, freedom of expression, and respect for state institutions in Indonesian democracy. It also shows that stand-up comedy can become an arena where meanings of power, law, legitimacy, and public trust are negotiated. *Mens Rea* is therefore significant not only as a comedy performance, but also as a communication text that constructs political meaning through satire.

This study employs William A. Gamson's framing theory and Stuart Hall's representation theory to examine how political satire constructs meaning around state power and legal culture. Gamson's framing theory explains that social reality in communication texts is constructed through framing devices, including metaphors, catchphrases, exemplars, depictions, and visual images, as well as reasoning devices, including roots, consequences, and appeals to principle [15]. These devices help explain how political issues are selected, emphasized, and interpreted in satirical narratives. Stuart Hall's representation theory explains that meaning is produced through language, symbols, and cultural practices, so representation does not simply reflect reality but actively constructs how society understands social and political relations [16]. In this study, stand-up comedy is positioned as a popular cultural text that represents the relationship between the state, society, and law through satirical humor.

Previous studies have examined satire in different media and cultural forms. Hasan and Ratnasari [17] analyzed socio-political satire in the cabaret performance *Kemelut Nafash Tirani* and found that cabaret functions as a medium for criticizing repressive power through irony, symbols, and humor. Ramadhan and Achmad [18] examined political satire in Instagram Reels content by Bintang Emon and showed that irony, sarcasm, hyperbole, and wordplay shape political criticism in digital communication. Satata, Korompis, and Dimas [19] used framing analysis to examine alleged electoral fraud in the documentary film *Dirty Vote* and demonstrated how narrative structures and visual symbols frame political power practices. Wibawanti [20] examined satirical humor in the television program *Meet Nite Live* and found that punchlines operate as a strategy for delivering socio-political criticism in an infotainment format.

These studies show that political satire has been widely discussed in relation to cabaret, digital content, documentary film, and television news, but relatively limited attention has been given to stand-up comedy as a political communication text that frames state power and legal distrust through live performance and humorous narration. Existing studies also tend to emphasize satire as language style, media critique, or political expression, while the specific use of Gamson's framing analysis to examine framing devices and reasoning devices in stand-up comedy remains underdeveloped. This study addresses that limitation by positioning *Mens Rea* as a satirical

text that constructs meanings about state power practices, legal legitimacy, and the crisis of public trust in legal culture.

The contribution of this study lies in extending framing analysis into the study of political satire and popular culture. Theoretically, this study demonstrates how Gamson's framing model can be applied beyond conventional news or documentary texts to analyze stand-up comedy as a cultural form that frames political reality. In communication studies, this research contributes to understanding how humor, irony, and performance become symbolic resources for articulating criticism of state power and law enforcement institutions. In popular culture studies, this research shows that stand-up comedy can function as a site of democratic reflection where citizens negotiate trust, legitimacy, and political accountability through satirical representation.

The urgency of this study lies in the need to understand how criticism of state power practices and declining public trust in legal culture are represented through political satire in *Mens Rea* by Pandji Pragiwaksono. Amid increasing public criticism toward state policies and legal institutions, satirical comedy becomes a cultural medium that reflects social unrest while constructing public discourse on the relationship between the state and citizens. This study aims to analyze how state power practices and the crisis of trust in legal culture are framed through political satire in *Mens Rea* using William A. Gamson's framing analysis.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative interpretive design with a textual analysis approach. This design is used because the study aims to interpret how state power practices and the crisis of trust in legal culture are constructed, represented, and communicated through political satire in stand-up comedy. A qualitative interpretive approach is considered appropriate because satire does not present meaning in a direct and literal form, but through humor, irony, exaggeration, metaphor, and narrative deviation. Textual analysis enables the researcher to examine comedic material as a communication text that contains symbolic meanings, political criticism, and representations of social reality. Therefore, this study does not focus on quantitative measurement, but on interpreting how political messages are framed in the stand-up comedy performance *Mens Rea* by Pandji Pragiwaksono [21].

