



A multimodal critical discourse analysis of Ridwan Kamil's weekly *Subuh Berjamaah* Instagram posts

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Abstract

This study analysed Ridwan Kamil's weekly *Subuh Berjamaah* (a congregational dawn prayer) Instagram posts. It focused on: (1) describing how he multimodally portrayed himself as a leader; and (2) revealing his leadership ideology in those posts. The posts comprised two different semiotic modes, namely visual images and captions, to communicate the messages and ideas to the followers. In the analysis, the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) approach was utilised. The results showed that Ridwan Kamil multimodally portrayed himself as an Islamic and tolerant leader, and putting the Islamic values forwards was his leadership ideology found in those posts. His leadership ideology was then able to be socially and cognitively accepted by some followers on Instagram, to build his Islamic identity, and to contribute to his winning in West Java's Governor Election in 2018.

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Introduction

The use of social media as a personal political means of communication has become a trend in Indonesia in the last decade. Some Indonesian politicians have used social media to interact with users in cyberspace (Azmi *et al.*, 2018). One of those famous and active Indonesian politicians in social media is Ridwan Kamil, the current Governor of West Java (a province in

Indonesia), whose governance is from 2018 to 2023. In facing the Governor Election in West Java in 2018, Ridwan Kamil successfully utilised his official Instagram account as one of his campaign media to persuade his followers to vote for him in that election (Kurnia, 2018).

In his official Instagram account, he constantly interacted with his followers by posting things or programmes related to his previous work as a mayor of Bandung city. One of the work programmes Ridwan Kamil posted every weekend was an invitation to carry out a congregational dawn prayer in a different mosque in Bandung city. In his Instagram posts related to this programme, he consistently posted visual images containing the *Subuh Berjamaah* (English:

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a congregational dawn prayer) writings followed by captions to explain what the images meant. Linguistically speaking, the combination of visual images and captions in those Instagram posts is defined as multimodal texts since they communicate meanings and ideas through different semiotic modes (Hermawan, 2013; Kress, 2009; Leeuwen, 2005).

From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), we hypothesised that Ridwan Kamil's Instagram posts must have certain social practices (Fairclough, 2003; 2013; Ledin & Machin, 2019; Lirola, 2016). The social practices are related to how Ridwan Kamil used his power as a mayor of Bandung city to portray himself as a good leader, and how to get sympathy from his followers to reach his political interest through his instilled leadership ideology in his Instagram posts. The more sympathy he got, the easier the path for Ridwan Kamil to win the 2018 West Java gubernatorial election contest. Emphasising this, Machin and Mayr (2012) stated that any texts that use linguistic and visual modes look normal and neutral on the surface. Still, in reality, those texts may shape the representation of events and people for particular purposes and contain certain ideologies.

Ideology itself can be defined from two different perspectives, relativists and Marxists. Relativists define ideology as denoting systems of ideas, beliefs, and practices. Marxists define it as working in social class and cultural groups (Mayr, 2008). Meanwhile, Fairclough in Mayr (2008) viewed ideology from Gramsci's critical perspective and defined it as serving a specific group's interests with social power, ensuring the events, practices, and behaviours to legitimate common sense.

Accordingly, in this study, we aimed at critically analysing Ridwan Kamil's weekly *Subuh Berjamaah* Instagram posts focusing on the following two questions:

1. How did Ridwan Kamil multimodally portray himself as a leader in those Instagram posts?
2. What was Ridwan Kamil's leadership ideology discursively depicted from those Instagram posts?

We utilised a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) as our study approach to answer those two questions. Machin and Mayr (2012) stated that this approach can analyse the certain ideologies buried in every semiotic mode that constructs the multimodal texts. Furthermore, the analytical tools used in our MCDA research are the grammar of visual design (GVD) (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006) and the language metafunctions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Those analytical tools can describe all potential meanings in any multimodal texts, either in their pictorial or linguistic modes.

Literature Review

Previous Studies

Eliya and Zulaeha (2017), Lestari et al. (2018); Setyawan and Soraya (2020) analysed Ridwan Kamil's political communication using social media. Eliya and Zulaeha (2017) investigated Ridwan Kamil's speech code from a sociolinguistic perspective. They found that Ridwan Kamil's political communication indicated a vertical pattern, which shows that Ridwan Kamil is an individual, cultural, communal, and educated leader. Furthermore, Lestari et al. (2018) investigated Ridwan Kamil's speech acts, politeness, and propaganda campaign in his Instagram captions. Lestari et al. (2018) found that Ridwan Kamil tried to discursively build an image as a wise, populist, and noble leader with high integrity. Meanwhile, Setyawan and Soraya (2020) investigated Ridwan Kamil's communication patterns on Instagram. They found that Ridwan Kamil had interactional communication in responses to comments made in his posts based on the urgency and impact of the reaction.

