

“Memories of My Body” Movie Ban as An Effect of Dominant Anti-LGBT Discourse in Depok City

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Abstract: "Memories of My Body" screening ban in 2019 by Depok local government is deemed problematic since it has already passed Film Censor Board (LSF). This paper aimed to better understand the decision made by the Depok local government in banning the movie through critical discourse analysis. This paper is a discourse analysis understand the discourse surrounding the movie ban in Depok.. This paper's primary data is literature studies from numerous electronic news sources. Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is used as a theory and methodology. The result from this research shows that there are two main discourses: protecting younger generation and incompatibility toward Islamic values. After further analysis, it is found that these discourses also exist in another events. This fact shows that the movie ban is an effect from a dominant discourse against LGBTQ community.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, film, Memories of My Body, local politics

1. Introduction

The relations between films and a state's political dynamics had been researched by numerous researchers. Films and politics are closely related due to film's nature to contain and the ability spread ideas. It also enables the elite to create or maintain hegemony through controlling films.[1], [2] Controlling films, however, affects numerous aspects. Freedom of speech is one of the most important aspects affected by films among the others. New Order Indonesia has already seen how the government controls the idea through the film industry. The government was using it as propaganda or banning and censoring films deemed to destabilise the country.[1] Film bans during New Order reflect the government's perspective on ideologies seen as a threat. During New Order, numerous films were banned or censored. Films such as “Si Mamad” and “Yang Muda Yang Bercinta” was among films that were banned during the period.[2]

However, these researches focus on a centralized authoritarian state as the leading actor of the control. It makes sense since a centralized government, moreover an authoritarian one, controls the society through its legitimate power. In this type of governance, Hegemony is related closely to their exercise of power. However, in Indonesia, changes happen after the Reformation that ended the New Order government. Post-reformation in Indonesia experienced a significant change. A big bang of decentralisation came into force after the fall of Soeharto regime. Along with changes in the national-level political dynamics, the sub-national political dynamics gradually

change. It means that local governments after Reformation have the right to independently manage their own fiscal and political situation and thus be given the autonomy to decide for themselves.

On April 25, 2019, the Depok local government issued Surat Edaran 460/185-Huk/DPAPMK urging cinemas in Depok City to take down the film "Memory of My Body" (Indonesian: Kucumbu Tubuh Indahku). The film that has passed censorship by the Film Censorship Institute (LSF) is considered to threaten the strengthening of family resilience against sexual deviant behavior and its effects[3]. The film is also considered to promote Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ). As a result, the film was taken down from one of the cinemas in Depok City, Cinemaxx Depok Town Square. In addition to the city government, the Depok City Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) also supports this action. Following a circular from the Depok City Government, the Depok City MUI sent a letter to the Depok City Government to prohibit the distribution of the film from cinemas in Depok City as a symbol of its support. A similar reason was given by the Depok City MUI that the film was not in accordance with the norms of decency and Islamic religions.

The city of Depok was recorded as the first to take action against the film. After the circular, there were protests to remove the film from cinemas in several areas [4]. In addition to Depok, the ban also occurred in the districts of Padang, Kubu Raya, Garut and Bandar Lampung. Protests filed by community organizations take the form of direct actions or through online petitions. In Bandar Lampung, for example, the screening of "Memory of My Body" had to be stopped after protests by a mass organization, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). Similar event happened in Semarang, as FPI boycotted this film as it did not educate the younger generation.

Decentralisation in post-Reformation Indonesia according to Vedi Hadiz, resulted in the the involvement of local oligarchs in sub-national level.[5] The rise of local elite in Indonesia has become a concern since its emergence is contradictory toward what neo-institutionalist have expected.[6] This phenomena calls on more researches about Indonesian local politics. The ban on "Memories of My Body" by Depok local governments may indicate the link between political dynamics in sub-national level and its effect on popular culture.

Mostly, researches about this movie were discussing the semiotics and the ideas of Garin Nugroho. It is true that these researches contribute insights toward what kind of idea are being promoted in the film. However, it also not able to explain the context surrounding the film itself. Studies about film ban in local cities in Indonesia are scarce. The scarcity of the research mainly due to the cultural diversity as well as complexities in political aspect. Therefore, this paper aimed to understand the discourse surrounding the movie ban in Depok. This is a preliminary research to first gain understanding about the film ban in a more so-called democratic and decentralised Indonesia.

2. Theoretical Framework

This research utilizes Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA). Fairclough critical discourse analysis aims to understand language as a political tool.[7] Instead of analyzing language within its own elements, Fairclough attempted to combine the discourse analysis with the sociocultural and political context surrounding the text itself.[8] This attempt creates a more robust way of analyzing discourse in a sociocultural and political setting to uncover the hidden agenda. CDA sees ideology as an important aspect to maintain unequal power relation. [9]

Fairclough suggested three dimensional of discourse: text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice.[8] Discourse practice is where a discourse is produced as a text and consumed in a certain way that define how the text is interpreted. Sociocultural practice is the social and cultural setting in which the producer and the consumer of the discourse engaged. The sociocultural practice is a relation between the text and context that explains the existence of power.

