The Discourse of Cannabis Represented by Lingkar Ganja Nusantara (LGN) in Twitter Account @legalisasiganja

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Abstract

Pro and contra about cannabis use in Indonesia cannot be separated from point of view of criminology and social culture. The shifting of cannabis use becomes a discourse in representing its legality or illegality. The issue about cannabis legalization in Indonesia is brought by Lingkar Ganja Nusantara (LGN). By using Twitter, LGN can share information about the advantages, and also the latest news about cannabis regulation within their postings. This study aimed to investigate discourse of Cannabis in Indonesia through the published articles in LGN’s Twitter account @legalisasiganja. The writer used Critical Discourse Analysis from Norman Fairclough to examine the discourse of cannabis by focusing on the words and sentences within the articles then related to the discourse practice and socioculture practice. Since LGN is a community consisted of young people, the writer used the theory of youth from David Buckingham. The result shows that LGN represented cannabis as a medical concern, not as a crime, and cannabis as a culture. Those representations cannot be separated from the character of youth reflected in the articles and the interviews. The conclusion reveals that language and power can influence people by showing knowledge and power within the text, so LGN is able to challenge the previous discourse of cannabis in Indonesia.

Keywords: cannabis, critical discourse analysis, lingkar ganja nusantara, twitter, youth identity

Introduction

Lingkar Ganja Nusantara or known as LGN is the first community in Indonesia supporting the legalization of Cannabis use since 2010. Located in Tangerang, West Java, this community brings issue about the advantages of Cannabis related to the five fundamentals of Indonesia (Pancasila). They asserted that using Cannabis is a part of human rights, and that Cannabis has its benefits, such as Cannabis medicine (Lestari 15).

Cannabis plant has existed and been used in Indonesia since the colonial era according to Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië published in 1918 and 1921. Cannabis is a plant which grows in tropical area like Asia, including Indonesia. Cannabis was generally used as an assortment of tobacco cigarette and anaesthetic medicine (Graaff, Stibbe and Wintgens 737). Cannabis in Indonesia has become illegal and been classified as narcotics since the Single Convention on Narcotics Drugs which become the result of the United Nations Conference for the Adoption of a Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, held from January 24 to March 30, 1961. In the time of New Order, Indonesia was built in various sectors including human resources, so negative influences such as narcotics and Cannabis also become a forbidden thing. Until now, Cannabis and narcotics remain illegal in Indonesia. The use and distribution narcotics like Cannabis would end up in prison according to the Law.

This study aims to analyze the different discourse of Cannabis brought by LGN in their Twitter account @legalisasiganja. In this study, youth identity is reflected in Lingkar Ganja Nusantara trying to deliver ideas and opinion toward Cannabis use in Indonesia. Their efforts to do the legalization of Cannabis use in Indonesia tend to challenge the dominant power in Indonesia which prohibits the use of Cannabis. David Buckingham states in his book *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media* about the sociology of youth that in the common perception the youth is mostly described as someone who has tendency to deviance and delinquency (Buckingham 4). In doing opposition to the dominant power, youth has always
been an active agent who criticizes political matters in society (Osgerby 5). Youth is also known as the idealistic one (France 83). In general, the youth often wants a positive change that will bring a good impact for the society.

**Method**

The legalization of Cannabis becomes one of the phenomenas in Indonesia because the pro and contra point of view still surround it. Through this study, the writer tries to examine the issues of Cannabis discourse brought by Lingkar Ganja Nusantara through their Twitter account @legalisasiganja. The writer used critical approach within the study because it can identify the condition of humanity which is improved by the common desire of text (Jackson 10-11). Thus, this study used Critical Discourse Analysis method to analyze the representation of Cannabis use in Indonesia brought by Lingkar Ganja Nusantara (LGN). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a process to analyze a text in order to get specific purposes and goals of dominant people or group (Darja 49). Critical Discourse Analysis proposed by Norman Fairclough categorizes into three levels of analysis, namely the descriptive level focused on the linguistics aspect, and the interpretation level and the explanation level related to discourse practice and sociocultural practice.

