

The Construction of Symbolic Meaning in the Lyrics of “Bingung” by Iksan Skuter: A Semiotic Analysis

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Abstract. Music plays a significant role in conveying social criticism through meaningful lyrics. This study aims to analyze the construction of symbolic meaning in the lyrics of the song *Bingung* by Iksan Skuter using Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach. Employing qualitative interpretive methods, the research uses lyric analysis and audience interviews to understand how listeners interpret the song's message. Analysis of the lyrics reveals various symbols in *Bingung* representing social injustice, stereotypes, commercialized education, media manipulation, and the existential paradoxes of modern humanity. The song highlights how individuals often experience labeling, social pressure, and inequality across multiple aspects of life. The semiotic approach reveals that the signifiers in the lyrics represent a complex social reality, while the signified conveys criticism of prevailing social conditions. Therefore, the song serves not only as artistic expression but also as a powerful tool for social critique. This study reinforces the understanding that music can serve as a powerful communication medium for raising social awareness, particularly through works by independent musicians such as Iksan Skuter.

Keywords: Semiotics, Social Criticism, Music, Iksan Skuter, Symbolic Meaning

1 Introduction

Music is not merely entertainment or artistic expression; it can also exert an influence on its listeners and even on broader communities [1]. This article explores the extent to which music possesses the power to affect its environment and drive change. This musical potential is clearly evident in the construction of symbolic meanings embedded in the song *Bingung* by Iksan Skuter. Music is one of the most universal forms of art. Across various cultures, music functions not only as entertainment but also as a medium of communication that conveys profound social, cultural, and political messages. Music holds the power to unite communities, evoke emotions, and mobilize social change. Therefore, music, especially song lyrics, can be understood as a form of mass communication that conveys information widely that carries social issues symbolically and widely to the public. As communication, music can be analyzed through a semiotic approach, a method that focuses on signs and their meanings. This approach is particularly relevant in analyzing song lyrics, which often contain symbolic messages for their audience.

Ferdinand de Saussure, a seminal figure in semiotics with a focus on linguistics, posited that language is a system of signs. Each sign comprises two elements: the signifier and the signified [2]. The relationship between the signifier and the signified enables a deeper examination of the meanings contained within music. Music has a significant impact on the mindset, behavior, and emotions of its listeners. Music also offers a mechanism for contemplation and appraisal of one's surroundings. This aligns with the assertion by [3] that “music containing elements of critique has the potential to support educational activities. When music can educate society, it can also motivate people to join or support a movement” [3], particularly through genres known as protest music. Music, symbols and social criticism are intertwined to form a communication message. Song lyrics are not only a means of artistic expression, but also a place to convey information that can influence the public's perspective. Lyrics are the most crucial element of a song, as they allow individuals to express what they have seen, heard, or experienced. In conveying their experiences, songwriters often play with words to create a unique appeal for their audience [4].

Iksan Skuter, a solo singer born in Blora, Central Java, has been active in the music industry since 2012, producing nine albums totaling 89 songs, not including eight compilation albums. In creating songs that reflect general human feelings, Iksan draws on events occurring around him, such as in the song *Bingung* [5]. Iksan Skuter explains that this music captures specific moments as expressions of frustration. The song is an expression of sadness, sarcasm, and complexity. Beyond frustration, it also encompasses various internal debates that leave him confused about himself [6]. In this study, Iksan Skuter's songs were chosen because he consistently produces works that depict life realities, ranging from environmental issues and the spirit of heroism to serving as an alternative medium for voicing socio-political criticism in Indonesia [7].

Within the socio-political context of Indonesia, poverty is not merely an economic problem but also a symbol frequently manipulated by the media. Television reality shows often exploit the suffering of impoverished communities to acquire ratings and profit, a phenomenon known as the commodification of poverty [8]. Such representations shape public perceptions by oversimplifying the structural roots of poverty and diverting attention from the state's failure to deliver social justice. Digital media propaganda exacerbates the distortion of the public sphere through the spread of misinformation, the promotion of political division, and the manufacture of artificial consensus by means of bots and automated accounts, as evidenced by analyses of political literacy in the study *Bungkam Suara* [9].

