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The Meaning and Functions of Sarcasm and Humour in Gen Z Netizens' Comments on Viral Issues on *TikTok*: A Pragma-Semantic Analysis

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Abstract

The increasing use of sarcasm and humour in social media discourse has transformed online comment sections into significant spaces for social criticism and public engagement. The present study investigates the use of sarcasm and humour by Generation Z (Gen Z) netizens on *TikTok* from a pragma-semantic perspective, focusing on their responses to viral issues during 2025–2026. It examines how sarcastic and humorous expressions function not only as forms of entertainment but also as vehicles for criticism, resistance, and evaluation in contemporary digital communication. Employing a qualitative content analysis to examine 20 *TikTok* comments selected from five viral topics. The analysis was guided by Austin's (1962) dan Searle's (1969) *Speech-Act theory* and a pragma-semantic framework, which integrates semantic meaning with contextual interpretation to uncover the pragmatic functions of sarcasms ang humour. The findings reveal a functional shift in online language use, in which *TikTok* comments serve not merely locutionary purposes of information sharing but also illocutionary functions of criticism, satire, and social resistance. Gen Z users frequently employ indirect speech, absurd humour, irony, wordplay, and (clumsy) metaphors to express scepticism toward public figures, institutions, and policies. Furthermore, conventional expressions such as "thank you" undergo semantic-pragmatic shifts, functioning sarcastically in specific contexts. The findings demonstrate that humour and sarcasm have become strategic communicative resources through which Gen Z articulates social criticism, negotiates public issues, and actively participate in contemporary digital discourse.

Keywords
Pragma-semantics, Sarcasm, Digital Humor, *TikTok*, Gen Z, Social Criticism.

Introduction

Language serves as a dynamic and evolving communication system that facilitates human interaction, emotional expression, and the establishment of social bonds, extending far beyond basic structural elements like syntax and morphology (Yule, 2022). Modern linguistic research has increasingly shifted from formal structuralism toward the analysis of language within real-world socio-cultural contexts, giving rise to pragma-semantics a hybrid approach that bridges literal semantic meaning with pragmatic contextual application (Nawangsih, 2021; Ward, 2016). From this perspective, meaning is viewed as a negotiable entity shaped by situational variables and speaker intent, encompassing locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary dimensions that function as tools for social action, such as persuasion, entertainment, and critique (Suhartono & Mintowati, 2021; Saifudin, 2019; Longworth, 2019; Anastasya & Supri, 2024). This multidimensional understanding is particularly vital when examining non-literal phenomena like sarcasm and humour in digital spaces (Lubis et al., 2025).

Sarcasm represents a complex linguistic strategy in which literal positivity is deliberately subverted to convey sharp derision, a practice often exacerbated by the impulsive and "faceless" nature of online interaction (Frenda et al., 2022; Kreuz, 2020; Jayadi, 2025). Conversely, humour operates through the strategic violation of expectations to elicit amusement, requiring a cognitive process where the recipient identifies and resolves incongruities between reality and anticipation (Aulia & Yanuarsih, 2025). Ultimately, the successful navigation of these linguistic forms depends on a sophisticated grasp of cultural references and implicit logic, which is essential for interpreting the nuanced social agency exercised by netizens in contemporary digital ecosystems.

This study investigates the linguistic nuances of Generation Z's digital interactions by examining the various forms of sarcasm and humour embedded in their *TikTok* commentary on viral issues during the 2025–2026 period. The primary objective is to analyse the underlying pragma-semantic meanings and pragmatic functions within these sarcastic and humorous expressions, seeking to answer how such speech acts navigate the complexities of contemporary digital communication. By focusing on the intersection of literal meaning and contextual intent, this research aims to decode the specific pragmatic implications of Gen Z's social media discourse (Yuzar et al., 2023), ultimately revealing how this demographic utilizes non-literal language as a strategic tool for reaction and engagement in an increasingly volatile online environment (Rahman, Yuzar, & Zhou, 2023).