The object of this study is the stand-up comedy performance *Mens Rea* by Pandji Pragiwaksono. The unit of analysis consists of selected segments, bits, punchlines, and thematic narratives that explicitly or implicitly contain criticism of state power practices, law enforcement, democratic conditions, public officials, legal culture, and public distrust toward political institutions. The analysis is not applied to every part of the performance, but is focused on comedic materials that are directly relevant to the research focus. This limitation is used to ensure that the analysis remains precise, transparent, and aligned with the aim of examining the representation of state power and the crisis of trust in legal culture.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data are obtained from the *Mens Rea* stand-up comedy performance, which serves as the main text analyzed in this research. The comedic material is treated as a cultural and political communication text because it contains narratives, symbols, expressions, and satirical structures that represent issues of power, law, democracy, and public distrust in Indonesia. Secondary data are obtained from academic journals, books, media articles, and other relevant literature on political satire, political communication, legal culture, representation, and framing analysis. These secondary sources are used to strengthen the interpretation of the primary data and to situate the findings within broader scholarly debates.

Data collection is conducted through observation and documentation. Observation is carried out by watching and examining the *Mens Rea* performance repeatedly to identify segments that contain social and political criticism. The performance is observed several times to ensure that the researcher can recognize recurring themes, rhetorical patterns, punchline structures, and satirical expressions related to state power and legal culture. During the observation process, the researcher records relevant segments, marks key statements, identifies contextual meanings, and notes the relationship between comedic narration and political issues. Documentation is conducted by collecting performance recordings, transcripts of relevant comedic material, notes from the observation process, media reports, and supporting academic literature related to the performance and its socio-political context.

The data analysis applies the framing analysis model developed by William A. Gamson. This model is used because the study seeks to understand how political satire frames issues of state power practices and the crisis of trust in legal culture through specific textual and rhetorical devices. The analysis is conducted in several stages. The first stage is identifying relevant segments of the performance that contain criticism of power, law, democracy, public officials, or legal institutions. The second stage is coding framing devices, including metaphors, catchphrases, exemplars, depictions, and visual images, to examine how political issues are symbolically presented in the comedic material. The third stage is coding reasoning devices, including roots, consequences, and appeals

to principle, to identify how the satire explains the causes of political problems, describes their implications, and constructs moral or normative claims. The fourth stage is interpreting the dominant frames that emerge from the relationship between framing devices and reasoning devices. The final stage is drawing conclusions regarding how *Mens Rea* represents state power practices and the crisis of trust in legal culture through political satire [22].

Gamson's framing analysis is directly connected to the objective of this study because it provides an analytical structure for identifying how meanings about power and legal distrust are organized within satirical narratives. Framing devices help reveal the symbolic forms used by Pandji Pragiwaksono to simplify and dramatize complex political issues, while reasoning devices explain how the performance constructs causal interpretation, consequences, and moral evaluation. In this study, framing analysis is also integrated with the concept of representation because the frames found in *Mens Rea* are understood not merely as rhetorical patterns, but as cultural constructions that shape how audiences may understand the relationship between the state, law, and citizens. Through this integration, satire is analyzed as a representational practice that produces meaning about legal legitimacy, public distrust, and democratic accountability.

The researcher occupies the position of the main instrument in the process of data interpretation. This position requires interpretive awareness because the analysis of satire may be influenced by the researcher's understanding of political context, language, humor, and legal culture. To minimize potential bias, the researcher conducts repeated observation, systematic note-taking, comparison between performance material and supporting documents, and careful interpretation based on the categories of Gamson's framing model. The interpretation is not based solely on personal impressions, but is guided by the analytical framework, textual evidence, and relevant academic literature.

To ensure data validity, this study employs source triangulation. This technique is conducted by comparing data obtained from the *Mens Rea* performance, transcripts or documentation of relevant comedic segments, academic literature, media reports, and supporting documents. Source triangulation is used to verify the consistency of interpretation and to ensure that the findings are not derived from a single source of meaning. Through this process, the analysis of state power practices and the crisis of trust in legal culture in political satire can be academically justified and methodologically accountable.