This situation is exacerbated by the dominance of oligarchies within political and media structures, which seek to maintain the status quo by silencing critical voices through controlling the narrative of information [10]. Therefore, the relationship between poverty, media propaganda, and socio-political problems is not a set of separate issues but an interconnected power network that mutually sustains existing inequalities. Iksan Skuter's song "Bingung" not only reflects personal unrest, but also shows Indonesia's complex socio-political dynamics, such as media manipulation, commodified poverty, and structural inequality in society. The semiotic approach in music analysis also offers a fresh perspective on the role of art in fostering social awareness. According to Afrilia et al. (2024), song lyrics can be utilized as social criticism of modern life because "the messages contained within the lyrics can create a strong emotional resonance, thereby enhancing the audience's understanding of specific social issues" [11].

A study entitled *Semiotic Analysis of Motivational Meaning in the Lyrics of "Laskar Pelangi"* by Nidji shows that semiotics can be employed to comprehend motivational messages embedded in song lyrics. Semiotics in this context is helpful for analyzing both social criticism and inspirational meanings relevant to specific cultural contexts. The analysis found that lyrics can build collective spirit while simultaneously motivating individuals to start change [12]. The inherent interpretative flexibility and diverse meanings within music, considered as an art form, necessitate a semiotic analysis. This study, therefore, examines the latent meanings in Iksan Skuter's "Bingung" lyrics through Ferdinand de Saussure's model, firmly rooted in communication theory. The selection of Ferdinand de Saussure's theory is because of the focus of this analysis on the fundamental meanings of the words in the song lyrics. Saussure divides a sign into two main elements: the signifier and the signified [2], which is suitable for structurally dissecting lyrics.

This study examines the construction of symbolic meanings in the song *Bingung* by Iksan Skuter through a semiotic approach, focusing specifically on social messages. Semiotic analyses of song lyrics have been conducted extensively, especially to explore various themes such as religiosity, love, and cultural critique. However, studies that specifically analyze social messages within songs featuring complex symbolic contexts remain relatively scarce. Therefore, this research provides a novel contribution by highlighting how symbols in song lyrics are utilized to communicate social values relevant to societal realities. This study, additionally, enhances the understanding of musical art's role in providing social critique, notably in the compositions of independent musicians like Iksan Skuter.

Symbolic analysis in music is important in communication studies because music contains complex social messages. With a semiotic approach, music can be an effective medium to critically understand and convey social reality.

The research problem in this study is how the construction of symbolic meaning occurs in the lyrics of the song *Bingung* by Iksan Skuter. This study aims to analyze the signifiers present in the song's lyrics and to identify the corresponding signified meanings contained within them. Thus, this research strengthens the position of music as a communication medium that plays a role in building collective awareness of contemporary social issues.

2 Literature Review

This study refers to various research that examines the construction of meaning within culture, music, and social movements. Prior studies show the role of symbols and social interactions in shaping collective understanding. Therefore, this literature serves as a foundation for analyzing how meaning is constructed across different contexts.

One relevant study explores the alienation of modern society through the song *Dalam Hitungan* by Feast using a semiotic approach. This song serves as a commentary on the social isolation resulting from a society that increasingly values technology over authentic human connection. The analysis reveals that the song's lyrics are filled with symbols depicting isolation, social disconnection, and a sense of lost identity. The song's musical structure contributes to its melancholic tone, thereby underscoring the feelings of isolation it expresses. The word choices demonstrate an implicit critique of social changes that have led to heightened individualism. Overall, the analysis illustrates how music can serve as an effective medium for voicing social criticism and influencing listener awareness regarding social alienation in the digital era [11].

The second study analyzes the motivational meaning in the lyrics of *Laskar Pelangi* by Nidji using a semiotic approach. The song depicts the spirit of struggle, hope, and togetherness, articulated through inspirational word

choices and a musical composition that evokes positive emotions. Hidayat explains how the song's lyrics function as the signifiers of enthusiasm and optimism, while the signified reflects aspirations to achieve a better future despite facing various limitations. The semiotic analysis also reveals that the song employs natural metaphors as symbolic elements to instill hope and freedom. Beyond serving as a source of motivation, this study highlights how the song fosters social solidarity and instills collective spirit among its listeners, making it an anthem of struggle for numerous individuals facing life's challenges [12].