Zai et al. (2026) identified types of sarcasm in in *TikTok* comments on Indonesian political issues and found that sarcasm acts as a subtle social critique. This research significantly focuses on understanding sarcasm as a linguistic phenomenon that serves not only a negative function or ridicule but also as a tool for strategic social criticism. The fundamental similarity between that study and the present one lies in the application of a pragmatic framework to explain how implied meaning is constructed indirectly. Despite sharing a similar conceptual foundation, there are significant distinctions in terms of subject matter and research medium. Meanwhile, Walsh's (2022) work focuses on analysing language attitudes through societal approaches such as discourse analysis, particularly the attitudes that are (re)produced in the print press or media. The current study instead explores a more dynamic digital realm, namely the interaction of Generation Z netizens on social media platforms. This divergence in medium has implications for more spontaneous data characteristics, the use of slang, and the integration of sarcasm with complex humorous elements (Sykora, Elayan & Jackson, 2020).

Further, the decade-long gap between the two studies (2015 versus 2025-2026) reflects a thematic shift from conventional socio-political issues to more volatile viral discourses in cyberspace. By comparison, Lunando & Purwarianti's (2013) seminal work serves as a foundational study confirming patterns of sarcasm in the Indonesian context, while this research is positioned as an effort to update and expand that theory.

Furthermore, Rahardi's (2020) investigation into digital communication patterns suggests that 'tricksters' successfully deploy misinformation by masking it as authentic media. By intentionally pairing

manipulated visuals with high-emotion headlines, these creators exploit the 'fast-lane' nature of messaging apps. The study concludes that the rapid speed of sharing on these platforms creates an environment where fabricated stories outrun scientific facts, leading to a widespread 'infodemic' of unverified content. Meanwhile, Prastagha et al.'s (2026) research investigates how educational creators on *TikTok* use language to balance instruction with audience engagement, specifically analysing 42 utterances from the account *@nathan_suparman* using Yule's (1996) integrated pragmatics framework. Their findings suggest that today's digital environment leverages cyber-pragmatics for both educational instruction and intentional deception; educational creators prioritize representative speech acts and bald-on-record politeness for instructional efficiency, while hoax creators intentionally exploit emotional vulnerabilities and false context to spread misinformation that outpaces verified scientific facts or updates.

Muyassaroh (2025) examines the pragmatic function of humorous speech in *TikTok* comments on viral social issues. This research has a very close thematic coherence with the present study, as both examine the pragmatic function of humorous speech in *TikTok* comment column sections. Conducted within a similarity close timeframe, the two studies also share significant similarities in their choice of research object, namely the phenomenon of digital communication triggered by viral social issues. The fundamental similarity lies in the recognition that social media commentary is a crucial space for public discourse, where the function of language is no longer merely informative but has been transformed into an instrument of non-literal, pragmatic social reaction (Muyassaroh, 2025).

Thus, despite having this thematic linkage, there are theoretical distinction and differences in platform that distinguish the two studies. The Muyassaroh's (2025) study exclusively focuses on the *TikTok* platform, emphasising the pragmatic functional aspects of humorous speech. Meanwhile, a profound difference lies in the analytical lens applied; whereas previous research focused on pragmatic function in general, this study applies a more comprehensive pragma-semantic approach. This approach allows researchers not only to identify speech functions but also to trace the shifts in lexical (semantic) meaning that occur in the use sarcasm and humour.

This research positions itself as an effort to expand existing theory, offering a more specific account of the ambiguity between sarcasm and humour. By collecting and categorising Gen Z's comments on viral issues on *TikTok* 2025-2026, this study complements previous findings through an in-depth analysis of how Gen Z netizens comment sarcastically and humorously on viral issues on the *TikTok* platform, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the pragmatic meaning embedded within these sarcastic and humorous comments.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach using descriptive-interpretive content analysis. Content analysis was selected because it enables researchers to systematically identify patterns of meaning, contextual interpretations, and communicative functions embedded in textual data. Following the principles of qualitative content analysis proposed by Hsieh & Shannon (2005), the analysis involved coding, categorizing, and interpreting comments to reveal underlying pragmatic meanings and social functions. The interpretive dimension was further used to understand how sarcasm and humour operate within specific sociocultural and digital contexts. The paradigm carried out is the paradigm of social constructivism, namely language is seen as a social construction whose meaning is built together in digital interaction.