The population of this study was all tweets posted by LGN from August to October 2014. In those three months, there were three big celebrations, namely Indonesian Independence Day celebrated on 17th August, International Democracy Day celebrated on September 15th, and Youth Declaration Day on 28th October. Thus, the total population of LGN’s tweet posts from August to October were 694 posts. The samples of this study were determined by using purposive sampling. The criterion was that the articles must have the top three tweets during those months. The first article was “Badan Kesehatan Dunia (WHO) Meminta Indonesia Berhenti Memenjarakan Pengguna dan Meninjau Kembali Kebijakan Ganja”. This article was posted on the first August 2014 and got 302 retweets. The second article was “Negara Mengaku Bersalah Karena Sudah 28 Tahun Memenjarakan Pengguna Ganja”. The article was published on 8th of August and got 251 retweets. The last was “Penggalian Sejarah Ganja Nusantara, Perjalanan Menyempurnakan Jati Diri Bangsa”. This article was published on 29th of September 2014 and got 61 retweets from LGN’s followers.

There are three related studies used in this study. The first related study was written by Putri Arum Lestari in her undergraduate thesis Persepsi Mahasiswa Di Surabaya Terhadap Akun Lingkar Ganja Nusantara “LGN” Dalam Situs Jejaring Sosial Facebook (Studi Deskriptif Persepsi Mahasiswa Di Surabaya Terhadap Akun Lingkar Ganja Nusantara “LGN” Dalam Situs Jejajaring Sosial Facebook published in 2012. The problem raised in this thesis is the effort made by LGN to inform people about the legalization of Cannabis. By using dependency theory of mass communication, she tried to examine college student’s opinion toward the LGN’s account in Facebook. The findings show that teen and college students are easily influenced to support the legalization of Cannabis in Indonesia.

The second study was conducted by Mohammad Zaki Ath Thaariq in his undergraduate thesis. The study entitled Membaca Youth Culture pada Lagu-lagu Warkop: Analisis Wacana Kritis Resistensi Youth Culture dalam Lagu-lagu Warkop published in 2013. The songs from Warkop, a legendary comedy group from Jakarta, were believed to contain several discourses of youth culture. The lyrics of Warkop’s songs became the object of this study. Youth culture issues within the study were related to the representation of Cannabis in Indonesia. The theory of youth culture used in the study is youth subculture understanding because youth in the study was believed as a group trying to fight against the government domination by making particular community; a comedy group.

The last study was from Budi Kurniawan in his master thesis entitled Konstruksi Identitas Tionghoa dalam Harian Nusantara dan Jawa Pos dalam Kurun Waktu Tahun 2013-2014 published in 2015. The objects of the study were articles from two newspapers which represented the construction of Tionghoa’s identity. The theory of Stuart Hall about identity was used as the main theory to identify the articles which were then analysed by using critical discourse analysis by Norman Fairclough. The finding shows that the negative stereotype of Tionghoa ethnics were derived from new order era, but it decreased as the Tionghoa ethnics united into national identity.
Discussion

Cannabis Considered as a Medical Concern

The first article entitled “Badan Kesehatan Dunia (WHO) Meminta Indonesia Berhenti Memenjarakan Pengguna dan Meninjau Kembali Kebijakan Ganja” mostly represented Cannabis as a medical concern from several words. The words and phrases used were WHO or World Health Organization, Kemenkes or Indonesian Ministry of Health, masalah kesehatan or health problem, rehabilitasi or rehabilitation, bukan kriminal or not a crime, pertukaran jarum suntik or needle-exchange, and terapi substitusi opiod or opioid-replacement therapy.