The third study examines symbolic meanings in the Rebo Kasan tradition using Roland Barthes's semiotic approach. The findings indicate that the symbols in this ritual possess three layers of meaning: denotation (literal meaning), connotation (cultural meaning), and myth (collective belief). For instance, white water symbolizes purity, dupi serves as a symbol of warding off misfortune, leupeut reflects unity, and bugis represents faith and belief. Overall, this study demonstrates that the Rebo Kasan tradition not only encompasses religious aspects but also functions as a cultural communication medium that strengthens social bonds within the Sundanese community [13].

The fourth study employs Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic model to examine the song *Jingga* by Efek Rumah Kaca as a representation of the Aksi Kamisan struggle. The song symbolically depicts social unrest related to human rights violations, particularly in activist kidnappings during 1997–1998. Through an in-depth analysis, Nariswari reveals how the use of metaphors in the lyrics not only strengthens the embedded meanings but also builds an emotional connection with listeners. The song collectively reminds us of unresolved injustices and shows solidarity with the victims' families. This study also identifies how musical elements in the song reinforce the narrative of struggle, creating an atmosphere that invites profound reflection among the audience. Consequently, this study highlights music's efficacy as a vehicle for disseminating social messages and advancing justice initiatives [14].

The fifth study investigates the construction of meaning regarding women activists within the Indonesian Islamic Student Movement Women's Corps (Korps Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia Puteri, KOPRI) in Karawang using a qualitative phenomenological approach. This research aims to understand the experiences, motives, and meanings constructed by women involved in social movements within the organization. The findings show that women activists perceive themselves as individuals capable of providing benefits and serving as the spearhead of civilization. This meaning emerges from their experiences in humanitarian actions such as fundraising, disaster volunteering, and establishing reading spaces to enhance literacy interest among the Karawang community. The study concludes that women in social movements play significant roles beyond the domestic sphere and contribute meaningfully to social change. The meaning of women activists is shaped through social interaction, personal experiences, and supportive environments that encourage their involvement in humanitarian activities and social advocacy [15].

This study presents a novel contribution compared to previous research, particularly the fourth study analyzing *Jingga* by Efek Rumah Kaca as a representation of the Aksi Kamisan struggle and human rights violations. Unlike that study, this research examines the song *Bingung* by Iksan Skuter with a broader focus on social criticism, encompassing injustice, losing common sense, commercialization of education, and the deterioration of social values. In addition to employing Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic approach, this study also incorporates audience analysis through interviews to understand how listeners interpret the messages within the song lyrics. Accordingly, this research offers new insights into the symbolic meanings in music, enriches the study of social criticism in song lyrics, and highlights the role of independent musicians in raising social awareness through music.

3 Methods

This study employs an interpretive qualitative method situated within a subjective perspective. As it is oriented towards interpretation, the results of this research are heavily influenced by the researcher's ability to accurately describe and explain the phenomena under study [15].

Data collection in this study involves two main methods: lyrical text analysis and an audience approach through interviews. The text analysis aims to identify signs, symbols, and meanings within the lyrics of *Bingung* by Iksan Skuter, while the audience approach seeks to understand how listeners interpret the lyrics and messages of the song. Participants in this study are fans of Iksan Skuter, commonly known as "Kawan Cerdas." They were selected purposively, as they are considered capable of providing relevant information regarding their perspectives, interpretations, and personal experiences in understanding the meanings embedded in the lyrics. The combination of these two analytical techniques is expected to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the symbolic meanings contained within the song.

De Saussure's semiotic theory serves as the analytical foundation for this study. The researcher chose Saussure's approach because of his linguistic background, which aligns with the study's focus on the elements of signifier and signified within the language of the lyrics of *Bingung* by Iksan Skuter.