### 3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The findings of this study present the results of an analysis of the *Mens Rea* performance by Pandji Pragiwaksono using the framing approach developed by William A. Gamson. The analysis was conducted by identifying several scenes within the stand-up comedy material that represent state power practices and the crisis of public trust in legal culture. Each scene was examined through framing devices and reasoning devices to understand how political satire frames the relationship between the state, law, and society [23]. The results show that satirical humor in the performance functions not only as entertainment but also as a form of meaning construction that represents social criticism of power dynamics, legal legitimacy, and political communication within the context of contemporary democracy in Indonesia.

**Table 1.** Scene: Citizens as the President's Superiors

Analysis Elements	Findings
Core Frame	State power should be under public control because political legitimacy derives from the people's mandate in a democratic system.
Metaphors	"The people are the president's boss."
Catchphrases	"We are the superiors of the President of the Republic of Indonesia."
Exemplars	The presidential election process as an example of the people granting a mandate to the government.
Depictions	The president is portrayed as accountable to the people, while the people are depicted as the holders of political mandate.
Visual / Symbolic	Collective humor on stage is used to emphasize the people's position as the source of power.
Roots	Public unawareness of their political position as holders of democratic mandate.
Consequences	When political awareness is low, state power can operate without strong public control.
Appeals to Principle	Democratic principle: power originates from the people.

The representation of the relationship between the people and state power in *Mens Rea* is constructed through a frame that reverses the conventional imagination of political hierarchy. The statement that the people are the “superiors” of the president does not merely function as a humorous exaggeration, but as a symbolic correction of political consciousness. In democratic discourse, the state is normatively positioned as an institution that derives legitimacy from the people. Pandji’s satire emerges because this normative principle is often obscured by everyday political culture, where citizens tend to perceive state leaders as figures above public control. The frame appears to challenge this misrecognition by restoring the people’s position as the source of sovereign authority.

The metaphor “the people are the president’s boss” and the catchphrase “we are the superiors of the President of the Republic of Indonesia” reinforce the core frame by translating democratic sovereignty into a familiar workplace analogy. This simplification is not analytically superficial because satire often works by converting abstract structures of power into ordinary language that audiences can immediately recognize. The metaphor makes political legitimacy intelligible, while the catchphrase gives the frame rhetorical force. In Gamson’s terms, both devices function as symbolic condensation because they compress a complex democratic principle into a memorable statement that can circulate socially [24].

The reasoning devices strengthen this frame by identifying public unawareness as the root of weakened democratic control. The problem is not only located in the state’s tendency to dominate, but also in society’s limited recognition of its own political mandate. The consequence is a political culture in which state power can operate with insufficient public scrutiny. The appeal to democratic principle then becomes the moral foundation of the satire: power originates from the people and must remain accountable to them. This connection between metaphor, catchphrase, roots, consequences, and principle shows that the scene does not only classify democratic ideas, but constructs a broader meaning about the need to recover public agency in democratic life.

Through Stuart Hall’s theory of representation, this scene can be read as an oppositional representation of state power. The performance does not reproduce the dominant image of state leaders as superior political actors, but contests it through humor. Language and humor become representational practices that produce a counter-meaning: citizens are not passive recipients of authority, but political subjects with evaluative power. In this sense, the satire represents democracy not as ceremonial electoral participation, but as an ongoing relationship of accountability between citizens and the state.