Data Collection & Analysis

The analysis was conducted in two stages: (1) semantic analysis to identify lexical and implied meanings, and (2) pragmatic analysis to identify speech functions, contextual meanings, and communicative implications.

The pragmatic analysis was based on Speech Act Theory developed by Austin (1962) and further elaborated by Searle (1969), particularly the concepts of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts.

These concepts were applied to examine how sarcasm and humour convey communicative intentions and social meanings in Gen Z *TikTok* comments (Altikriti, 2011). The data of this research is taken from the source of data on Gen Z netizens' comments on viral issues on the *TikTok* platform in 2025-2026. The data collected amounted to 20 comments that were identified as containing elements of sarcasm and humour in five different viral issues. This research is the main instrument, namely the researcher himself who conducts the selection, and analyses the data with the guidance of pragmatic and semantic theory. The data collection technique used in the form of documentation (screenshots) the researcher observes every comment of Gen z netizen without engaging in interaction, the data that has been collected is then analysed to ensure that the message conveyed is not misinterpreted.

Findings & Discussion

Table 1. Findings in *TikTok's* comments section

No.	Comments of Gen Z	Context (viral issue)	Semantic Meaning	Pragmatics Meaning	Types of Sarcasm and Humour
1.	@ca "the point is cheap" 2025	Jule's cheating case	Something that is low or inexpensive.	Insinuating the self-esteem of the cheating perpetrator who is considered low or easy.	Sarcasm (innuendo) satirizing characters through the word "cheap".
2.	@manis "Too Late😅" 2025	Jule's cheating case	Committing delinquency at an age that is no longer young.	Insinuating people who have just committed deviant behaviour (cheating) when they are established/aged.	Circus – making fun of age-inappropriate behaviour.
3.	@." A couple is stunned🩶🩶🩶" 2026	Furab (Fuji Arap)	A pun on the "favorited", chlorine is a water whitening powder.	A harsh irony that the couple is actually bad/toxic to the public.	Humour malapropism – omitting words for funny/insulting effect.
4.	@. "A lot of people are going to be playing but they don't want to play in 2026."	The case of the late murder	F*ra is the subject who plays, R*yhan acts seriously.	Satirizing the perpetrator of a crime (F*ra) who meets a much more sadistic/serious opponent (R*yhan).	Situational irony – the contrast between "playing" and a fatal act.
5.	@milaazzhr "A holiday is coming to an end" 2026	The case of *FH UI*	Commenting on the funny break/holiday giveaway.	Criticism of suspension sanctions is considered not a punishment, but a reward of rest for the perpetrator.	Sarcasm (political/social satire) – Satire of the unfairness of sanctions.
6.	@waa 🅰"my soap is only PO 90 days, it's only 45 days"2026	The case of *FH UI*	Compare the waiting period (Pre-Order) of soap with a duration of 45 days.	Insinuating the lightness of the punishment of the perpetrator whose duration is even shorter than waiting for the soap delivery.	Comparative humour (Hyperbole) – Comparing trivial things with laws .
7.	@. "At first I sympathized, now Indosat" 2026	The case of the U.S. student loan	Mention the names of two mobile operators in Indonesia.	Pun is a play on words to state that the pity (sympathy) for the victim has disappeared/changed.	Humour Wordplay (Pun) – uses brand names to shift meaning.