These preliminary studies on Ridwan Kamil's communication provided a helpful description of how Ridwan Kamil portrayed himself as a leader, specifically on his weekly *subuh berjamaah* Instagram posts. However, this research utilised a different and more critical perspective to analyse the visual images and their captions.

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA)

Machin and Mayr (2012) stated that MCDA combines Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) with a critical perspective. Being critical here can mean denaturalising the language or other semiotic modes to examine the kinds of ideas, absences, and taken-for-granted assumptions in the texts. Only by being critical can the analysts reveal the ideology and types of power interests buried in multimodal texts. Accordingly, in MCDA, the analysts need to critically describe how the choices of semiotic modes in any texts create meaning through a careful description process since those texts look normal and neutral on the surface. However, they may be ideological and full of power interests. Generally speaking, how MCDA works is similar to the CDA, revealing the ideologies reflected, reinforced, and constructed in any discourses (Ledin & Machin, 2019; Machin, 2016; Machin et al., 2016; Mayr, 2008).

The difference between MCDA and CDA is in the necessity of analysing other semiotic modes besides the languages.

Language Metafunctions

The theory of language metafunctions describes languages from three functions, namely, ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Ideational views languages as a physical reality related to the representation of ideas or experiences. Interpersonal sees social reality and the interaction between the speakers or authors and the listeners or readers. Meanwhile, textual can reveal how linguistic modes in any text are coherently created in the context. The three metafunctions are then simultaneously described when language is in use.

Grammar of Visual Design (GVD)

Kress and Leeuwen (2006) stated that the GVD views three meaningful aspects in analysing visual images, similar to language metafunctions. They are representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning. Simply said, representational meaning is determined by represented participant's actions formed by a vector direction created by a represented participant's body. Furthermore, the represented participant's gaze system determines the interactive meaning of visual images. Meanwhile, the compositional meaning of visual images is determined by how the semiotic modes used in the multimodal texts come together to create meaning coherently.

Methodology

This study used a qualitative method with the MCDA approach to analyse how Ridwan Kamil portrayed himself as a leader and revealed his instilled leadership ideology behind the semiotic modes of his *subuh berjamaah* Instagram posts. Furthermore, 4 (four) Ridwan Kamil's *subuh berjamaah* Instagram posts were selected as this study data. They were all published on 2, 9, 16, and 23 of December 2017 or six months before the West Java governor election held in June 2018. Every post had a visual image and caption, and every caption always consisted of three parts or sections.

In the analysis, the visual images' meanings were first described and then the meanings of the captions used in the posts were explained. In the analysis of the visual images, the interactive meanings were first described,

then, the compositional meanings, and lastly, the representational meanings. Furthermore, in the analysis of the captions, the interpersonal metafunction to find out captions' speech functions was first explained, then, the textual metafunction in order to find out the captions' themes, and lastly, the ideational metafunction in order to find out the kinds of social actors and social actions.

After analysing the visual images and captions, we presented how Ridwan Kamil multimodally portrayed himself as a leader and uncovered his leadership ideology instilled in those semiotic modes by relating to the political contexts happening at the time.

Results and Discussion

The Analysis of Visual Images in Ridwan Kamil's Subuh Berjamaah Instagram Posts

From the perspective of interactive meaning, the visual images in the following [Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4](#) function to offer information to the followers as there are no gazes from the represented participants of the visual images addressed and directed to them. Furthermore, from the perspective of compositional meaning, Ridwan Kamil's followers on Instagram would probably see and read the *subuh berjamaah* writings in the following figures as their first point of sight before seeing the other represented participants (mosques, calligraphy, and Muslims). The writings then become the salient modes in all visual images of the following figures. Besides, the *Subuh Berjamaah* writings' framing and the represented participants of the following figures are always formed by rectangular boxes and separated by white lines.

Meanwhile, from the perspective of representational meaning, the four visual images in the following figures have 2 (two) meanings; the symbolic and the actional with non-transactional meanings. Those meanings are formed by the objects and people represented in those visual images. They are termed as the represented participants in GVD. The symbolic meanings are formed by objects that resemble mosques and Islamic calligraphies. Meanwhile, the actional with non-transactional meanings are formed by a vector created by the kneeling Muslims (see [figure 1](#)), those sitting when praying (see [figure 2](#)), and those walking around the mosques (see [figures 2 and 4](#)) with no clear goals.



