

Mens Rea Representation In Pandji Pragiwaksono's Public Communication: A Communicative Action and Mass Communication Theory Perspective

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Abstract

This study examines communicative intent (mens rea) in Pandji Pragiwaksono's public communication through his Netflix stand-up special MensRea(2025), which triggered widespread controversy in Indonesia's digital public sphere. Despite growing scholarship on political satire and digital communication, little attention has been given to the gap between communicator intent and audience interpretation in the Indonesian context. This research employed qualitative online media observation conducted from March to May 2026, using systematic keyword searches across designated digital platforms. Data were drawn from the Netflix special as primary corpus, supplemented by YouTube podcast content, social media posts, and national online news coverage. Sentiment data were sourced from Drone Emprit and DataIndonesia.id. Pandji's communicative mens rea was consistently identified as an intent to deliver socio-political critique through satire across four dimensions lexical, contextual, consistency, and responsive with significant sentiment polarization between online media (53.2% negative) and social media (66.1% positive). Mens Rea demonstrates comedy's capacity as a political mirror, while media framing and the absence of a shared normative framework rather than communicator failure alone contributed significantly to public polarization. Findings suggest implications for communication ethics, media coverage standards, and regulatory frameworks in Indonesia's digital public sphere.

KEYWORDS

MENS REA, communicative action theory, mass communication, pandji pragiwaksono, digital public sphere

Introduction

The rise of digital platforms has fundamentally transformed how public figures communicate socio-political critique to mass audiences. In Indonesia, this transformation has created a complex tension between communicative intent and audience interpretation, particularly when satire intersects with sensitive political and religious themes. The case of Pandji Pragiwaksono's Netflix stand-up special Mens Rea (2025) exemplifies this tension, generating unprecedented public controversy across digital media platforms. While existing studies have examined political satire and media framing separately, few have integrated the concept of communicative intent (mensrea) as an analytical framework within communicative action theory to explain how gaps between communicator intent and public interpretation emerge and escalate in Indonesia's digital public sphere. This study addresses that gap by proposing a communicative mens rea analytical model that bridges legal concepts of intent with Habermas's theory of communicative action and McQuail's mass

communication theory. This research is an applied study aimed at generating knowledge that can be directly applied to solving real problems related to digital public communication practices. Unlike pure research that solely aims to develop theory, this applied research is oriented toward implementing academic findings to address identified practical needs (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This research is important to analyze how mens rea in Pandji Pragiwaksono's statements can be understood by netizens through positive, negative, and neutral comments, as well as how the processes of communicative action and mass communication unfold in the digital public sphere. This analysis is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between communicator intent and the meaning of messages received by audiences in the context of public figure communication. Furthermore, this research may encourage public figures to be more careful and responsible in making public statements, taking into account the potential impact arising from differing interpretations within society. This research aims to contribute to the creation of healthier, more constructive, and consensus-oriented public communication, in accordance with the principles idealized in Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action (Couldry, 2012).

The research questions addressed in this study are as follows: (1) What is the form of Mens Rea (intent or purpose) in Pandji Pragiwaksono's statements as expressed through his public communication? (2) How is the meaning of Pandji Pragiwaksono's messages understood by the public audience based on the Theory of Communicative Action? (3) What communication factors influence the emergence of controversy in Pandji Pragiwaksono's statements in the digital public sphere? (4) What are the implications of the analytical findings on the form of Mens Rea in Pandji Pragiwaksono's public communication for the quality of public discourse, communication ethics, and social impact within the mass communication ecosystem?

The objectives of this research are as follows: (1) To identify the form of Mens Rea (intent or purpose) in Pandji Pragiwaksono's statements as expressed through his public communication. (2) To analyze the meaning of the messages conveyed by Pandji Pragiwaksono based on the Theory of Communicative Action. (3) To identify the communication factors that contribute to the emergence of controversy over Pandji Pragiwaksono's statements in the digital public sphere. (4) To examine the implications of the analytical findings on the form of Mens Rea in Pandji Pragiwaksono's public communication for the quality of public discourse, communication ethics, and its social impact within the mass communication ecosystem. The benefits of this research are divided into three categories as follows:

Theoretical Benefits

This research makes an original theoretical contribution by critically adapting the legal concept of mens rea traditionally used to establish criminal culpability into a communicative analytical framework. In this study, mens rea is not applied to determine legal guilt, but rather to systematically identify and interpret a communicator's intent through four operational dimensions: lexical, contextual, consistency, and responsive. This adaptation addresses a gap in existing communication scholarship, where studies on political satire (Fikri et al., 2025; Hutagalung & Nurhasanah, 2025) and digital public sphere dynamics (Angga et al., 2023)

have not sufficiently theorized the role of communicative intent as a structured analytical category. By positioning communicative mens rea within Habermas's validity claims framework and McQuail's media framing theory, this study offers a novel interdisciplinary model that goes beyond merely combining existing theories it proposes a replicable analytical instrument for studying intent-interpretation gaps in public figure communication.

Practical Benefits

This research serves as a guide for communicative intent analysis and a reference for public figures, media, and society to be more thoughtful in conveying and interpreting public figure statements, thereby minimizing misunderstandings and controversies in the digital public sphere.