**Table 2.** Scene: Taxes as a Source of State Power

Analysis Elements	Findings
Core Frame	The state gains power and governs through taxes paid by the public.
Metaphors	Taxes are depicted as the source of “government officials’ salaries.”
Catchphrases	“Income tax (PPH) should just say it’s for Gibran’s salary.”
Exemplars	An example of an employee’s payslip showing income tax (PPH deductions).
Depictions	The state is portrayed as the recipient of funds from the public, while the public is depicted as financing the state.
Visual / Symbolic	Humorous imagination about labeling on payslips as a critique of budget transparency.
Roots	Lack of public awareness regarding how taxes are used by the state.
Consequences	When transparency is low, the public feels disconnected from the management of state finances.
Appeals to Principle	Principles of accountability and governmental transparency..

The representation of taxes as a source of state power in *Mens Rea* expands the previous frame of democratic legitimacy into the material dimension of governance. The performance frames taxation not merely as a fiscal obligation, but as the economic foundation that sustains state institutions, political elites, and bureaucratic authority. This framing appears because public distrust often grows when citizens feel that their material contribution to the state is not accompanied by transparent accountability. The satire therefore links taxation to power by showing that the state does not stand independently from society, but is materially financed by citizens.

The metaphor that taxes are connected to the “salary of government officials” and the catchphrase about income tax being labeled as “for Gibran’s salary” intensify the core frame by personalizing the abstract issue of state finance. The humor works because it brings the hidden relationship between citizens’ income and state expenditure into a concrete image. The payslip exemplar strengthens this frame by grounding the satire in an everyday bureaucratic object familiar to workers. Metaphor, catchphrase, and exemplar therefore operate together to make taxation visible as a political relationship rather than a neutral administrative process.

The reasoning devices direct the audience toward a critique of fiscal opacity. The root of the problem lies in the lack of public awareness and limited transparency regarding how taxes are managed by the state. The consequence is a sense of distance between citizens and public finance, where the people continue to fund the state but do not always feel included in understanding or evaluating state budget priorities. The appeal to accountability and transparency gives the satire its normative basis. The humor does not reject taxation itself, but questions the legitimacy of fiscal power when public contribution is not balanced by clear responsibility.

From Hall’s perspective, this scene represents taxation as a cultural sign through which the relationship between state and citizen is negotiated. The payslip is no longer only an economic document; it becomes a symbol of unequal visibility between what citizens give and what the state explains. The representation is oppositional because it challenges the dominant bureaucratic framing of tax as a routine obligation and reconstructs it as a site of democratic accountability. This interpretation also resonates with previous studies showing that satire can transform institutional issues into accessible symbolic criticism within public discourse [17], [18].

**Table 3.** Scene: Corruption and Officials Fleeing Abroad

Analysis Elements	Findings
Core Frame	The legal system is perceived as not strong enough to restrain officials involved in corruption.
Metaphors	“A corruption detection device at the airport.”
Catchphrases	“What case are you involved in?”
Exemplars	Examples of officials traveling abroad when facing legal cases.
Depictions	Public officials are portrayed as actors capable of evading legal processes.
Visual / Symbolic	Imaginative humor about a corruption detection machine as a critique of weak legal oversight..
Roots	Weak monitoring systems for officials involved in legal cases.
Consequences	The public loses trust in the state’s legal system.
Appeals to Principle	The principles of justice and equality before the law.

The representation of corruption and officials fleeing abroad frames legal culture as an arena marked by unequal access to accountability. The scene appears not simply to mock individual officials, but to expose a structural perception that legal mechanisms are weaker when dealing with political elites. The core frame reflects a crisis of legal legitimacy, where law is imagined as strict for ordinary citizens but negotiable for actors with political resources. This frame is ideologically important because it positions corruption not only as moral misconduct, but as a sign of asymmetrical power within the legal system [26].

The metaphor of a “corruption detection device at the airport” and the catchphrase “what case are you involved in?” strengthen the core frame by creating a satirical fantasy of technological certainty in a context where legal certainty is perceived as fragile. The imaginary machine becomes a symbolic substitute for an oversight system that audiences may perceive as insufficient. This humor is effective because it turns public frustration into a visualizable scene. The airport also functions as a symbolic location of escape, mobility, and privilege, making the metaphor more politically charged than a simple joke about corruption.