Figure 1 The visual image used in *Subuh Berjamaah* Instagram post on December 2, 2017



Figure 2 The visual image in *Subuh Berjamaah* Instagram post on December 9, 2017

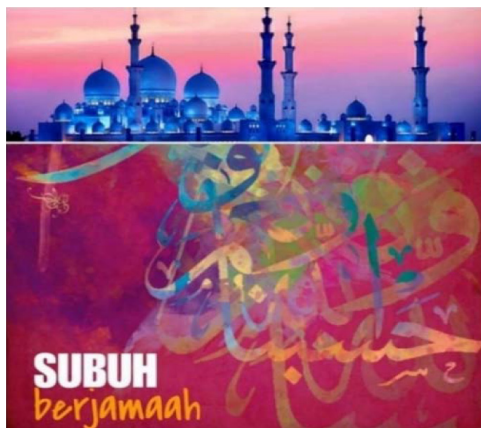


Figure 3 The visual image in *Subuh Berjamaah* Instagram post on December 16, 2017

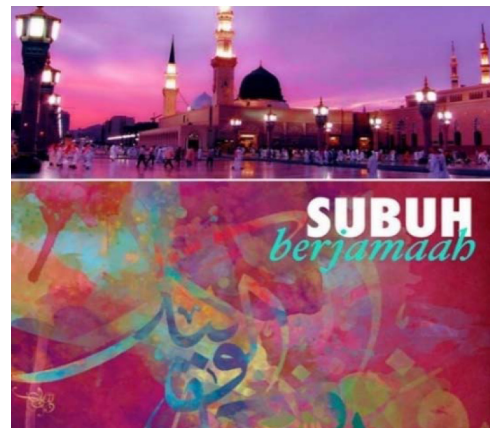


Figure 4 The visual image in *Subuh Berjamaah* Instagram post on December 23, 2017

The Analysis of Captions in Ridwan Kamil's Subuh Berjamaah Instagram Posts

From the interpersonal metafunction perspective, in every first part of the captions, Ridwan Kamil: (1) always reminded the Muslim youths of Bandung city to carry out a dawn prayer in the weekend; (2) always invited them to carry out a dawn prayer with him in the weekend in a specific mosque in the city; (3) always recommended his followers to carry out a dawn prayer every day in the mosques; and (4) sometimes invited them to pray together for Palestine and Jerusalem. Furthermore, the first parts of the captions function to demand action from the followers. The following excerpt 1 is the first part of the caption in the *subuh berjamaah* Instagram post published on December 23, 2017.

Excerpt 1

“Anak-anak muda Bandung tersayang khususnya Kec. Arcamanik, jangan lupa setelah semingguan rutinitas ratusan jam mencari dunia, besok Minggu subuh, kita subuh berjamaah berjamaah di masjid terdekat. Setiap hari lebih afdal. Sambil kita doakan Palestina dan Yerusalem.”

(English: Dear youths of Bandung who are particularly in Arcamanik district, do not forget, after a weekly routine with hundreds of hours searching the world, tomorrow at dawn, we will carry out a dawn prayer together at the nearest mosque. Doing it every day is more recommended. We will also pray for Palestine and Jerusalem.)

In every second part of the captions, Ridwan Kamil always informed the location where he or his mayor deputy would carry out a dawn prayer. Furthermore, the second parts of the captions function to offer information to the followers. The following excerpt 2 is the second part of the caption published on December 16, 2017.

Excerpt 2

“*Saya insya Allah hadir di Mesjid At-taqwa Jalan Purwerejo No.2 RT 01 RW 12, Kelurahan Antapani Kidul, Kecamatan Antapani. Bapak Wakil Walikota di Mesjid Baitul Makmur Komplek Bojong Koneng Makmur Kel. Sukapada Kec. Cibeunying Kidul*”

(English: I will be, God willing, present at At-taqwa mosque on Purwerejo street No.2, Neighborhood Association No.1, Citizens Association No. 12 Antapani Kidul Village, Antapani district. Mr. Deputy Mayor will be present at Baitul Makmur mosque in Housing Complex of Bojong Koneng Makmur, Sukapada village, Cibeunying Kidul district)

In every third part of the captions, Ridwan Kamil always posted the same clauses. Those clauses were used to remind his Christian people to worship diligently according to their respective beliefs. Since the third parts consist of a reminder, they function to demand actions from the followers, especially Christians. The following excerpt 3 is the third section of the captions posted on December 2, 9, 16, and 23, 2017.