Applied Benefits

In the context of this research, the applied form includes producing a communicative mens rea analytical model that can be used as an evaluation tool for public figure communication; providing theory-based message interpretation guidelines adoptable by communication practitioners, journalists, and regulators in assessing communicator intent; and generating strategic recommendations based on empirical findings that can be directly applied by public figures, mass media, and regulatory institutions in managing sensitive communication in Indonesia's digital public sphere (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

Methods

Data were collected through systematic online media observation conducted from March to May 2026. The observation covered three designated platforms: (1) Netflix Indonesia as the source of primary corpus, specifically the Mens Rea stand-up special in its entirety, (2) Pandji Pragiwaksono's official YouTube channel, focusing on podcast content published between December 2025 and March 2026, and (3) national online news portals and social media platforms, retrieved using the following search keywords: Mens Rea, Pandji Pragiwaksono, stand-up Netflix, and penistaan agama. Inclusion criteria required that sampled items: (a) directly referenced the Mens Rea special or Pandji Pragiwaksono's related statements, (b) were published within the observation period of December 26, 2025 to March 2026, and (c) were publicly accessible without subscription barriers. Items unrelated to the controversy or duplicated across platforms were excluded. The unit of analysis was each communicative statement or media text that contained explicit or implicit representation of communicative intent.

Coding was conducted using four analytical dimensions lexical, contextual, consistency, and responsive applied to each unit through a structured observation table. Each dimension was operationalized as follows: lexical referred to word choice and rhetorical markers indicating intent, contextual examined situational and sociopolitical factors surrounding the statement, consistency traced patterns of communicative intent across multiple platforms and time points, and responsive analyzed the communicator's reactions under public and legal pressure as indicators of sustained intent. Sentiment percentages were derived from Drone Emprit and DataIndonesia.id monitoring data covering December 26, 2025 to January 6, 2026, which employed automated sentiment classification subsequently cross-checked against manual reading of dominant

narrative patterns to ensure consistency. Validity was ensured through source triangulation across three independent data sources Netflix, YouTube, and online news media and theoretical triangulation using Habermas's communicative action framework and McQuail's media framing theory, with confirmability established through Pandji's publicly available clarification statements as indirect member checking.

Research Type

This research employs a qualitative method with a single instrumental case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2021). The case of Pandji Pragiwaksono's *Mens Rea* was selected on three grounds. First, it is a critical case in that it represents an extreme and revelatory instance of communicative intent controversy involving simultaneous legal, religious, and political dimensions that rarely converge in a single public communication event (Yin, 2018). Second, it is an instrumental case in that it serves as a lens through which broader dynamics of intent-interpretation gaps in Indonesia's digital public sphere can be systematically examined and theorized, beyond the specifics of this individual comedian's situation (Stake, 1995). Case boundaries were defined temporally, substantively, and platformically. Temporally, the case is bounded from April 2025 when the national tour commenced to March 2026, when legal proceedings were still ongoing. Substantively, the case is bounded to three main communicative statements within the *Mens Rea* special that directly triggered public controversy. Platformically, the case is bounded to publicly accessible digital content across Netflix, YouTube, and national online news and social media platforms.

Analytical generalizability rather than statistical generalizability is the intended scope of this study's findings (Yin, 2018). The communicative mens rea analytical model proposed here is transferable to other cases of public figure communication controversy in digitally mediated environments, particularly where gaps between communicator intent and audience interpretation produce significant public polarization. Future comparative case studies are recommended to further test and refine this model across different communicative contexts. Paradigmatically, this research falls under the category of applied research, which differs from pure or basic research in several fundamental aspects.

- **Goal Orientation:** Pure research aims to develop new universally applicable theories, whereas applied research aims to apply theory to solve specifically identified problems (Bryman, 2016). This research specifically aims to produce an analytical model that can be directly used by communication practitioners.
- **Contextual Relevance:** This research does not merely test theoretical propositions in the abstract, but directly connects its findings to the ongoing context of Indonesia's digital public communication, which carries real social and legal implications (Creswell and Poth, 2021).
- **Applicable Output:** The outcomes of this research are not limited to theoretical contributions, but also include strategic recommendations that can be adopted by public figures, mass media, and communication regulators.

Therefore, this method was selected by the researcher so that the research can provide a systematic picture of the dynamics of communicator intent, media message construction, and audience interpretation within the framework of communicative action theory and mass communication theory.

Research Time

This research was conducted using observations of the *Mens Rea* stand-up comedy special by Pandji Pragiwaksono through the Netflix platform. The research was carried out from March to May 2026.

Data And Instrumentation

Data sources in this research are divided into two categories, both obtained through systematic online media observation on designated digital platforms as research locations. The types of data used are as follows:

Primary Data

The primary data obtained in this research is the recording of the *Mens Rea* stand-up comedy special by Pandji Pragiwaksono, accessible through the Netflix Indonesia platform since December 27, 2025. This primary data consists of three main communicative statements that form the analysis corpus, as they directly contain the communicator's mens rearepresentation, namely: the political satire referencing Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka as political critique, the critique of mining permits for religious organizations as socio-political policy critique, and the *shalat safar* material as socio-religious critique and identity politics.