The reasoning devices produce a coherent moral diagnosis. The root is weak monitoring of officials involved in legal cases. The consequence is declining public trust in the legal system. The appeal to equality before the law gives the frame its normative direction. The connection between these elements shows that the satire constructs corruption as a problem of institutional credibility rather than merely individual deviance. The humorous device invites audiences to laugh, but the reasoning structure directs them to recognize the deeper crisis: legal culture loses legitimacy when public officials appear able to evade accountability.

Hall’s representation theory helps clarify how the scene produces an oppositional meaning toward legal authority. The performance does not represent law as a neutral and universally binding institution. It represents law as a contested cultural field where public meaning is shaped by perceived inequality. The official who flees

abroad becomes a symbolic figure of elite impunity, while the imagined detection device represents society's desire for a legal system that is consistent, visible, and impartial. This finding is consistent with framing studies on political media, which show that narrative and symbolic devices can shape public understanding of power abuses and democratic violations [19].

**Table 4.** Scene: Criticism of Law Enforcement (Police Institution)

Analysis Elements	Findings
Core Frame	Law enforcement institutions are perceived as not always performing their functions professionally.
Metaphors	"Precision in slogans, but persecution in practice."
Catchphrases	"The police lack integrity."
Exemplars	A case involving a police vehicle hitting an online motorcycle taxi driver.
Depictions	Law enforcement is portrayed as an institution that is inconsistent between its slogans and its actions.
Visual / Symbolic	The contrast between institutional slogans and on-the-ground actions serves as a symbol of criticism toward legal institutions.
Roots	A mismatch between professional standards and actual practices in the field.
Consequences	A decline in public trust toward law enforcement institutions.
Appeals to Principle	Principles of professionalism and the protection of citizens.

The criticism of the police institution in *Mens Rea* frames law enforcement as a site of contradiction between institutional branding and public experience. The frame appears because modern state institutions often construct legitimacy through official slogans, public relations language, and claims of professionalism. Satire exposes the fragility of that legitimacy when institutional narratives are perceived as inconsistent with practices encountered by citizens. The scene therefore does not merely criticize the police as an organization, but highlights a wider problem of symbolic legitimacy in legal culture.

The metaphor "precision in slogans, but persecution in practice" is central because it creates a sharp contrast between official self-representation and public perception. The catchphrase "the police lack integrity" reinforces the frame by condensing institutional distrust into a direct evaluative statement [27]. The exemplar involving a police vehicle and an online motorcycle taxi driver gives the satire empirical resonance by connecting the frame to a concrete incident. The relationship among these devices shows how satire moves from symbolic contradiction to social evidence. The joke is not detached from reality; it is anchored in a recognizable public narrative of institutional inconsistency.

The reasoning devices deepen the interpretation by locating the root problem in the mismatch between professional standards and field practices. The consequence is a decline in public trust toward law enforcement institutions, especially when the public perceives that the institution responsible for protecting citizens may also be associated with intimidation or negligence. The appeal to professionalism and citizen protection constructs a moral expectation that law enforcement must be accountable not only in formal procedure, but also in public experience. This frame reveals that legal legitimacy depends on the congruence between institutional discourse and lived social reality.

In representational terms, the scene negotiates the dominant image of the police as protectors of society. It does not fully deny the normative role of law enforcement, but contests its actual performance through humor. The representation can therefore be read as negotiated-oppositional: it acknowledges the institutional ideal of policing while exposing the gap between ideal and practice. This strengthens the analytical value of the scene because the satire does not operate as mere mockery; it functions as a cultural mechanism for evaluating whether state institutions fulfil the meanings they attach to themselves.