Excerpt 3

“*Untuk umat kristiani juga jangan lupa dan jangan bolos untuk kebaktian di hari minggu esok. Agar kita kuat dan kokoh dalam fisik dan spiritual. Semangat ya*”

(English: Also, for Christians, do not forget and skip devotions tomorrow on Sunday, so that we become

strong and sturdy physically and spiritually. Keep your spirits up.)

From the textual metafunction perspective, every part of the captions used the same themes. The first part made use of two themes, namely *Anak-anak muda Bandung tersayang* (dear youths of Bandung), and the *kita* (we). Those themes are used to determine the receiver of the reminder, invitation, and recommendation. Furthermore, there are two themes in the second part namely *Saya* (I) and *Bapak Wakil Walikota* (Mr. Mayor Deputy), which represent the government of Bandung city in that programme. Meanwhile, the third part comprises only one theme known as *Untuk umat kristiani* (for Christians), which is focused on another party that receives a reminder to carry out worship.

From the ideational metafunction perspective, the captions of the *subuh berjamaah* Instagram posts represented five social actors with their actions, as shown in Table 1.

The first social actor in the captions was *Anak-anak muda Bandung tersayang* (Dear youths of Bandung). This social actor is categorised as a specific group (Leeuwen, 2008) and functions as parties to whom Ridwan Kamil’s reminder and worship invitation were addressed. It was always found in the first parts of the captions. Also, there was a social action of the actor represented from a process. The action was *mencari dunia* (search the world). From this action, the youths in Bandung city were portrayed as busy parties who loved to search for life in the world. Besides, they were also represented as if they had always forgotten things related to their afterlife.

Table 1 The representation of social actors and their actions in the captions

No	Participants/ Social Actor	Types	Identities	Actions	Types of Process	Dates of Captions
1	Anak-anak muda Bandung tersayang	Receiver	Specific group	Mencari dunia	material	December 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd, 2017
2	Kita	Actor and Sayer	Classified	Subuh Berjamaah	material	December 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23th, 2017
				Doakan Palestina dan Jerusalem	sayer	December 16th and 23rd, 2017, 2017
				kuat dan kokoh dalam fisik dan spiritual	material	December 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd, 2017
3	Saya	Actor	Classified	Insya Allah Hadir	material	December 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd
4	Bapak wakil walikota	Actor	Classified	(Hadir) di	material	December 2nd and 16th, 2017
5	Umat Kristiani	Receiver	Specific group	Jangan lupa dan jangan bolos untuk kebaktian	material	December 2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd, 2017

The second social actor represented from the captions was *kita* (we). This actor was found in three clauses written in the first and third parts of the captions. The following are the clauses:

- (1) *Kita subuh berjamaah di mesjid terdekat*
(we carry out a congregational dawn prayer at the nearest mosque.)
- (2) *Sambil kita doakan Palestina dan Yerusalem*
(while we pray for Palestine and Jerusalem.)
- (3) *Agar kita kuat dan kokoh dalam fisik dan spiritual*
(so that we become strong and sturdy physically and spiritually.)

Referring to the above clauses, *kita* (we) in; (1); (2); and (3) functioned as a party capable of carrying out three different social actions, namely carry out a dawn prayer, pray for Palestine and Jerusalem, and become strong and sturdy physically and spiritually. In Indonesian, *kita* is a subject pronoun for the first person in the plural form. In clauses: (1); (2), *kita* represented two social actors, namely Ridwan Kamil and Muslim Youths of Bandung. In those two clauses, Ridwan Kamil was mainly defined as an actor that invited the youths of Bandung city to carry out such actions. In clause; (3) *kita* represented Ridwan Kamil and his Christian followers in Bandung city. In this clause, Ridwan Kamil wrote the purpose of reminding Christians to worship according to their beliefs to make them solid and sturdy in building Bandung city.

The third social actor found in the captions was *saya* (English: I), which is a subject pronoun for the first singular person. This social actor was found in the first clause of the second part and functioned as a party capable of coming to a mosque to carry out a dawn prayer. Meanwhile, the social action of the actor was *Insya Allah hadir* (God willing, I attend).

The fourth social actor found was *Bapak Wakil Walikota* (Mr. Mayor Deputy). This social actor was located in every second part of the captions. Similar to the third, this social actor functioned as a party that would also come to a particular mosque to carry out a dawn prayer. The social action represented was (*hadir*) *di* (to attend).

The fifth social actor found was *Umat Kristiani* (Christians). This social actor was categorised as a specific group and functioned as parties where the reminder to worship was addressed. Meanwhile, the social action represented was '*jangan lupa dan jangan bolos untuk kebaktian*' (do not forget and skip devotions). This social actor and its action were always found in every third part of the captions.