The scheme in text one is chronologic. From the total of six paragraphs, the five paragraphs contained information about WHO policy. WHO is a branch organization of United Nation which has world level legality. Thus, the first part become the background of the regulation of Cannabis legalized in all of the countries due to WHO’s discourse as the highest health organization which concerns medical issues in the world. LGN as the author of the article wanted to ensure the readers that the text was legitimated by WHO. LGN also used the symbol of WHO or World Health Organization to assure the readers that the report written in the LGN article was officially from WHO. In fact, WHO never mentioned directly about Cannabis consumption in the text. WHO mentioned narcotics in the text, but LGN made Cannabis use also be included in the new regulation of WHO. It means that LGN tried to legalize Cannabis use as supported by WHO.

Cannabis not Considered as a Crime

In the second data entitled “Negara Mengaku Bersalah Karena Sudah 28 Tahun Memenjarakan Pengguna Ganja” the writer found that the article is associated with the representation of Cannabis not as a crime through several words and phrases. LGN as the author of the text uses the words and phrases, such as mengaku bersalah or confessed guilty, rehabilitasi or rehabilitation, penyalahguna or misuser, didzolimi or wronged, and jeruji ketidakadilan or injustice trellis.

The topic became clearer in each paragraph because LGN made the article from general to specific idea. The scheme of the article is almost the same with the first article. LGN used ‘general to specific’ type of writing to set the attitude of how reader would agree with LGN as the positive agent in the article. LGN used an inductive writing style because in an inductive writing style, the main information or the main idea is located in the last part of the text (Somad, Aminudin and Irawan 9). Thus, the second data could be divided into two parts. LGN let the reader to know first about the discourse of Cannabis brought by government. Before the new regulation was published, the government considered Cannabis consumption as a form of criminality in Indonesia. The second part was about the impact of the new regulation of Cannabis consumption from WHO. In short, in the second article LGN tried to describe the situation when Cannabis regulation by National Narcotics Agency (BNN) was established in Indonesia, and then continued with the discourse from their own perspective. Thus, LGN more tended to try to set reader’s perspective that government felt guilty and then attempted to regulate narcotic policy in Indonesia.

Cannabis as part of culture: Legitimacy of Representing the Different Discourse of Cannabis

LGN tried to legitimate the different discourse firstly by glorifying their mission related to the discourse of cannabis. In lexical analysis, the writer found the words and phrases, such as Atas berkat rahmat Allah Yang Maha Kuasa or in the grace of Allah almighty, silaturahmi, and saudara seperjuangan or brother in arms. The Islamic sense within the article can be considered to glorify the LGN’s mission in legalizing Cannabis in Indonesia. LGN implies that their mission has a tight bond with Islamic culture which is mostly owned by Indonesian Moslem. That is the reason for LGN to glorify their mission in the name of Islamic manners.

Secondly, LGN tried to examining the use of Cannabis as part of dogma derived from a religion in Indonesia. In this article LGN gives Hindu as the example of Cannabis user. LGN writes Cannabis use in Ayurveda. Ayurveda is a book containing information of healing method based on spiritual and behaviour (Sridana). The book is a belief for the traditional healing from Hindu of India which is also used by Hindu
Bali in Indonesia. The implication of the words is that LGN wants to show that Cannabis is also depicted as part of the sacred culture because it is directly mentioned in the book, Ayurveda. LGN believes that Cannabis had become the traditional healing method in the past and also become the sacred habit of Hindu people.

Thirdly, LGN claims their mission in representing the different discourse as a ‘Heroic Action’. The first word is Nusantara or archipelago. The word itself has meaning as unity of world which is generally identified as a region from Sabang, western city of Indonesia in Aceh Province, to Merauke, eastern city of Indonesia in Irian Jaya Province (Husain). Hence, the implicit meaning from the word ‘Nusantara’ can represent nationalism in order to grow the sense of culture and ‘heroism’ in Indonesia. Second word is perjuangan or struggling. The government still bans Cannabis in Indonesia, so that LGN tries to struggle by giving new discourse about Cannabis because LGN believes that Cannabis is part of human right and identity.