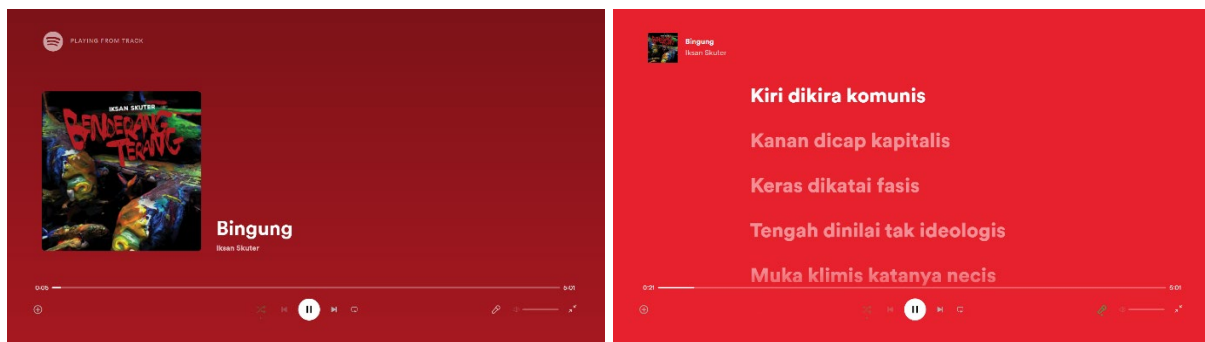
4 Results

Iksan Skuter is a solo singer born in Blora, Central Java. He has been active in the music industry since 2012 and has developed a fanbase known as Kawan Cerdas, which is widely spread across various regions. Throughout his career as a solo artist, Iksan has increasingly voiced personal experiences and social conditions surrounding him. He often addresses issues such as corruption, land eviction, environmental degradation, and themes of love. His lyrics frequently contain moral messages and educational value. From 2012 to 2018, Iksan Skuter released nine solo albums and contributed to eight compilation albums [5].

In 2016, Iksan Skuter released the album *Benderang Terang*, comprising twelve songs. This folk-inspired album extensively discusses social and political issues in Indonesia at the time. The track list includes titles such as “Bencana,” “Bingung,” “Tak Perlu Update Status,” “Kereta, Kisah Kakek Dan Cucu,” “Layang Layang,” “Lagu Petani,” “Petualangan Jojo,” “Setor Data,” “Tai Luwak,” “Bohong,” and “Kertas Sialan” [16].

In a podcast interview with Deddy Corbuzier, Iksan Skuter explained that his musical works aim to capture certain moments to convey unease and internal debates that lead to personal confusion. Besides conveying frustration, Iksan emphasized that the songs also record a variety of emotions such as sadness, sarcasm, and complexity [6].

This study focuses on analyzing the song *Bingung* by Iksan Skuter.



Gambar 1. Lyrics to the song “Bingung” from Spotify

Lyrics of “Bingung” by Iksan Skuter:

Kiri dikira komunis - *Left is labeled communist*
 Kanan dicap kapitalis - *Right is branded capitalist*
 Keras dikatai fasis - *The strict are called fascists*
 Tengah dinilai tak ideologis - *The center is judged as non-ideological*
 Muka klimis katanya necis - *Clean-shaven face is said to be neat*
 Jenggotan dikatai teroris - *Bearded ones are called terrorists*
 Bersurban dibilang kearab-araban - *Wearing a turban is said to be Arabized*
 Bercelana lepis dibully kebarat-baratan - *Wearing tight pants is bullied as westernized*
 Diam dianggap fasis - *Silence is considered fascist*
 Lantang katanya supersif - *Loudness said to be superficial*
 Bertani dianggap kuno - *Farming is considered archaic*
 Jadi pegawai distempel mental londo - *Being an employee is stamped colonial mindset*
 Memilih jadi kere salah - *Choosing to be poor is wrong*
 Ingin kaya sangatlah susah - *Wanting to be rich is very hard*
 Belum berhasil dihina - *Not yet successful, insulted*
 Sukses jadi omongan tetangga - *Successful, become the talk of the neighbors*
 Makin hari makin susah saja - *Each day it gets harder*
 Menjadi manusia yang manusia - *To be a human who is humane*
 Sepertinya menjadi manusia - *It seems that being human*
 Adalah masalah buat manusia - *Is a problem for humankind*
 Menjadi bintang ketinggian - *Becoming a star is too high*
 Menjadi tanah kerendahan - *Becoming the ground is too low*
 Jadi matahari tak sanggup - *Being the sun is unbearable*
 Menjadi bulan terlalu redup - *Being the moon is too dim*
 Gedung gedung ditinggikan - *Buildings are raised high*
 Akal sehat dihancurkan - *Common sense is destroyed*
 Sekolah dimahalkan - *School fees become expensive*
 Ilmu dibuang ke selokan - *Knowledge is thrown into the gutter*
 TV-TV mengejar rating - *TVs chase ratings*