Secondary Data

The secondary data in this research consists of four sources functioning as supporting data within the analytical context: First, podcast content on Pandji Pragiwaksono's official YouTube channel containing statements, arguments, and clarifications related to mens rea before, during, and after the polemic. Second, national digital mass media coverage of events and controversies surrounding mens rea, obtained through systematic keyword searches on leading online news outlets. Third, posts and statements on Pandji Pragiwaksono's official social media accounts published within the research period and directly related to the mens rea text. Fourth, supporting documents including legal counsel statements, official press releases, and academic references relevant to the research focus.

The first instrument is the communicative mens rea analytical framework, comprising four dimensions applied to each unit of analysis. The second instrument is Habermas's validity claims matrix, used to identify communicative gaps. The third is a structured observation guideline table. The fourth is McQuail, (2010) media framing analytical matrix, used to trace the reframing of *Mens Rea* from satirical entertainment into a criminal legal event. To ensure transparency and reduce interpretive bias, the following coding [table 1](#) and [table 2](#) was developed.

All four instruments complement one another sequentially: the communicative mens rea framework identifies intent representation; the validity claims matrix locates communicative gaps; the observation guideline table systematizes data collection; and the media framing matrix explains how controversy was amplified through reframing processes.

Research Subject

This research involves two distinct subject categories. The primary subject is Pandji Pragiwaksono as a public communicator, examined exclusively through his publicly produced and distributed communication across designated digital platforms namely the *Mens Rea* performance on Netflix, podcast content on his official YouTube channel, and statements on his official social media accounts. No direct interview was conducted with Pandji Pragiwaksono; his publicly available clarification statements including those

made during an 8-hour police examination, podcast appearances, and social media posts served as indirect confirmation of communicative intent, functioning as a substitute for member checking (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

The secondary subject is Ivanovic Agusta, a sociologist at IPB University's Faculty of Human Ecology (FEMA), who was selected as a key informant through purposive sampling on the basis of his demonstrated academic expertise in Indonesian social critique, digital public discourse, and political communication (Patton, 2015). A semi-structured interview was conducted as this format allows for flexible yet focused data collection on predefined thematic areas while permitting the informant to elaborate on relevant insights. The interview focused on four thematic areas: (1) the sociological function of Mens Rea as social critique; (2) the dynamics of public response and polarization; (3) the role of digital platforms in amplifying controversy; and (4) implications for freedom of expression and democratic communication in Indonesia. Informed consent was obtained prior to the interview, and the informant was made aware that responses would be used for academic research purposes. Interview data were analyzed thematically in accordance with Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) framework, with responses cross-checked against primary data from Netflix and secondary data from online media coverage to ensure analytical consistency.

Data Validity

To ensure objectivity in interpreting communicator intent and avoiding researcher interpretive bias, this research applies four data validity mechanisms. First, source data triangulation is conducted by comparing findings from three independently different sources primary data from Netflix, secondary data from Pandji's YouTube podcast, and secondary data from digital mass media coverage. If all three sources demonstrate consistent patterns of mens rearepresentation, the researcher's interpretation can be declared valid (Miles et al., 2014). Second, theoretical triangulation is conducted by analyzing data using two theoretical frameworks in Table 1. *Communicative Mens Rea Coding Framework*

parallel Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action and McQuail's Mass Communication Theory. If both frameworks produce convergent conclusions, the research findings carry a higher degree of credibility (Creswell and Poth, 2021). Third, confirmability through the subject's public statements is applied as a substitute for direct member checking. Given that the research subject is not examined through interviews, Pandji Pragiwaksono's publicly available clarification statements including those made to investigators, on podcasts, and on social media are used as indirect confirmation of the researcher's interpretation of his intent (Rijali, 2018). Fourth, an audit trail is applied by transparently documenting the entire analytical process, from text transcription, selection of analysis units, application of the analytical matrix, to conclusion drawing, enabling readers to independently follow and evaluate the researcher's thought process.

Implications and Findings Dissemination Plan

The findings of this research are planned to be strategically disseminated to three stakeholder groups in order to maximize their practical impact in managing sensitive public communication. First, for public figures particularly comedians, artists, and opinion activists who use performing arts as a medium for social critique the research findings can serve as an analytical guide on how to construct critical messages that still fulfill communicative validity claims, thereby minimizing the risk of misunderstanding and social conflict escalation (Sahid et al., 2025). Second, for mass media, these findings can serve as a more balanced coverage framework in handling controversies involving public figure statements by taking into account the mens rea dimension of the communicator, rather than merely emphasizing the sensational and legal controversy aspects. Third, for public communication regulators such as the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) and law enforcement agencies, this research provides a communication science-based analytical foundation for distinguishing satire as a protected form of artistic expression from speech that potentially disturbs public.

Dimension	Indicator	Data Source	Example of Coded Text	Decision Rule
Lexical	Word choice, rhetorical markers, figurative language signaling critical intent	Netflix transcript ; YouTube podcast	I know this is sensitive, but this is a fact	Coded as intentional critique if language explicitly signals awareness of sensitivity combined with deliberate assertion
Contextual	Sociopolitical context, timing, target of critique, platform choice	Netflix special; national news coverage	Critique of mining permits delivered in the context of public policy debate	Coded as contextually grounded if statement aligns with verifiable socio-political events or public discourse
Consistency	Recurrence of similar communicative positions across platforms and time	YouTube podcast; social media posts; police examination transcripts	Repeated denial of blasphemous intent across podcast, social media, and 8-hour police examination	Coded as consistent if the same communicative intent is maintained across at least three independent platforms or time points
Responsive	Communicator's reactions under public and legal pressure	Social media statements; legal counsel statements; press releases	Public statement maintaining satirical intent despite multiple police reports	Coded as responsive-intentional if communicator sustains original framing under pressure without retraction

Sources: Chesney (1939), Entman (1993), Fikri et al (2025), Habermas (1984), McQuail (2010), Miles, Huberman & Saldaña (2014).