The scheme of the third article is written in the general to specific way of writing. At the beginning of the article, LGN writes the background of the result of Indonesian Ministry of Health and LGN about Cannabis research which is shared to LGN members in Aceh. However, the focus of the third data is still to explain the importance of Cannabis and its history in Indonesia. The background shown in the beginning of the paragraph aims to build readers’ awareness that LGN is a community that concerns Cannabis legalization in Indonesia. They are serious to make Cannabis legal in Indonesia because they could collaborate with Indonesian Ministry of Health to conduct Cannabis research for medical health.

Interpretation of the Text Based on the Discourse Practice and Socio-culture Practice

The characters of youth are associated with the interpretation results at the level of discourse practice and socio-culture practice in this section. Those characteristics reflect the primary purpose of the author who writes about the Cannabis discourse in Indonesia which is different from the existing discourse. This shows the role of youth of Indonesia, in this case LGN, by their behaviour in representing Cannabis in Indonesia in order to make it legal.

The first thing shown by the LGN is that they are challenging Indonesian government as the dominant agent by conducting a research of Cannabis. LGN is attempting to do Cannabis research in order to demonstrate to the government that Cannabis can also be used as a medicine that helps Indonesian people in healing various diseases. In running a Cannabis research, Dhira as the representative of LGN seems to be always in cooperation with various parties. One of those who helped in the realization of Cannabis research by LGN is a lecturer at the University of Syah Kuala, Aceh. LGN also publishes books and writes articles via online media such as Twitter account, Facebook, and also the website. Until this study is written, there are three books that have been published by the LGN, namely: Hikayat Pohon Ganja which contains the history of Cannabis and its use in various countries, Kriminalisasi Ganja which is written based on the experience of one member of LGN who were caught by the apparatus for using Cannabis, and Sekarang Aku Besok Kamu that tells about how to fight the apparatus for the right to use Cannabis. The representation shown in the discourse issued by LGN tries to challenge the previous discourse of Cannabis brought by the Indonesian government. It also reflects Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis which agrees with Marxist that the one who is very powerful can produce their own discourse or truth (Fairclough and Graham 2-3).

Lingkar Ganja Nusantara as a youth community tries to produce their own discourse of Cannabis, either by negotiating or challenging the government’s discourse. Youth have long been regarded as a political mover, and it is proven by the publication of LGN’s books as well as articles published in online media. The book entitled Kriminalisasi Ganja and Sekarang Aku Besok Kamu tell that the use of Cannabis should not be categorized as a crime. Here LGN tries to urge people to oppose the government who prohibit the use of Cannabis. LGN urges people not to fear the apparatus and the government if they are caught using Cannabis because Cannabis use is not a crime. Moreover, LGN here tries to claim that this community has greater authority than other societies because they teach people how to dare using the rights as citizen which is the right to use Cannabis. The third way is representing LGN as an active youth agent.
Indonesia is a law-based country. Therefore, legalizing Cannabis activities in Indonesia cannot be separated from government’s involvement. In this case, LGN shows the state that the movement to legalize Cannabis in Indonesia is carried out by negotiations with the government. The first negotiation proposed by the LGN is to ask for a Cannabis research. This research is expected to show that Cannabis in Indonesia can be used as a medicine for Diabetes. In addition, LGN is supported by one of the lecturers from Syah Kuala University in Aceh to undergo this research. This indicates that Cannabis can officially provide advantages to be used as part of medical health since LGN did research with the help of an official from the government, in this case is one of the lectures from the state University of Syah Kuala, Aceh.