Koran mengais berita tak penting - *Newspapers scavenge for trivial news*
 Kebenaran diiklankan - *While truth is put up for sale*
 Dusta dusta dilambungkan - *Lies are inflated*
 Guru setra sudah digelar - *"Guru Setra" is already staged*
 Dalangnya akan berkoar - *The mastermind will roar*
 Lakon sudah disiapkan - *The script has been prepared*
 Korban korban pasti dibungkam - *Victims will surely be silenced*
 Makin hari makin susah saja - *Each day it gets harder*
 Menjadi manusia yang manusia - *To be a human who is humane*
 Sepertinya menjadi manusia - *It seems that being human*
 Adalah masalah buat manusia - *Is a problem for humankind*
 Maling sandal dibakar - *Sandals thief is burned*
 Koruptor berkelakar - *Corruptors joke around*
 Makin hari makin susah saja - *Each day it gets harder*
 Menjadi manusia yang manusia - *To be a human who is humane*
 Sepertinya menjadi manusia - *It seems that being human*
 Adalah masalah buat manusia - *Is a problem for humankind*
 Makin hari makin susah saja - *Each day it gets harder*
 Menjadi manusia yang manusia - *To be a human who is humane*
 Sepertinya menjadi manusia - *It seems that being human*
 Adalah masalah buat manusia - *Is a problem for humankind*

The analysis in this study clearly distinguishes between the signifier in the form of language elements in song lyrics and the signifier which refers to the meaning that listeners understand from these symbols. The signifier refers to the words, expressions, or figures of speech stated directly by the songwriter, while the signifier relates to the social message contained therein.

Analysis of Stanza 1

Kiri dikira komunis - Left is labeled communist
 Kanan dicap kapitalis - Right is branded capitalist
 Keras dikatai fasis - The strict are called fascists
 Tengah dinilai tak ideologis - The center is judged as non-ideological

Signifier: The ideological terms such as "communist," "capitalist," "fascist," and "non-ideological" serve as the primary signifiers in this stanza. The use of these terms highlights the frequent labeling phenomena in society. Historically, the terms "left" and "right" have been employed to categorize the political spectrum, where "left" is often associated with the struggle for equality and social change, while "right" upholds the status quo and traditional values [17].

Signified: The signified meaning of this stanza is a critique of society's tendency to assign extreme labels to others without a deeper understanding of their perspectives. The lyric fragment "left is labeled communist" reflects Iksan's unease when wearing a hat with a red star patch. Semiotic theory interprets the red star as a symbol of the proletariat; however, the symbol ironically strengthens the impression of Iksan as "leftist" because of his alignment with farmers' causes. Iksan Skuter emphasizes, "I voice farmers' cases, then I'm labeled left. I say no, I don't care about left or right. I don't care about Karl Marx or Adam Smith. I'm just trying to be a human who cares about other humans" [7]. This shows that the first stanza clearly reflects how labeling functions as a powerful social control mechanism that often overlooks the complexity of individual thought.

Analysis of Stanza 2

Muka klimis katanya necis - Clean-shaven face is said to be neat
 Jenggotan dikatai teroris - Bearded ones are called terrorists
 Bersurban dibilang kearab-araban - Wearing a turban is said to be Arabized
 Bercelana lepis dibully kebarat-baratan - Wearing tight pants is bullied as westernized

Signifier: Words such as "bearded," "terrorist," "Arabized," and "westernized" serve as signifiers of stereotypes and prejudices attributed to individuals based on their physical appearance. Beards are often perceived as symbols associated with terrorism or radical Islamic groups. Discrimination based on appearance has become a serious issue in various parts of the world [18]. There is a phenomenon where individuals who maintain beards are stereotypically linked to radical or terrorist groups, leading to discrimination against them.