Table 2. *Habermas's Validity Claims Analytical Matrix*

Validity Claim	Indicator	Data Source	Communicative Gap Identified
Truth	Factual accuracy of statements	Verified public data; news reports	Gap between verifiable facts and audience perception of fabrication
Sincerity	Consistency between stated intent and observable behavior	Podcast; social media; police examination	Gap between communicator's declared intent and audience attribution of malicious intent
Rightness	Normative appropriateness within shared social framework	Audience comments; media framing	Gap arising from absence of shared normative framework for satire in Indonesian public discourse

Sources: (Al'anam & Salman, (2022), Angga et al (2023), Habermas (1984), Muttaqien & Ramdan (2023).

order, so that the handling of similar cases in the future can more comprehensively consider the communicative context and communicator intent.

Research Reminder

This research holds significant practical relevance as an instrument for preventing communication conflicts in the digital public sphere. Concretely, this research can be utilized by three stakeholder groups. First, for public figures, this research provides an analytical guide on how to construct critical messages that remain communicatively accountable, thereby minimizing the risk of misunderstanding. Second, for mass media, this research offers a coverage framework that takes into account the mens rea dimension of the communicator, rather than merely emphasizing the sensational aspects of the controversy at hand (Sahid et al., 2025). Third, for public communication regulators, this research provides an analytical foundation for distinguishing satire as a legitimate form of artistic expression from speech that potentially divides society, thereby supporting the creation of a healthier, more constructive, and consensus-oriented public communication ecosystem (Winanto et al., 2025). This research does not intend to assess criminal accountability, but rather uses the concept of mens rea as an analytical tool for communicative intent and mass communication. The Theory of Communicative Action developed by Jurgen Habermas serves as one of the main theoretical foundations of this research.

Accordingly, this research is important to conduct in order to analyze how mens rea in Pandji Pragiwaksono's statements can be understood by netizens through positive, negative, and neutral comments, as well as how the processes of communicative action and mass communication unfold in the digital public sphere. This analysis is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between communicator intent and the meaning of messages received by audiences in the context of public figure communication. Furthermore, this research may encourage public figures to be more careful and responsible in making public statements, taking into account the potential impact arising from differing interpretations within society. This research aims to contribute to the creation of healthier, more constructive, and consensus-oriented public communication, in accordance with the principles idealized in Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action (Habermas, 1984).

Result and Discussion

Contextual Description of the Case

The Mens Rea stand-up special was officially released on Netflix Indonesia on December 27, 2025, and immediately ranked as the number one content in the

Netflix Indonesia TV Shows category (Kompas TV, 2026). The special contained three main communicative statements that triggered public controversy: (1) a political satire referencing Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka by name, (2) a critique of mining permit policies granted to religious organizations, and (3) material regarding the shalat safar practice, interpreted by some parties as religious blasphemy (BBC Indonesia, 2026; CNN Indonesia, 2026). These three statements constitute the primary corpus of this study and form the basis for the analytical findings presented below.

Analytical Findings: Communicative Mens Rea Representation

Addressing Research Question 1 what is the form of communicative mens rea in Pandji's public communication? analysis across the four dimensions reveals a consistent pattern of intentional socio-political critique through satire. First, at the lexical dimension, Pandji's deliberate adoption of the legal term mens rea as the title of his special signals full communicative awareness of the content delivered. This lexical choice functions as a pre-emptive declaration of intent, consistent with Chesney, (1939) conceptualization of mens rea as a conscious mental state preceding action. Rather than concealing critical intent, Pandji's language openly frames his communication as purposeful critique, satisfying Habermas's (1984) sincerity claim at the level of utterance. Second, at the contextual dimension, each of the three controversial statements was grounded in verifiable socio-political realities documented policy decisions, publicly known political figures, and ongoing religious debates fulfilling Habermas's (1984) truth claim. This contextual grounding distinguishes the statements from arbitrary provocation and positions them within Indonesia's broader democratic discourse (Muttaqien & Ramdan, 2023). Third, at the consistency dimension, Pandji maintained identical communicative positions across multiple platforms Netflix, YouTube podcasts, social media, and an 8-hour police examination involving 63 questions (TvOneNews.com, 2026) without retraction or substantive revision. This cross-platform consistency constitutes strong evidence of stable communicative intent (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). Fourth, at the responsive dimension, Pandji's sustained framing of his statements as satire under significant legal and social pressure including multiple police reports and a traditional adat court proceeding further confirms the intentional nature of his communicative mens rea (Antaranews, 2026). Taken together, these four dimensions consistently identify Pandji's communicative mens rea as an intent to deliver socio-political critique through satire, directly answering Research Question 1 and confirming the applicability of the communicative mens rea analytical framework proposed in this study.