How Ridwan Kamil Multimodally portrayed Himself as a Leader in His Weekly Subuh Berjamaah Instagram Posts

Through a careful analysis describing the meanings of every semiotic mode in Ridwan Kamil's *Subuh Berjamaah* Instagram posts, it was found that those modes multimodally and coherently portrayed Ridwan Kamil as an Islamic and tolerant leader to his followers. The following process is how Ridwan Kamil portrayed himself as a leader in those Instagram posts.

The followers were positioned to continuously and directly visualise and read the *Subuh Berjamaah* writings as the most salient modes (see Figure 1, 2, 3, and 4). Those writings built their positive perception of Ridwan Kamil and considered him an Islamic leader. Afterwards, when reading the posts' captions, the followers were always invited and reminded to pray. Ridwan Kamil always invited Muslim followers, especially youths, to carry out a dawn prayer in the mosques and sometimes asked them to pray for Palestine and Jerusalem. Besides, he also reminded his Christian followers not to forget to pray over the weekend. The visual images and captions in those posts socially portray and reinforce Ridwan Kamil's representation as a leader that is Islamic and tolerant to Instagram users.

The Leadership Ideology on Ridwan Kamil's Subuh Berjamaah Instagram Posts

According to Paltridge (2012), tracing ideology in a text starts from textual analysis and moves to explanation and interpretation. This research first analysed the meanings of every semiotic mode in Ridwan Kamil's *Subuh Berjamaah* Instagram posts. Furthermore, it interpreted Ridwan's leadership ideology by relating those meanings to his political motives and interests.

From the results of the meaning analysis of the *subuh berjamaah* Instagram posts' semiotic modes, it was found that Ridwan Kamil's leadership ideology in those posts was to put forward Islamic values. This ideology was discursively depicted from: (1) the invitation to carry out a congregational dawn prayer in the mosques; (2) the invitation to pray for Palestine and Jerusalem addressed to Muslim youths of Bandung city; and (3) the reminder for Christians to pray always.

In Islam, a dawn prayer is considered the most arduous for every Muslim. It must be carried out early in the morning at mosques. For that reason, Ridwan Kamil invited the youths to the mosque to carry out this prayer. Besides, caring for Palestine and Jerusalem seems to be an obligation for every leader in Indonesia, especially in

West Java. This is due to the increase in the number of Muslims in Palestine being tortured and oppressed by Israeli colonialism. Therefore, Ridwan Kamil tried to show his care for Muslims in Palestine and Jerusalem by inviting the youths to pray for their freedom.

Furthermore, being tolerant is also an essential part of Islamic values. Therefore, Ridwan Kamil always reminded Christians not to forget to pray during weekends. By reminding them, Ridwan Kamil tried to ensure non-Muslim people pray without being disturbed and wished to show that Bandung city had accepted the difference and promoted the tolerance value according to Islamic teachings.

By putting forward those Islamic values, Ridwan Kamil tried to retain his political interests and hegemony towards his people and followers on Instagram. Ridwan Kamil also tried to strengthen his image as a governor candidate of West Java by building his Islamic identity using mayoral power by encouraging people to worship according to their beliefs. In West Java province, the Islamic identity is a must-have attribute owned by every leader.

Furthermore, Ridwan Kamil's leadership ideology was socially and cognitively accepted by followers and slowly influenced their consciousness as the *Subuh Berjamaah* Instagram posts were continuously given to them every week. They accepted Ridwan Kamil's leadership ideology without realising. In other words, when they subconsciously received the ideology, they were no longer critical and forgot the motives underlying the texts. When the audiences are in such a situation, they are already in a false consciousness created by manipulating discourses built in the texts.

Conclusions

This study critically analysed and revealed: (1) how Ridwan Kamil portrayed himself as a leader; and (2) his leadership ideology instilled in his weekly *Subuh Berjamaah* Instagram posts. It utilised MCDA along with Kress and Leeuwen's GVD and Halliday's language metafunctions to explore the potential meanings in those posts' semiotic modes. The results showed that: (1) Ridwan Kamil portrayed himself as an Islamic leader and tolerant through the coherences of the *subuh berjamaah* writings, Islamic symbols; (2) Social actions. The actions were the invitation to do a congregational dawn prayer in a mosque, the invitation to pray for Palestine and Jerusalem, and being tolerant; and (3) Ridwan Kamil's leadership ideology revealed was to put forward Islamic values. His leadership ideology

could be accepted by his followers, build his Islamic identity on Instagram, and contribute to his winning in the 2018's West Java Governor election.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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