Signified: The signified meaning of this stanza critiques society's tendency to judge others based on physical appearance or cultural attributes, often without substantial grounds. The stereotype of Islam as a religion of terrorism arises because certain terrorist groups frequently adopt Islamic symbols in their actions. This contributes to a social construction that marginalizes Islam through narratives accompanying violent acts [19]. These lyrics

highlight how every style a person chooses appears to carry certain stigmas, making it difficult for individuals to escape social prejudice.

Analysis of Stanza 3

Diam dianggap fasis - Silence is considered fascist

Lantang katanya supersif - Loudness said to be supversive

Bertani dianggap kuno - Farming is considered archaic

Jadi pegawai distempel mental londo - Being an employee is stamped colonial mindset

Signifier: The signifiers in this stanza include “silence,” “fascist,” “loudness,” “subversive,” “farming,” and “employee.” These represent societal tendencies to label individuals based on their actions or life choices. This reflects how people are often categorized according to existing stereotypes. For example, farming is often perceived as a low-status job associated with backwardness, thus lacking appeal among the younger generation [20].

Signified: The signified meaning here is a critique of how individual actions are judged or branded according to prevailing social norms. Those who remain silent are viewed as passive; those who speak out are perceived as threats, and life or career choices are constantly measured against certain societal standards. Therefore, labeling individuals is not necessarily objective but is a social construction shaped by the majority group’s perspective. Additionally, the stereotype of farming as a profession is evident. Young people tend to avoid agriculture because it is still linked to stigma related to poverty and limitations [20]. This illustrates how farming is often reduced to a symbol of regression, whereas in reality, this sector holds significant potential for food security and the economy. Overall, this stanza critiques society’s inclination to label and stereotype individual life choices without considering broader contexts.

Analysis of Stanza 4

Memilih jadi kere salah - Choosing to be poor is wrong

Ingin kaya sangatlah susah - Wanting to be rich is very hard

Belum berhasil dihina - Not yet successful, insulted

Sukses jadi omongan tetangga - Successful, become the talk of the neighbors

Signifier: The primary signifiers in this stanza are “poor,” “rich,” “insulted,” and “talk of the neighbors.” These highlight societal perspectives that frequently judge individuals based on their economic status. Labeling people as “the rich” or “the poor” creates significant social divisions [21]. Consequently, poverty is often viewed as something shameful or wrong, while wealth can provoke envy or suspicion.

Signified: The signified meaning here is a critique of economic standards that often dictate social respect or acceptance. A poor person is looked down upon, while a rich person may be envied or distrusted. The disparity between wealthy and disadvantaged groups reveals significant differences in access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, which perpetuate social stereotypes and stigmas [22]. This reflects social pressure related to economic status.

Analysis of Stanzas 5 and 8

Makin hari makin susah saja - Each day it gets harder

Menjadi manusia yang manusia - To be a human who is humane

Sepertinya menjadi manusia - It seems that being human

Adalah masalah buat manusia - Is a problem for humankind

Signifier: The primary signifiers in these stanzas are “harder,” “being human” and “a problem for humans.” These highlight an existential paradox where becoming a true human being feels increasingly difficult within society. The existential paradox is a philosophical dilemma questioning the meaning and significance of our existence [23].

Signified: The signified meaning here is a critical reflection on the condition of modern humanity, which is progressively losing its humane values. According to [7], in *Bingung*, people today still do not fully understand who they are or what they should do. As a result, they often blame others’ actions, leading to conflicts fueled by ego and differences in choices. There is an irony in the fact that humans struggle to be beings of empathy, morality, and ethics amidst an increasingly harsh world.