8.	@calvinchandra "If a South Korean dies and becomes a ghost, does the ghost wear a face before or after the surgery?" 2026	Knetz vs Indonesian netizens	A logical question about the face of the soul of a person who has had plastic surgery.	Satirizing the phenomenon of plastic surgery in South Korea which is very massive to the extreme.	Absurd Humour – Using ghostly logic to satirize social reality.
9.	@ininanaisy "Like pus and boils, where there are boils, there must be pus, that's the presence of this furab ship, which is inseparable and very harmonious💗💗" 2026	Furab (Fuji Arap)	Comparison of relationships with related skin diseases.	Stating that the couple is both disgusting or has a bad impact on each other.	Dark Humour/Crude Metaphor – Using disgusting analogies to insult.
10.	@Agus Triwibowo "even though we rarely celebrate birthdays, we also want to live a long life 🙏" 2026	KRL accident case	The desire to live a long life even though he never celebrated his birthday.	Protests by small people against public policies/facilities (KRL) that endanger their lives.	Melancholy/Self-Deprecating Humour – Laughing at threatened self-preference.
11.	@rekas.p "thank you, sir, I have cancelled 🙏 the pashmina cod (2026)	KRL accident case	Notify that the order for hijab (*pashmina*) of the COD system has been cancelled.	A form of protest/fear to travel or "look pretty" because they feel public facilities are unsafe.	Satirical humour (action-based) – Satirizes the situation through the act of cancelling shopping.
12.	@rovi "thank you, sir I'm almost wearing, a *daster*" 2026	KRL accident case	Thankfully, I didn't wear a house dress (*daster*).	Satirizing the narrative of officials who blame the clothes or the position of the passengers when the accident/problem occurs.	Sarcasm (*Reductio ad absurdum)* – Playing on the logic of victim abuse.
13.	@ocaa "It's all in the middle, ma'am, back and front taro bubble wrap" 2026	KRL accident case	Advice to put everything in the centre and wrapped in plastic safety.	Insinuating the official's unreasonable statement about the arrangement of the position of KRL passengers.	Sarcasm (hyperbole) – exaggerating silly solutions to reply to silly ideas.
14.	@muhyahyaaa_: "Thank you sir, I finally cancelled the installation of eyelashes, nails, and eyebrow embroidery" (2026)	KRL accident case	Cancel all beauty care appointments.	Insinuation that it is useless to dress up beautifully if its safety is not guaranteed by the service provider (KRL).	Satirical humour – connecting lifestyle to public safety issues.
15.	@lolo0 "Thank you sir, I'm almost wearing a wig" (2026)	KRL accident case	Thank you for almost wearing a wig.	Satirizing the statement of officials who seem to blame the details/physicality of passengers. Netizens feel "useless" to perform optimally or improve their	Sarcasm (*Reductio ad absurdum*) – responding to the logic of officials by bringing up a wig to show how

				appearance if the basic security system is broken.	ridiculous the argument is.
16.	@Stuart (talk) "😭🙏 02:00, 2025 (UTC)"	The case of the uterus being removed	Tired of studying medicine but finally the patient chose a birth shaman.	Insinuation of people who believe in traditional/mythical medicine more than modern medical science.	Irony – the contrast between higher education and the reality on the ground.
17.	@☐ "Thank you sir, I cancel my SS robe" (2026)	KRL accident case	Cancel the purchase of certain brands of robes.	Similar to No. 11, as a protest that people have lost interest in shopping because they feel insecure/disappointed.	Satirical humour – using shopping trends to criticize policies.
18.	@22% "Eat Nutritious what does each x get is only seasoned eggs ... Long Boil 😂" (2025)	MBG Case	Protests about food menus that only eggs and cause skin problems.	Criticism of the quality of the Free Nutritious Meal (*MBG*) program which is considered not in accordance with nutritional standards.	Satirical humour/social criticism – complaining about the quality of government services.
19.	@echa.yes "in addition to Jule, it turns out that the DPR also refuses to dim" (2026)	The case of the *KRL* accident (the house of legislative members to the president director of *KAI*	Mention two entities that remain the centre of attention (do not want to drown).	Satirizing the actions of the House of Representatives which are considered to continue to make blunders or seek sensation in the midst of other viral issues.	Sarcasm (analogy) – equating institutional behaviour with people who are viral negative.
20.	@rose "it's all in the middle, period! Train Extends Up" (2026)	*KRL* (commuter rail) accident case	Idea of a car shape that extends vertically to the sky	The peak of the insinuation against the proposal of KRL officials that is unreasonable regarding the arrangement of passenger space.	Absurd humour – using impossible logic to respond to statements that are considered stupid.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a rich and nuanced landscape of sarcasm and humour employed by Generation Z *TikTok* netizens in Indonesia when responding to viral social and political issues. The twenty data points collected from various *TikTok* comment sections between 2025 and 2026 demonstrate that digital humour is not merely a form of entertainment but also a significant vehicle for social criticism, political commentary, and collective emotional expression. Humour in online discourse frequently operates as an indirect communicative strategy through which speakers encode evaluative stances toward social phenomena without risking overt confrontation (Feng & O'Halloran, 2012).