Communicative Gaps: Habermas's Validity Claims

Addressing Research Question 2 how is the meaning of Pandji's messages understood by the public audience based on communicative action theory? analysis using Habermas's (1984) validity claims matrix reveals three communicative gaps. The truth claim gap emerged when verifiable policy critiques were received by some audiences as personal attacks or fabrications, reflecting a failure of shared factual grounding in Indonesia's fragmented digital public sphere (Angga et al., 2023). The sincerity claim gap emerged when Pandji's declared satirical intent was reinterpreted by opposing audiences as malicious provocation, demonstrating that sincerity cannot be unilaterally established by the communicator but requires a receptive normative framework. The rightness claim gap the most structurally significant emerged from the absence of a shared normative framework for satire in Indonesian public discourse, meaning that the same communicative act was simultaneously judged as legitimate political critique and as ethically or legally transgressive depending on the audience's normative reference point (Entman, 1993). These gaps confirm that consensus failure in the Mens Rea controversy does not solely stem from communicator failure, but from structural fragmentation in Indonesia's digital public sphere directly addressing Research Question 3.

Mens Rea in Criminal Law Proof: Normative Foundation

Before analyzing mens rea in its communicative dimension, this research first establishes a normative legal foundation as a reference framework. Through the Old Criminal Code (KUHP): Chapter IV on Attempts, Article 53 Paragraph (1), the concept of mens rea is implicitly recognized as a constitutive element in criminal proof that intent must be proven objectively through the commencement of execution, not merely through subjective allegations from the reporting party. This standard of proof becomes highly complex when applied to the context of satirical statements and performing arts. Meanwhile, the National Criminal Code (New): Article 36 Paragraph (1) of [Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 1 Tahun 2023 Tentang Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana](#), (2023) affirms two relevant categories of mens rea, namely intentionality (*dolus*) and negligence (*culpa*), while simultaneously codifying the principle of *geen straf zonder schuld* (no punishment without fault) as the foundation of modern criminal accountability in Indonesia. This research affirms that the determination of whether or not mens rea exists in a legal context remains the exclusive authority of judges in court proceedings, and therefore the mens rea framework in this research is used solely as a communicative analytical tool, not as a legal assessment.

Representation of Mens Rea in Three Main Topics of the Netflix Show

Analysis of communicative mens rea representation was conducted through four operational dimensions lexical, contextual, consistency, and responsive applied in parallel across three main segments.

The first segment, Satire on the State: Reference to Gibran Rakabuming Raka, was analyzed as an organic continuation of Pandji's communicative position consistently built over more than two decades not an impulsive act. Gibran himself responded by stating that criticism and evaluation are normal and need not be reported to the police, while digital spaces experienced polarization between those appreciating Pandji's courage

and those viewing it as normatively excessive.

The second segment, Critique of Mining Permits for Religious Organizations, was built on verifiable factual data fulfilling Habermas's truth claim. However, audience responses were polarized based on religious affiliation and political position. Reports to the Jakarta Metro Police under the names of Young NU and Young Muhammadiyah were denied by both central boards, while Muhammadiyah viewed Pandji's mining critique as constructive. An editorial in Media Indonesia highlighted serious procedural flaws the show was performed in August 2025 but reported using a new Criminal Code that only took effect January 2, 2026, violating the principle of non-retroactivity.

The third segment, Shalat Safar Material: Socio-Religious Critique and Identity Politics, generated the highest public reaction. The use of religious terminology in satirical comedy created significant semantic ambiguity due to inherent polysemy. Despite this, Pandji consistently maintained he had no intent to blaspheme across all platforms and during an 8-hour police examination with 63 questions. A total of three police reports and two public complaints were filed, with legal proceedings still ongoing through restorative justice and criminal channels.

Pandji Pragiwaksono's Traditional Adat Court Proceedings in Toraja

Outside formal legal channels, resolution was pursued through a traditional adat court in Toraja on February 10 - 11, 2026, where Pandji was sanctioned with one pig and five chickens as a symbol of restoring adat balance and honor not merely as a punishment. The process, facilitated by the Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago (AMAN), was bidirectional in nature, with the Toraja community also extending apologies for personally offensive attitudes that arose from being provoked by circulating video clips. Pandji graciously accepted all adat decisions, treating the experience as valuable learning to exercise greater care in delivering material particularly that which relates to regional customs and culture.

Netflix Responds to the Mens Rea Controversy

Responding to the controversy, Netflix's Senior Director of Content for Southeast Asia, Malobika Banerji, was reported as stating that the platform respects Pandji and supports content diversity, while indicating that Pandji is the most appropriate party to address questions regarding the content and its legal implications ([Tempo.co](#), 2025). According to the same report, Netflix maintained that the content would remain on the platform, as no official government order or court ruling mandating its removal had been issued at the time of reporting a position consistent with standard platform content governance practices as described by Deuze (2012) and Couldry (2012).

Separately, law lecturer Herdiansyah Hamzah of Mulawarman University was reported as raising legal questions regarding the validity of evidence submitted by the complainant, specifically a Netflix video downloaded to a flash drive, on the grounds that such action may constitute a violation of the platform's terms of use ([Detik.com](#), 2026). It should be noted that this represents an academic legal opinion and not a formal judicial determination; the admissibility of said evidence remains subject to the exclusive authority of the presiding court in the ongoing legal proceedings ([Hiariej](#), 2017). (See [figure 1](#)).