Analysis of Stanza 6

Menjadi bintang ketinggian - Becoming a star is too high

Menjadi tanah kerendahan - Becoming the ground is too low

Jadi matahari tak sanggup - Being the sun is unbearable

Menjadi bulan terlalu redup - Being the moon is too dim

Gedung gedung ditinggikan - Buildings are raised high

Akal sehat dihancurkan - Common sense is destroyed

Sekolah dimahalkan - School fees become expensive

Ilmu dibuang ke selokan - Knowledge is thrown into the gutter

Signifier: The main signifiers in this stanza include “star,” “ground,” “sun,” “moon,” “buildings,” “common sense,” “school,” and “knowledge.” Each of these represents abstract concepts such as ambition, humility,

influence, development, reasoning, education, and intellectual value. For instance, the phrases “Becoming a star is too high” and “Becoming the ground is too low” symbolically refer to individuals who shine or stand out versus those who remain unnoticed. As expressed by Iksan in a podcast with Deddy Corbuzier, the core idea is that being different is not the problem—what becomes problematic is when people begin to discriminate based on those differences [6].

Signified: This stanza reflects an existential dilemma and social disparity, where individuals struggle to find their rightful place in the world. Iksan Skuter presents an analogy where the moon does not resent the sun for its brightness, and the sun does not blame the moon for its dimness [7]. The underlying message is that every person possesses their own uniqueness and role in life. There is no need to compare or blame one another for differences. In societal reality, there are those who shine brightly (influential) and those who remain in the shadows (less prominent), yet both hold value and contribute in their own way.

Analysis of Stanza 7

Tv-tv mengejar rating - TVs chase ratings
 Koran mengais berita tak penting - Newspapers scavenge for trivial news
 Kebenaran diiklankan - While truth is put up for sale
 Dusta dusta dilambungkan - Lies are inflated
 Guru setra sudah digelar - “Guru Setra” is already staged
 Dalangnya akan berkoar - The mastermind will roar
 Lakon sudah disiapkan - The script has been prepared
 Korban korban pasti dibungkam - Victims will surely be silenced

Signifier: Key signifiers in this stanza include “TV,” “ratings,” “newspapers,” “truth,” “lies,” “inflated,” “guru setra,” “script,” and “victims.” These symbols represent a media ecosystem dominated by economic and political interests. As [24] notes, media language is often manipulated to deceive readers and serve the agendas of powerful stakeholders. Within this framework, media outlets transcend their function as mere information disseminators, instead operating as propaganda tools that manipulate public perception to benefit the ruling power structure.

Signified: These lyrics criticize how the media prioritizes profit and sensationalism over truth, and how lies are spread for certain interests. Iksan states that the metaphor of “guru setra” refers to the Mahabharata war—a battlefield where good and evil clash [6]. Meanwhile, the term “dalang” (puppet master) alludes to a prearranged political or power scenario, where victims are denied the space to speak. The media can subtly yet effectively influence public opinion, demonstrating how it can be used to disseminate messages that benefit particular parties [25]. Thus, the lyrics critically reflect a reality in which the media functions not only as an information channel, but also as a tool exploited by vested interests to control narratives and shape public opinion often at the expense of truth and objectivity.

Analysis of Stanza 9

Maling sandal dibakar - Sandals thief is burned
 Koruptor berkelakar - Corruptors joke around

Signifier: The terms “sandal thief” and “corruptor” serve as symbolic markers representing the injustice within the legal and social system. Cases such as that of a teenager in Palu, Central Sulawesi, who faced a potential five-year prison sentence for stealing a pair of flip-flops, contrast starkly with many corrupt officials who receive light sentences sometimes as short as 1.5 years or are even left unpunished. This highlights the disparity in a legal system that tends to be harsher on petty criminals than on those who commit large-scale crimes [25].

Signified: These lyrics criticize the disparity in societal treatment, where petty criminals are dealt with harshly, while corrupt officials who commit large-scale crimes often escape with minimal punishment or even complete impunity. This phenomenon reflects a legal system that is “sharp downward but blunt upward,” generating a sense of injustice among the public. The law tends to act firmly against minor thefts committed by the poor, yet remains weak and lenient when addressing major crimes that have widespread impacts on the state [26]. Thus, the lyrics critically portray the reality of legal injustice in Indonesia, where small-scale offenders face severe penalties, while major offenders often evade proportionate accountability.