These comments reflect the ways in which young Indonesians engage with current events through wit, wordplay, and satirical framing, often using humour as a shield to address otherwise difficult or sensitive topics. The discussion below elaborates on each finding systematically, drawing connections between the linguistic strategies employed and their broader pragma-semantic and sociocultural implications (Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2019; Stepanova et al., 2025; Tanduk, 2023).

The first datum, posted by *@ca* with the comment '*the point is cheap*' in 2025 in response to the Jule's cheating case (Jule is an Indonesian internet personality or a name of Indonesian *selebgram* or celebrity

Instagram), exemplifies the use of innuendo as a form of sarcasm. On the surface, the word cheap denotes something of low monetary value. However, within the context of infidelity, the expression acquires an implied evaluative meaning that extends beyond its literal semantic content. This interpretation can be understood through the notion of conversational implicature, whereby contextual information enables hearers to infer meanings that are not explicitly stated (Grice, 1975). The commenter is not making a literal economic observation but rather insinuating that the person who committed the act of cheating possesses low moral worth and poor self-esteem. This form of indirect insult, wrapped in seemingly benign language, is characteristic of innuendo-based sarcasm, which allows the speaker to convey a critical message while maintaining a degree of plausible deniability. The use of this strategy reflects a broader pattern in online discourse where netizens prefer indirect yet biting criticism over overt verbal attacks.

The second comment, made by *@manis* with the phrase 'too late' accompanied by a laughing emoji in 2025, also concerning the Jule's (Instagram celebrity) cheating case, employs a form of circus humour a type of comedic expression that ridicules behaviour considered inappropriate given someone's age or social standing. The semantic content of the comment points to the idea of committing wrongdoing at an advanced age when one should presumably know better. The pragmatic layer adds a dimension of mockery toward the cheating perpetrator, who is portrayed as someone engaging in deviant behaviour that is both morally and socially misaligned with their life stage. The emoji usage further softens the delivery, making the humour more palatable while still delivering a pointed critique.

The third finding, from *@.* with the comment "*A couple is stunned*" in 2026, relates to the viral topic of *Furab* (a portmanteau combining the names Fuji and Arap: two Indonesians internet personality). This comment employs malapropism-based humour, wherein words are intentionally or cleverly misused or omitted to create a comic or insulting effect. The pun embedded in this comment draws on 'chlorine,' a chemical substance used for whitening water, as a play on words that insinuates something negative or toxic about the couple. The humour operates on two levels. First, it relies on incongruity created by the unexpected comparison between a romantic relationship and a chemical substance. Second, it conveys an implicit negative evaluation that can only be inferred through contextual interpretation. This mechanism is consistent with theories of conversational humour and incongruity, which emphasize the interaction between literal expressions and implied meanings in humorous discourse (Dynel, 2009). Through this humorous comparison, the relationship is indirectly portrayed as harmful or undesirable, thereby transforming a simple linguistic play into a form of evaluative social commentary.

The fourth comment, attributed to *@.*, reads "*A lot of people are going to be playing but they don't want to play in 2026*", and references the case of a violent attack that occurred at the state university, Indonesia, involving individuals named F*ra and R*yhan. This represents a case of situational irony, where a stark contrast exists between expectations and reality. The word 'playing' typically suggests casual or light-hearted engagement, yet the context involves a criminal act of a gravely serious nature. The pragmatic meaning of the comment satirizes F*ra, the alleged perpetrator, who is portrayed as treating a dangerous situation carelessly, while R*yhan, her adversary, is depicted as far more serious and ruthless. This ironic framing exposes the dangerous underestimation of situations and uses dark humour to comment on the consequences of recklessness.