**Table 5.** Scene: Fear of the Criminalization of Political Criticism

Analysis Elements	Findings
Core Frame	Criticism of state power is perceived as potentially carrying legal risks.
Metaphors	“Tips for speaking safely about politics.”
Catchphrases	“In my opinion...” / “According to my belief...”
Exemplars	Examples of using certain phrases to avoid legal consequences.
Depictions	Critics of power are portrayed as individuals who must be cautious.
Visual / Symbolic	Humor about “safe language strategies” symbolizes a sensitive condition of freedom of expression.
Roots	Concerns about the use of law to target political criticism.
Consequences	Criticism of the government becomes more cautious or indirect.
Appeals to Principle	The principle of freedom of expression in a democratic system.

The scene on the fear of criminalization frames political criticism as an activity shaped by caution, risk, and linguistic self-protection. This frame appears because democratic freedom of expression is not experienced only through formal legal guarantees, but also through the public perception of safety when criticizing power. Pandji’s humor about “speaking safely” indicates that political criticism may be felt as legally sensitive, particularly when directed at public officials or state institutions. The satire therefore represents not only the presence of criticism, but also the anxiety surrounding the act of criticizing.

The metaphor of “tips for speaking safely about politics” and catchphrases such as “in my opinion” or “according to my belief” reinforce the frame by turning legal anxiety into a comedic language strategy. These expressions function as protective formulas that symbolize public caution. The humor arises from the excessiveness of the precaution, yet the deeper meaning lies in the condition that makes such precaution imaginable. Framing devices and reasoning devices are closely connected here: the linguistic devices represent fear, while the reasoning devices explain that fear as rooted in concerns about the possible use of law against political criticism.

The consequence of this frame is the indirectness of political speech. When citizens or public figures feel that criticism may carry legal consequences, political communication becomes more coded, humorous, or symbolic. Satire gains significance precisely because it can express criticism through ambiguity. The appeal to freedom of expression gives the scene its democratic meaning. *Mens Rea* does not simply present humor about careful wording; it represents a public sphere in which citizens negotiate the boundary between speaking critically and protecting themselves from potential sanction.

Using Hall’s theory, this scene shows how humor becomes a representational code for political anxiety. The meaning of freedom of expression is produced through language, hesitation, and comedic indirection. The representation is oppositional because it challenges the dominant claim that democratic speech is fully open and secure. At the same time, it is also negotiated because the performance still uses humor as a strategy to remain communicative within a sensitive political environment. This finding strengthens previous studies that identify satire as a mode of public criticism capable of operating across constraints in media and performance contexts [18], [20].

**Table 6.** Scene: Distrust in State Political Communication

Analysis Elements	Findings
Core Frame	The public experiences confusion in trusting political information in the digital media era.
Metaphors	The comparison between political speeches and AI-generated content.
Catchphrases	“Don’t trust social media 100%.”
Exemplars	Examples of officials’ speech videos whose authenticity is questioned.
Depictions	Political elites are portrayed as actors whose communication is often debated in terms of truthfulness.

Visual / Symbolic	Humor about AI is used to highlight the crisis of information trust.
Roots	The widespread presence of information manipulation and digital disinformation.
Consequences	Declining public trust in government political communication.
Appeals to Principle	Principles of transparency and honesty in public communication.

The representation of distrust in state political communication frames the digital public sphere as a space where political messages are increasingly unstable, contested, and difficult to verify. The comparison between political speeches and AI-generated content appears because contemporary political communication is shaped by technological mediation, platform circulation, and the growing possibility of manipulation. The scene does not only discuss disinformation as a technical problem. It represents a deeper crisis of trust in which audiences' question not only the message, but also the credibility of political speakers and the authenticity of mediated political appearances.

The metaphor comparing official speeches with AI-generated content strengthens the core frame by dramatizing the blurred boundary between genuine communication and synthetic production. The catchphrase "don't trust social media 100%" reinforces a critical orientation toward digital political information. The exemplar of officials' speech videos whose authenticity is questioned gives this frame a concrete basis in contemporary media culture. These devices work together to construct political communication as a field of suspicion, where the public must constantly verify the truthfulness of what appears before them.