Analysis of Stanza 10

Makin hari makin susah saja - Each day it gets harder
 Menjadi manusia yang manusia - To be a human who is humane
 Sepertinya menjadi manusia - It seems that being human
 Adalah masalah buat manusia - Is a problem for humankind
 Makin hari makin susah saja - Each day it gets harder
 Menjadi manusia yang manusia - To be a human who is humane
 Sepertinya menjadi manusia - It seems that being human
 Adalah masalah buat manusia - Is a problem for humankind

Signifier: The central signifiers in this stanza include the repeated expressions “harder,” “being human,” and “a problem for humanity.” These phrases emphasize the existential paradox of modern life, where being genuinely humane, compassionate, ethical, and conscious, is becoming increasingly difficult in a society marked by disconnection and systemic contradictions.

Signified: The repetition of these lyrics emphasizes the existential paradox that becoming a true human being is increasingly difficult in today’s social reality. The songwriter’s anxiety is clearly reflected in this emphasis, suggesting that this issue is not merely a fleeting complaint but lies at the heart of his critique of the human condition. In a podcast interview with Deddy Corbuzier, a comment from a user named @KolaborasiKopi noted: “Nowadays, being human is a rare profession. It must be carried out professionally because not all people can be professional human beings. It seems that many are still learning how to be human. Being human alone is already difficult—let alone humanizing others.” In the same interview, Iksan also stated: “Many people want to be treated humanely but forget to treat others humanely,” followed by: “Try to be a human who cares about other humans.”

In addition, interview results indicate that several phrases from the song particularly captured the audience’s attention, including “Each day it gets harder,” “A sandal thief gets burned, corruptors joke around,” and “Buildings rise higher, common sense is destroyed.” These lyrics are perceived as powerful representations of social criticism that remain highly relevant to the current state of society.

Based on the analysis of all stanzas, it can be concluded that the meanings of the signs contained in the song “Bingung” are not only an individual expression, but a form of sharp social criticism of Indonesian reality. Every symbol used by Iksan Skuter is built contextually and represents social inequality, media disinformation, labeling, and the loss of human values. These interpretations are not only logical, but also reinforced by textual evidence and relevant socio-political conditions, making this song a powerful and meaningful medium of public information.

Ferida (@feridangkasa) highlighted the difficulty of accessing education through the phrase “School fees become expensive, knowledge thrown into the gutter.” Fajri Thufail (@birumembiru) drew attention to media manipulation in the line “Guru Setra” is already staged, the mastermind will roar,” while Rezza Ilham Saputra (@rezzais) emphasized the theme of social inequality in development, as reflected in the phrase “Buildings are raised higher, common sense is destroyed.”

Overall, “Bingung” is regarded as a relevant piece of social reflection, raising awareness about injustice and serving as a powerful medium for expressing criticism of the existing social system. The symbolic meaning in the lyrics of “Bingung” is not merely a direct form of social criticism, but rather a reflection of broader realities. By understanding the relationship between the signifier and the signified, one can see how the song constructs a narrative of identity uncertainty, social inequality, and individual anxiety within a system filled with contradictions.

5 CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this article is that the song Bingung by Iksan Skuter reflects the complex social anxieties within Indonesian society through the use of symbolic language in its lyrics. By employing Ferdinand de Saussure’s semiotic approach, this study reveals how each stanza contains signifier and signified that construct symbolic meanings related to social injustice, stereotyping, the commodification of education, media manipulation, and the existential paradox of modern humanity. The findings show that the song is not merely an artistic expression, but also functions as an effective tool of social criticism. The lyrics portray how individuals are subjected to labeling, social pressure, and inequality across various dimensions of life. Interviews with listeners further support the notion that the song remains relevant in raising awareness of prevailing social issues. Thus, this study asserts that music can serve as a powerful medium of communication in delivering social critique. Bingung not only exposes the existing realities but also invites listeners to reflect on their position in society and to question the values increasingly eroded by systemic structures.

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