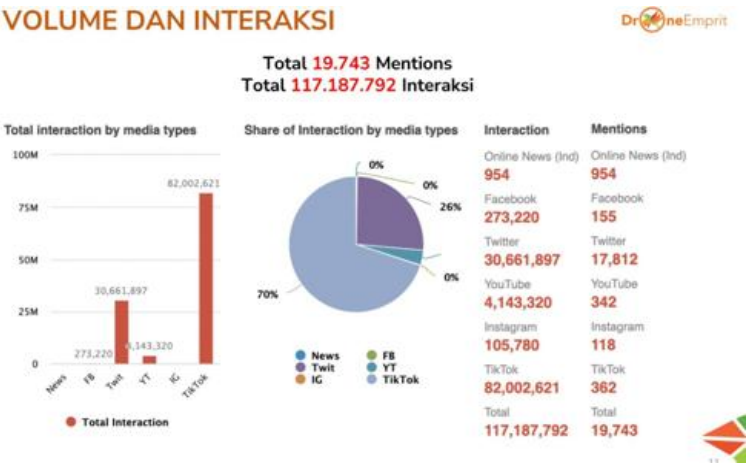


Figure 1. Audience Sentiment Analysis of Mens Rea
Source: Volume and Interaction Analysis, Pers.droneemprit.id, January 2026



Figure 2. Analysis of conversations trends on the topic of mens rea across online and social media
Source: Conversation Trend Analysis, and Pers.droneemprit.id, January 2026.



Figure 3. Public sentiment on the topic of mens rea involving Pandji in online media and social media
Source: Public Sentiment Analysis, Pers.dronememprit.id and DataIndonesia.id, January 2026

Quantitative sentiment data were sourced from Drone Emprit, an Indonesian social media monitoring platform that employs automated keyword-based crawling to collect publicly accessible content across multiple digital platforms. The monitoring period covered December 26, 2025 to January 6, 2026, using the primary keywords Mens Rea and Pandji Pragiwaksono. Data were collected separately across four platform categories: online news media, Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram. It should be noted that Drone Emprit's interaction metrics aggregate likes, shares, comments, and reposts within each platform, and

cross-platform figures are summed rather than deduplicated; therefore, total interaction figures reflect platform-level aggregation rather than unique user engagement. Sentiment classification was conducted through Drone Emprit's automated lexicon-based system, subsequently cross-checked in this study through manual reading of dominant narrative patterns to ensure categorical consistency (Winanto et al., 2025). Based on this data, the Mens Rea issue recorded a total of 19,743 mentions with total interactions reaching 117,187,792 across all monitored platforms during the observation

period (Fahmi, 2026). TikTok recorded the highest interactions at 82,002,621, reflecting the platform's algorithmically driven content amplification characteristics, followed by Twitter with 30,661,897 interactions and 17,812 mentions.

These figures indicate that the Mens Rea controversy generated engagement far exceeding typical viral content thresholds, constituting what Deuze, (2012) describes as a digitally mediated public event in which platform architecture actively shapes the scale and intensity of public discourse. It is further noted that minor numerical discrepancies in total mention figures appearing across different sections of this manuscript specifically between 19,743 and 19,787 reflect differences in Drone Emprit's real-time data updating across separate report extractions conducted at different time points during the monitoring period. The figure of 19,743 represents the final consolidated report and is used as the authoritative reference throughout this study (DataIndonesia.id, 2026; Fahmi, 2026).

The conversation trend distribution showed significant gradual escalation, peaking on January 6, 2026 with online media reaching 337 mentions driven by dr. Tompi's criticism of Pandji's material regarding Gibran Rakabuming Raka's eye condition, and social media reaching 2,699 mentions triggered by the body shaming controversy and the emergence of the "Pandji Darurat Ide" narrative allegedly driven by buzzers. (See [figure 2](#)).

Online Media Public Sentiment

Online media coverage was dominated by negative sentiment at 53.2%, with positive sentiment at 35.4% and neutral at 11.4%, reflecting mainstream online media's tendency to frame Mens Rea through the lens of controversy, ethics, and potential legal implications rather than proportionally elevating its political critique substance.

Social Media Public Sentiment

Conversely, social media platforms showed strongly dominant positive sentiment at 66.1%, with negative sentiment at only 15.2% and neutral at 18.7%, reflecting that the digital public viewed Mens Rea as a representation of courageous expression and validation of collective societal concerns long seeking expressive space. (See [figure 3](#))

The significant sentiment gap between online and social media formed the basis for understanding Mens Rea's public conversation dynamics. Six key findings were identified: dominance of public interest in political satire; discussion polarization due to ethical boundaries; indications of counter-narrative mobilization in the digital space; sentiment gaps between news media and social media; public security concerns over the alleged "intel" presence; and escalation of public figure responses and identity-based legal risks. These findings were reinforced by specific dominant issues: the Gibran physical material polemic versus Tompi's medical critique, alleged buzzer mobilization and hashtag wars, and the light-toned responses of other public figures such as Dedi Mulyadi, Verrell, and Raffi Ahmad that further amplified public discourse beyond the performance stage.