The second negotiation LGN tends to agree with the dominant way of obeying the command from the government, such as making applicable law to control the Cannabis plant in Indonesia and also the statement that the implementation must be based on Pancasila. Furthermore LGN claim themself as the only organization who is able to carry out the management of the Cannabis plant in Indonesia. It seems that LGN considers that no other individual or organization have enough capability to carry out the management of Cannabis because they want that Cannabis in Indonesia is handled by the right people. LGN as an Indonesian youth community is able to play an active role in producing a discourse on Cannabis in Indonesia. It depicts that LGN as the community of Indonesian youth who tries to go through the stages of negotiation and processes to adhere to the country but also strive for challenging the government itself.

The third way, LGN tries to legalize the use of Cannabis in Indonesia in an idealistic way. LGN wants Indonesian to have the right to utilize Cannabis in life. Therefore, LGN would like to remind that the country’s purpose to give freedom to its people is also included to provide freedom of utilization and use of Cannabis as in the past. The goal of the state is explicitly inscribed in the Preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945. As stated in the text analysis of the third data, LGN conveys that Hindus used to use Cannabis as part of religious rituals. This further evidence reinforces the reason to legalize Cannabis in Indonesia because when it is seen from the legal aspect, the government gives freedom to the citizens to embrace and believe in the religion of each along with performing rituals in the belief. Furthermore LGN wants Cannabis to be legalized in Indonesia because their evidence to legalize is obtained from the recognition of local communities. It demands that the government can give permission for Cannabis producer regions in Indonesia to cultivate Cannabis. Then, the use of Cannabis as part of life’s support can be realized in terms of the independence for the welfare of the people of Indonesia.

Related to the freedom in using Cannabis as part of Indonesian right to achieve independence, LGN also admits that in the community Cannabis is also used for recreational activities. It means that Cannabis is used for the pleasure of LGN members itself. The contrary way occurs in the additional interview held by Fresher Globe. Dhira as the representative of LGN did not admit that recreational Cannabis was also done in their communities. It may be said that all LGN members seem to deliberately conceal it from the public eye because there is an interest in the glorification of their addiction. The ambivalence occurs on the question of whether LGN uses recreational of Cannabis or not. Therefore, in the two interviews that become the data of this study, LGN delivers two different explanations about Cannabis use within their community.

**Conclusion**

Based on the results of the critical discourse analysis on the three articles as the highest retweet published on LGN’s Twitter account @legalisasiganja from August to October 2014, it can be said that LGN considered as the youth community try to challenge the previous discourse of Cannabis set by Indonesian government. They try to represent a different discourse of Cannabis from the government’s one, such as the discourse of Cannabis as part of medicine and Indonesian culture, and also not as a crime. Moreover, LGN full of young members can also be considered as the representation of youth. Based on the theory about youth identity proposed by David Buckingham, the youth is always identical to rebel character, active agent, and idealistic person (Buckingham 4).
However, the writer found that the struggling done by LGN is a ‘Pseudo Heroism’ since there were differences between the articles they produced and the explanations given during the interview. Based on an interview held by Fresher Globe, LGN seemed to try to hide the fact that they also use Cannabis as recreational activities in their communities. But, based on an interview conducted by the writer, LGN claims that they also use Cannabis as recreational activities in their communities. Therefore, it is assumed that the struggling done by LGN in legalizing Cannabis for the benefit of the Indonesian people is only a pseudo struggling because they do the legalization of Cannabis in Indonesia based on the interests of LGN as Cannabis users. The disappointments toward the era when Cannabis were banned in Indonesia make the community have an orientation of the same nationalism as in the founding fathers’ era. That is why they implicitly share the similarities between LGN’s struggling and the founding fathers’ struggling in independence era. Unfortunately, their struggling is demolished by their camouflage to the glorification toward their addictive to Cannabis.

The writer also found the power relation between this community and the government in those three articles. LGN constructed the government as the powerful one who has wrong decision and perspective on Cannabis, meanwhile LGN itself is constructed as the youth community with heroic action and purpose. Thus, it seems that those three articles published on LGN’s Twitter account @legalisasiganja challenges both the government’s discourse of Cannabis and the government’s power.

Works Cited