The reasoning devices identify information manipulation and digital disinformation as the roots of public distrust. The consequence is a decline in confidence toward government political communication. The appeal to transparency and honesty indicates that political legitimacy in the digital era depends not only on policy performance, but also on communicative credibility. Humor about artificial intelligence therefore functions as a symbolic entry point into a broader critique of state communication. The satire suggests that when political communication loses credibility, state legitimacy becomes vulnerable because public trust is partly built through the perceived sincerity and reliability of official messages [28].

Through Hall's representation theory, this scene shows that digital political communication is not merely transmitted but culturally decoded by audiences. The public does not passively accept official messages; they interpret, question, compare, and sometimes reject them. The representation in this scene is oppositional because it challenges the authority of official communication by placing it within the same field as manipulated digital content. *Mens Rea* thus represents political communication as a contested symbolic practice in which truth, trust, and legitimacy must be continuously negotiated.

### Analysis

The overall findings indicate that *Mens Rea* constructs a broad narrative of legitimacy crisis through six interrelated frames: democratic sovereignty, fiscal accountability, elite legal evasion, institutional inconsistency, anxiety over political criticism, and distrust in state communication. These frames do not stand separately. Each scene contributes to a larger representational structure in which state power is imagined as needing stronger public control, legal institutions are questioned in terms of fairness and integrity, and political communication is interpreted through suspicion. This synthesis shows that the performance does not simply present scattered jokes about politics, but constructs a coherent critique of democratic accountability and legal culture [29].

The first pattern that emerges concerns the repositioning of citizens within the structure of power. The frame of "citizens as the president's superiors" and the frame of "taxes as a source of state power" both emphasize that the public is the source of political and material legitimacy. In the first scene, citizens provide electoral mandate. In the second scene, citizens provide fiscal support. The relationship between these two frames produces a critical insight: state power is legitimate only when it remains accountable to the people who authorize and finance it. Satire becomes a medium for making this relationship visible in everyday language.

The second pattern concerns the crisis of legal legitimacy. The scenes on corruption, officials fleeing abroad, and criticism of the police institution both frame law as an institution whose moral authority depends on equality, professionalism, and consistency. The ideological meaning of these frames lies in the critique of legal asymmetry. Law is not represented as absent, but as unevenly experienced. Political elites are depicted as capable of evading legal processes, while law enforcement institutions are portrayed through the gap between institutional slogans and public perception. This pattern shows that the crisis of trust in legal culture emerges when the public perceives that legal principles are not consistently applied.

The third pattern concerns the shrinking psychological space of democratic expression. The scene on criminalization anxiety shows that political criticism is framed as something that must be carefully managed through linguistic strategies. This does not mean that criticism disappears; rather, criticism is transformed into satire, humor, metaphor, and indirect speech. The ideological meaning is significant because satire becomes both a symptom and a response to political anxiety. It is a symptom because it reflects fear of direct criticism. It is a response because it creates an alternative communicative space where critique can still be expressed.

The fourth pattern concerns the instability of political truth in the digital era. The scene on distrust in state political communication extends the crisis of legitimacy from legal institutions to communicative institutions. Public trust is no longer determined only by what the state does, but also by how the state communicates and how its messages are perceived in a digital ecosystem marked by disinformation and artificial intelligence. The satire frames the state's political communication as vulnerable to doubt, thereby showing that democratic legitimacy is increasingly mediated by the credibility of information.

Gamson's framing theory explains how these meanings are constructed through the relationship between framing devices and reasoning devices. Metaphors and catchphrases function as symbolic shortcuts that make political criticism memorable, while exemplars and depictions connect the humor to concrete public experiences. Roots, consequences, and appeals to principle then transform the humor into a moral argument. The analytical significance lies in this connection: *Mens Rea* does not only name political problems; it frames why these problems occur, what consequences they produce, and what democratic principles are violated. Political satire therefore operates as a framing mechanism that converts laughter into public reasoning.