On the positive side, West Java Governor Dedi Mulyadi through Kompas.com encouraged Pandji to keep creating and delivering critique creatively, viewing the show as openly packaged constructive correction. Social activist Ferry Irwandi through Viva.co.id praised the courage and density of Pandji's material both reflecting maturity in

accepting self-criticism as a healthy part of democratic life. (See [table 5](#)).

The divergence between positive and negative media coverage of Mens Rea directly addresses Research Question 3 regarding communication factors contributing to controversy in the digital public sphere. From a media framing perspective, McQuail (2010) and Entman (1993) argue that media do not merely report events but actively construct social reality through selective emphasis, interpretation, and moral evaluation. The negative framing identified in online media coverage centering on ethical boundaries and legal implications functioned to reframe Mens Rea from a work of political satire into a site of normative transgression, regardless of the communicator's original intent. This reframing process produced what Habermas (1984) identifies as a breakdown in the rightness claim the normative dimension of communicative action. When media frames emphasize ethical violations rather than satirical intent, they effectively displace the communicator's validity claims from public consideration, making consensus impossible not because the communicator failed to articulate intent clearly, but because the dominant framing preemptively assigned negative normative judgment to the content (Angga et al., 2023). (See [Figure 6](#))

This finding is consistent with Hutagalung and Nurhasanah's (2025) study on digital media framing effects on public opinion formation, which demonstrates that negative framing by mainstream online media disproportionately shapes perception among audiences who have not directly consumed the primary content. In the case of Mens Rea, audiences who formed opinions based solely on media reports rather than direct Netflix viewing were predominantly exposed to controversy-centered frames, contributing to the 53.2% negative sentiment recorded in online media compared to 66.1% positive sentiment on social media platforms where direct content sharing was more prevalent (Fahmi, 2026). Taken together, these findings confirm that media framing rather than communicator failure alone constituted a primary structural factor in controversy amplification, supporting the broader theoretical argument that Indonesia's digital public sphere lacks a shared normative framework for evaluating political satire as a legitimate form of democratic expression (Muttaqien & Ramdan, 2023).

Interview Response: Ivanovic Agusta - IPB FEMA Sociologist

Semi-structured interview data from Ivanovic Agusta, sociologist at [IPB University](#), (2026) Faculty of Human Ecology (FEMA), provided supplementary sociological grounding for the analytical findings. Selected through purposive sampling on the basis of his expertise in Indonesian social critique and political communication, Agusta assessed Mens Rea as a communicatively effective social critique medium, with its effectiveness evidenced by the diversity and scale of real-world public responses both legal complaints and massive public support ([Agusta, 2026](#)). (See [figure 4](#)).

Agusta further noted that Mens Rea's distinctiveness from prior public critiques lies in its explicit naming of the nation's highest leadership, which significantly amplified its viral reach across digital platforms. From a sociological standpoint, he identified the special as functioning as social bridging between marginal communities and the middle class consistent with Putnam's (2000) conceptualization of bridging social capital though he acknowledged the attendant risk of reality oversimplification inherent in

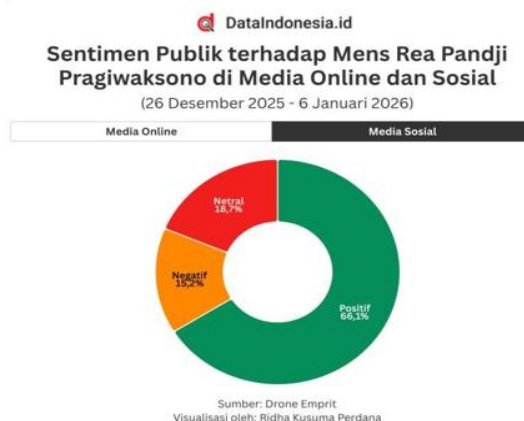


Figure 4. Public sentiment on the topic of mens rea involving Pandji in online media and social media
Source: Public Sentiment Analysis, Pers.droneemprit.id and DataIndonesia.id, January 2026.

CONTOH PEMBERITAAN POSITIF

- **Nama Tokoh:** Dedi Mulyadi.
 - **Kelompok:** Gubernur Jawa Barat.
 - **Quote:** "Terus berkarya, melakukan otokritik yang terbuka ... setiap orang berhak menyampaikan pernyataan, pikiran, dan gagasan termasuk koreksi secara terbuka. Apalagi dikemas dalam koreksi-koreksi yang jenaka. Keren."
 - **Konteks:** Dorongan untuk terus berkarya dan menyampaikan kritik secara kreatif.
 - **Media:** Mainstream / kompas.com.
-
- **Nama Tokoh:** Ferry Irwandi.
 - **Kelompok:** Aktivis sosial.
 - **Quote:** "Lucu, padat, berani, sangat layak untuk ditonton walau gak sepenuhnya relativistik dan punya layer objektif ... shownya pecah!!"
 - **Konteks:** Menilai materi yang dibawa Pandji padat & berani.
 - **Media:** Mainstream / viva.co.id.