The fifth datum, from *@milaazzhr* with the comment "*A holiday is coming to an end*" in 2026, pertains to the case of *FH UI* (*Fakultas Hukum*) or the Faculty of Law in one Indonesia top university, and exemplifies political and social satire. At its semantic face value, the phrase references the conclusion of a holiday period; however, the pragmatic intention is to criticize what the commenter perceives as an inappropriately lenient sanction specifically, a suspension that is being ironically reframed as a vacation or period of rest rather than a genuine punishment. This satirical reinterpretation of institutional punishment highlights a growing scepticism among young Indonesians toward the fairness and effectiveness of disciplinary mechanisms within higher education institutions. By using the language of leisure to describe what should be a consequence, the commenter exposes the perceived inadequacy of institutional justice.

The sixth comment, by *@waa* in 2026, reads *"my soap is only PO 90 days, it's only 45 days",* and also references to the case of *FH UI*. This comment employs comparative humour through hyperbole, drawing a deliberately absurd parallel between the waiting period of a pre-ordered soap product and the duration of the perpetrator's suspension. The humour lies in the triviality of the comparison: the fact that a consumer product takes longer to arrive than the perpetrator's punishment lasts is used to underscore the perceived injustice and lightness of the sanction. The use of a mundane, everyday reference soap shopping serves to demystify legal and institutional processes and frame them within the relatable experience of everyday consumer life, making the critique more accessible and impactful to a broad online audience.

The seventh finding involves *@.*, who comments "*At first I sympathized, now Indosat"* in 2026, in response to the case of the U.S. student loan. This comment is a masterclass in wordplay (pun), leveraging the names of two Indonesian telecommunications providers *Simpati* (which sounds like 'sympathy' in Indonesian) and *Indosat* to express a shift in emotional stance. The pragmatic implication is that the commenter's initial feelings of compassion or sympathy for the student in question have disappeared and transformed into something else entirely. By using brand names to encode emotional transitions, the commenter demonstrates the creative linguistic agility characteristic of Gen Z communication. This form of humour is particularly sophisticated because it requires cultural and linguistic knowledge to fully decode the intended meaning.

The eighth comment, posted by *@calvinchandra* in 2026 in response to tensions between Korean netizens and Indonesian netizens (*Knetz* vs. *Netizen Indo*), asks: "*If a South Korean dies and becomes a ghost, does the ghost wear a face before or after the surgery?*" This represents a prime example of absurd humour; wherein impossible or illogical scenarios are used to satirize real-world social phenomena. The question uses the fantastical framework of *ghost lore* to comment on the pervasiveness of plastic surgery culture in South Korea. The absurdity of imagining what a ghost's face would look like post-surgery is precisely the point by posing a logically unanswerable question, the commenter highlights how extreme and normalized cosmetic surgery has become in Korean society. This type of humour invites reflection through laughter and is particularly effective in cross-cultural online exchanges.

The tenth comment, by *@Agus Triwibowo* in 2026, pertains to the Indonesian *KRL* (commuter rail) accident case. The commenter writes: "*even though we rarely celebrate birthdays, we also want to live a long life*". This poignant observation employs melancholy or self-deprecating humour, wherein the speaker laughs at their own difficult circumstances. The pragmatic layer of this comment is a protest directed at government negligence and unsafe public infrastructure. By expressing a desire for basic survival, a long life while acknowledging that they cannot even afford the luxury of birthday celebrations, the commenter gives voice to the frustration of ordinary citizens who feel marginalized and endangered by the failures of public services. This type of humour resonates deeply because it blends comedy with genuine social pain.

The eleventh comment, from *@rekas.p*, announces the cancellation of a hijab pre-order in response to the *KRL (commuter rail)* accident case. The pragmatic meaning is that the unsafe condition of public transportation has made the commenter reluctant to travel or invest in personal appearance, since safety cannot be guaranteed. This form of satirical humour, based on a concrete everyday action (cancelling a shopping order), criticizes public policy by demonstrating its impact on the most mundane aspects of daily life. The act of cancelling a fashion purchase becomes a political statement, revealing how deeply institutional failures can penetrate personal routines and choices. This comment exemplifies the Gen Z tendency to merge lifestyle discourse with civic protest.