Stuart Hall's representation theory strengthens this interpretation by showing that the performance does not merely reflect political reality but actively constructs meanings about the relationship between state, society, and law. Through symbols, language, and humor, *Mens Rea* produces an oppositional representation of power. State authority is not represented as naturally superior, legal institutions are not represented as automatically legitimate, and official communication is not represented as automatically trustworthy. The performance invites audiences to decode state power critically by exposing contradictions between democratic ideals and perceived political practices.

These findings are aligned with Hasan and Ratnasari [17], who show that satire in performing arts can function as a symbolic medium for criticizing power practices. *Mens Rea* extends this insight by showing that stand-up comedy produces a more direct, personal, and dialogic form of political criticism because the comedian communicates through bodily presence, timing, voice, and audience interaction. The findings also strengthen Ramadhan and Achmad [18], who identify irony, sarcasm, hyperbole, and wordplay as strategies of political satire in digital media. *Mens Rea* demonstrates that similar rhetorical strategies operate not only in short-form digital content, but also in long-form performance where jokes are built through extended narrative structures.

The findings also correspond with Satata, Korompis, and Dimas [19], who demonstrate that political issues can be framed through narrative structures and symbolic devices in documentary film. The difference is that *Mens Rea* frames political reality through humor rather than documentary seriousness. This distinction is important because comedy allows criticism to appear accessible while still carrying ideological weight. The study also relates to Wibawanti [20], who explains that satirical humor in television news programs can deliver socio-political criticism in a lighter manner. *Mens Rea* expands this perspective by showing that stand-up comedy does not merely soften criticism; it can intensify criticism by making contradictions in power relations more visible and memorable.

The novelty of this study lies in positioning stand-up comedy as a political communication text that actively frames the realities of state power and the crisis of trust in legal culture through political satire. Unlike previous studies that primarily examine satire in digital media, documentary films, cabaret, or news programs, this study situates stand-up comedy as a form of popular cultural practice capable of shaping political and legal discourse in the public sphere. By applying William A. Gamson's framing analysis and integrating Stuart Hall's concept of representation, this research demonstrates that satirical humor in *Mens Rea* functions not only as entertainment but also as a mechanism for meaning construction that frames the relationship between the public, the state, and legal institutions. The broader contribution of this study lies in showing that political satire can represent a crisis of state legitimacy, not through formal political argument, but through humorous language, symbolic condensation, and audience-oriented cultural performance.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that *Mens Rea* represents state power practices and the crisis of public trust in legal culture through political satire that frames democracy as a contested relationship between citizens, state institutions, and legal authority. In response to the research objective, the analysis shows that Pandji Pragiwaksono's satire constructs state power not as an unquestioned authority, but as a structure that must remain accountable to citizens as the source of political and fiscal legitimacy. Through Gamson's framing analysis, the performance reveals that metaphors, catchphrases, exemplars, depictions, roots, consequences, and appeals to principle do not merely function as humorous elements, but as meaning-making devices that transform political

anxiety into accessible public reasoning. The main insight of this study is that stand-up comedy can convert laughter into a critical language for questioning unequal legal practices, weak institutional accountability, and declining trust in state political communication.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of framing analysis by demonstrating that Gamson's model can be applied not only to news, documentary, or formal political texts, but also to stand-up comedy as a popular cultural text. This study also enriches political satire studies by showing that satire functions as a representational practice that constructs oppositional meanings about power, law, and democracy. From Stuart Hall's perspective, *Mens Rea* does not simply mirror political reality; it actively produces meanings through humor, language, and symbolic condensation. Practically, the findings imply that political satire can serve as an alternative democratic space where citizens reflect on state legitimacy, legal culture, and institutional trust outside formal political channels. This study is limited to one performance and relies on interpretive textual analysis, so its findings cannot be generalized to all forms of Indonesian political comedy. Future studies may compare several stand-up comedy performances, examine audience reception, or analyze how political satire circulates across digital platforms to understand its broader role in shaping public discourse on law, power, and democracy.

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