Figure 5. Positive news coverage in online media

Source: Positive Coverage Analysis, Pers.droneemprit.id, January 2026

CONTOH PEMBERITAAN NEGATIF

- **Nama Tokoh:** Deolipa Yumara.
 - **Kelompok:** Praktisi Hukum.
 - **Quote:** "Niatnya Pandji mungkin mengkritik sambil berkoreksi tapi dengan nada menyinggung wapres kita, bisa dikategorikan komedi ga ini? Komedi yang bagus itu yang membuat tertawa tanpa menyinggung perasaan orang lain."
 - **Konteks:** Menilai niat Pandji kritik lewat komedi menyinggung.
 - **Media:** Regional Mainstream / medan.tribunnews.com.
-
- **Nama Tokoh:** Tompi.
 - **Kelompok:** Penyanyi/Dokter Bedah Plastik.
 - **Quote:** "Kritisi gagasan, kebijakan, dan tindakan, bukan fisik yang tidak pernah dipilih oleh pemiliknya. Karena martabat manusia seharusnya tidak menjadi punchline."
 - **Konteks:** Menyayangkan jika kondisi fisik pejabat dijadikan lelucon.
 - **Media:** Mainstream / nasional.kompas.com.



Figure 6. Negative news coverage in online media

Source: Negative Coverage Analysis, Pers.droneemprit.id, January 2026)

comedic formats.

The institutional response of pursuing legal channels rather than engaging with the substance of critique was interpreted by Agusta as consistent with patterns of democratic backsliding described by Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018), wherein legal mechanisms are instrumentalized to suppress legitimate criticism. These expert observations corroborate the study's analytical findings regarding communicative mens rea consistency and the structural role of institutional responses in controversy amplification, directly supporting the conclusions drawn in response to Research Questions 3 and 4.

Conclusion

This study addressed four research questions regarding communicative mens rea representation, audience interpretation, controversy factors, and implications for public discourse quality in Indonesia's digital public sphere. In response to Research Question 1, analysis across four dimensions lexical, contextual, consistency, and responsive consistently identified Pandji's communicative mens rea as an intent to deliver socio-political critique through satire. This finding confirms

the applicability of the communicative mens rea analytical model as a structured instrument for identifying communicator intent in public figure communication.

In response to Research Question 2, application of Habermas's (1984) validity claims matrix revealed three communicative gaps in truth, sincerity, and rightness claims demonstrating that consensus failure does not solely stem from communicator failure but from the structural absence of a shared normative framework for satire in Indonesia's digital public sphere. In response to Research Question 3, sentiment data and media framing analysis confirmed that online media's predominantly negative framing contrasted with social media's predominantly positive sentiment functioned as a primary structural factor in controversy amplification, consistent with Entman's (1993) and McQuail's (2010) framing theories.

In response to Research Question 4, the findings carry three implications: theoretically, the communicative mens rea model offers a replicable analytical instrument bridging legal intent concepts with communicative action theory; practically, the findings provide evidence-based guidelines for public figures, media practitioners, and communication regulators in managing sensitive public communication; and for democratic discourse, the findings suggest that the absence of normative consensus around satire rather than the satirical act itself constitutes the primary risk factor for communication conflict escalation. This study acknowledges two principal limitations. First, as a single instrumental case study, findings are analytically rather than statistically generalizable, the communicative mens rea model requires further testing across different public figure communication cases and cultural contexts (Yin, 2018). Second, sentiment data relied on Drone Emprit's automated classification system, which may not fully capture contextual nuances in Indonesian digital discourse. Future research is recommended to employ comparative case study designs across multiple public figure communication controversies, and to integrate computational sentiment analysis with qualitative discourse analysis for more robust findings.

Researcher's Reflection

This research emerges from an academic concern regarding the quality of public communication in Indonesia in the digital era. The Mens Rea case reveals a genuine paradox: criticism and satire are integral parts of a healthy democracy, yet differing interpretations of a communicator's intent can lead to serious legal consequences. Communication ethics is not a restriction on freedom of expression rather, it is the very foundation that makes such freedom sustainable in the long run. This research maintains an academically neutral position, taking no side either in support of or in opposition to Pandji. It solely analyzes mens rea within a communicative dimension, not criminal law, and does not take a stance on Pandji's legal guilt or innocence.

This research acknowledges the limitations inherent in a single case study; the findings and analytical models generated require further testing across other cases before they can be broadly generalized. Follow-up research employing a comparative, cross-case approach is recommended in order to strengthen the validity of the proposed communicative mens rea analytical model.

Recommendations

This study produces three recommendations. First, public figures and communicators using performing arts as socio-political critique should systematically consider the four communicative mens rea dimensions lexical, contextual, consistency, and responsive as guidelines to clearly articulate and consistently maintain communicative intent under pressure without limiting creativity.

Second, digital mass media should adopt a coverage framework oriented toward communicator context and intent rather than merely emphasizing sensational and legal controversy aspects, to improve public discourse quality and minimize disproportionate controversy amplification. Third, regulatory institutions such as KPI and law enforcement agencies should develop more comprehensive understanding of the distinction between satire as constitutionally protected artistic expression and speech potentially disturbing public order, so that this research's findings can serve as a reference in developing communication science-based analytical guidelines for handling similar cases in the future.

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May this scientific journal provide benefits to the development of communication studies, particularly in the field of political communication, and serve as a useful reference for future researchers, media practitioners, and other parties in need.

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