The twelfth comment, from *@rovi* in 2026, also referencing the Indonesian *KRL (commuter rail)* accident, reads: "*thank you sir I'm almost wearing a daster"*. A *daster* (An informal Indonesian lightweight house dress) is and the sarcastic gratitude expressed here functions as a critique of officials who apparently blamed passengers' clothing choices for accidents. By pretending to be thankful for narrowly avoiding wearing a house dress implying that doing so might have caused or worsened an accident the commenter

employs *reductio ad absurdum* (a form of argument, showing that following the logic of a contrary proposition or argument would lead to absurdity or contradiction) sarcasm, taking an illogical argument to its extreme conclusion to expose its fundamental absurdity. This form of humour is intellectually sharp and requires the audience to already be aware of the official's original statement to fully appreciate the irony embedded within the response. They dismantle the argument's credibility through shared laughter.

The thirteenth finding, from @*ocaa* in 2026, advises readers to "*put everything in the middle, and wrap front and back in bubblewrap*", satirizing the official's recommendations regarding passenger positioning during *KRL (commuter rail)* journeys. This is an instance of hyperbolic sarcasm (or sarcastic gratitude), where an already questionable suggestion is taken to ridiculous extremes to illustrate how impractical and unreasonable it truly is. The image of passengers wrapped in bubble wrap as a safety measure is deliberately farcical, drawing attention to the inadequacy of the official's proposed solution. The humour operates by amplifying the logic of the original statement until it collapses under its own absurdity, which is a common comedic technique used to dismantle poorly reasoned arguments in public discourse.

The fourteenth comment, from @*muhyahyaaa_* in 2026, similarly references the *KRL (commuter rail)* case with: "*Thank you sir, I finally cancelled the installation of eyelashes, nails, and eyebrow embroidery*". This is satirical humour that connects personal grooming rituals to public safety issues. By listing specific beauty treatments eyelash extensions, nail installations, eyebrow embroidery and framing their cancellation as a response to inadequate public safety, the commenter critiques the idea that personal aesthetics should be prioritized in an environment where basic security is absent. The sarcastic '*thank you*' further amplifies the irony. The comment implies that there is little point in investing in one's appearance if the journey itself is life-threatening, thereby linking the personal and the political through the lens of feminine beauty culture.

The fifteenth datum, from @*lolo0* in 2026, echoes the same theme with: "*Thank you sir, I'm almost wearing a wig*". Like the previous comments in the KRL series, this employs *reductio ad absurdum* sarcasm, using the trivial image of a wig to highlight how ridiculous it is to blame passenger appearance for structural and systemic failures in transportation safety. The comment builds on a shared understanding among netizens of the official's original statement, which apparently implied that passengers' physical attributes played a role in the danger they faced. By extending this logic to include wigs, the commenter underscores the ludicrous nature of victim-blaming narratives and rallies collective indignation through shared laughter.

The sixteenth datum, from @*Stuart* in 2025, pertains to a case involving unnecessary uterus removal. The comment expresses the exhaustion of someone who studied medicine for years only to find that the patient ultimately chose to consult a traditional birth shaman instead. This represents an instance of irony, where the contrast between the commenter's extensive academic preparation and the reality of patient behaviour creates a darkly comedic dissonance. The pragmatic meaning critiques the persistent preference for traditional or mythical healing practices over evidence-based modern medicine in certain segments of Indonesian society. The humour, tinged with professional frustration, reflects broader tensions between scientific literacy and cultural belief systems in contemporary Indonesia.

The seventeenth comment, from @□ in 2026, states: "*Thank you sir, I cancel my SS robe*", again in the context of the *KRL (commuter rail)* accident case. Much like comment eleven, this represents satirical humour that uses a consumer behaviour specifically, the cancellation of a robe purchase to protest the perceived inadequacy of public safety measures. The '*SS*' likely refers to a specific brand "Shella Saukia", and the cancellation serves as a symbolic rejection of normalcy and routine in the face of systemic failure. Collectively, comments eleven through fifteen and seventeen form a coherent satirical thread in which netizens mock officials' victim-blaming rhetoric by cataloguing increasingly mundane fashion and beauty choices that, under the officials' logic, would ostensibly place them in danger.

Commentary from the account @22% in 2025 sharply critiques the Free Nutritional Meal program (or *MBG: Makanan Bergizi Gratis*) through satirical humour. By continually expressing dissatisfaction with the menu consisting solely of spiced eggs, this internet user points out the nutritional inadequacies of the

government welfare initiative. The informal and fragmented language typical of social media enhances the serious message about the policy's failure, demonstrating that humour can serve as an effective tool for delivering substantial social critiques (Spencer & Oppermann, 2025).

Comments from the account @*echa. yes* in 2026 illustrate how skilled Gen Z is at linking two different viral issues using the analogy of '*reluctance to fade*'. By comparing the affair case of 'Jule' (a name of *I*ndonesian *selebgram* or celebrity Instagram) with the behaviour of the parliament, this internet user critiques how both individuals and government institutions stubbornly seek negative attention while disregarding public backlash. This sarcastic technique illustrates how social media users employ digital discourse to connect personal experiences with broader social and institutional concerns. Such forms of layered criticism are characteristic of online communication, where users negotiate meanings, identities, and social positions through discourse practices in networked environments (Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2019).

Analysis of comments from Gen Z users on *TikTok* Indonesia reveals that humour functions as a strategic tool for criticism and social commentary. Through irony, wordplay, satire, and indirect expressions, users are able to communicate critical evaluations of social and political issues while reducing the risks associated with direct confrontation (Naiyf Qaiwer, 2020; Rahman et al., 2025; Ullah et al., 2025). Such communicative practices are consistent with previous studies showing that humour and sarcasm in digital discourse often serve as mechanisms for expressing dissent, negotiating social meanings, and constructing public criticism in online environments (Dynel, 2009). Furthermore, the findings indicate that viral cultural references or digital feeds provide a shared interpretive framework that enables users to engage collectively in public discussions and social critique and movements (Dynel, 2021; Harju, 2015; Mukhongo, 2020).

Overall, the findings suggest that Gen Z users on *TikTok* employ humour and sarcasm as sophisticated communicative resources that combine entertainment with social criticism. The preference for indirect criticism through irony, satire, and wordplay supports previous research demonstrating that online humour frequently functions as a form of civic participation and discursive engagement in networked publics (Shifman, 2013; Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2019). In this context, humour not only reflects linguistic creativity but also serves as a means through which users negotiate public issues, challenge institutional practices, and express collective evaluations of contemporary social realities.

Conclusion

That the linguistic phenomenon of Gen Z netizens on the *TikTok* platform has undergone a functional transformation from just a communication tool to a complex instrument of social resistance. This study looked at the literal meaning (the dictionary definition), and then they dove into the pragmatic layer, the "vibe" or the hidden intention behind the words. One of the most human elements highlighted in the discussion is how Gen Z uses innuendo to criticize moral failings. When a user commented "the point is cheap" regarding a cheating scandal, they weren't talking about money. They were using a semantic-pragmatic shift to suggest the perpetrator had low moral worth. It is a way of delivering a "biting" critique while keeping enough plausible deniability to avoid a direct confrontation.

Further, the researchers found that Gen Z uses hyperbole and comparative humour to make heavy legal issues feel relatable. By framing a serious legal sanction as shorter than a shipping delay, they demystify complex institutional processes and expose the perceived lightness of the law. The study paints a picture of a generation that has weaponized wit. They have turned "thank you" into pure sarcasm and "soap shipping" into a legal critique, proving that humour is their most effective tool for negotiating public issues and challenging institutional power. This requires the audience to have a shared cultural framework to even understand the joke. This paper also notes a fascinating trend where users "cancel" mundane plans—like

eyelash extensions, buying a robe, or wearing a wig—as a form of civic protest. The logic is: *Why bother looking pretty if the basic security of the journey isn't guaranteed?*

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