Sociocultural practice is an important concept in Fairclough's CDA. Fairclough sees interconnected network of discourses and genres produced by social practices. Fairclough emphasizes social order as an important part of producing meaning. In this social order, discourse dominance becomes an important aspect. As he explained, "...ways of making meaning are dominant or mainstream in a particular order of discourse; others are marginal, or oppositional, or 'alternative'".[7] It means that through social order, a dominant discourse is put in place to marginalized the other in attempt to create unquestionable articulation.

Fairclough's conception and point of view is used to examine what sociopolitical context that exists surrounding the "Memory of My Body" ban in Depok City. The ban was issued by local government which indicate interest

3. Research Method

This research utilizes critical discourse analysis method developed by Norman Fairclough. Fairclough explained there are three stages of critical discourse analysis.[8] First stage is text description. Text is described as it is without correlation toward any other aspect or context surrounding the text. Second stage of Fairclough analysis is interpretation. The text described is then interpreted to how the text is produced and received. Lastly, the text is put in its social context to understand the relation between the text as a discourse and sociohistorical setting where the discourse is produced.

The text as a data in this research is statement made by Depok local government and MUI achieved from electronic news during the ban. The secondary data used is literature studies achieved from researches and electronic news that cover issues such as Depok domestic politics, LGBT in Depok, and Depok anti-LGBT policy.

4. Findings and Discussion

In the table below, statements from Depok local government and MUI on the ban is shown.

| Depok Local Government | Depok Local MUI |
|--|--|
| <p>"There are three main reasons for the Depok City Government to prohibit showing the film, namely the first to have an impact on public unrest because the sexual deviation scenes shown in the film can affect the perspective or behavior of the community, especially the younger generation to follow and even justify the behavior of sexual deviants.</p> <p>The second is against religious values.</p> <p>Third, it can lead to public opinion, especially the younger generation, so that they consider sexual deviant behavior to be a normal and acceptable act, said Mohammad Idris.[10]</p> | <p>First, the film is not in accordance with the norms of decency in society, especially with the principles and values of the Islamic religion.</p> <p>Second, the film has the potential to damage the younger generation of Muslims in Depok City for free and deviant sexual behavior.</p> <p>"Then thirdly, we strongly support the steps of the Mayor of Depok by banning the screening of the film in the Depok area," said Chairman of the Depok MUI KH A Dimyathi to reporters, Friday (26/4/2019).[11]</p> |

In table 1, the phrase “anticipating unrest”, “younger generation”, “sexual deviant behaviour” and “against religious value” can be found in the statements made by Depok’s mayor and local MUI. “Anticipating unrest” indicates that Depok government have the responsibility to maintain societal stability. In other word, Depok’s local government was securitizing the society from a new idea. Hence, they treated the movie and its idea as a threat. This phrase only stated by Depok local government which emphasize the power legitimacy. Securitization is then narrowed down by these two phrases: “younger generation” and “sexual deviant behaviour”. It can be concluded that Depok Government emphasizes this banning act as a protection toward young generation in the city. While “against religious value” indicates that the LGBTQ issue brought up in the film is considered against religion-based morality. With the backing from local MUI, this religion-based morality can be reduced into Islamic values.

From these phrases, we can understand that there are two main themes as a reason to ban the film: protecting younger generation and incompatibility toward Islamic values. These two themes should be put into a broader context. Antagonizing LGBTQ community has become an issue under Mohammad Idris rule in Depok. Before the film ban, discourses against LGBTQ community are rampant and can be seen in some other events.

In early 2018, the Depok City Government formed an Anti-LGBT team as a result of the arrest of two homosexuals who spread immoral videos located in a gym in Depok City. The team consisted of the Social Service, police, community organizations, and 200 residents from various urban villages in Depok City [12]. The reason for forming the team was to reduce the existence of the LGBT group in the city of Depok. In January 2019, the Mayor of Depok, Muhammad Idris issued Surat Edaran Number 460/90-Dinsos for the citizens of Depok City to make a report regarding LGBT community’s activity in their neighborhood.[13] The case of Reynhard Sinaga, a Depok resident who committed same-sex sexual violence in England, in early 2020 which emerged in the public, prompted the Anti-LGBT Raperda to be re-discussed. [14] The word used by the public to refer LGBTQ

community is “penyakit” or disease. This antagonism is being strengthened with other discourse made by local Komisi Penanggulangan Aids (KPA). In a report made by KPA of Depok, HIV cases in the city are dominated by LGBTQ community.[15]

Protecting the younger generation has also become a recurring discourse in Depok public policy. One policy issued by the local government, “Implementation of Strengthening Family Resilience against Sexual Deviant Behavior and Its Impact” explicitly called for families to protect their children from “deviant sexual behavior”. It also called for citizens to reject any form of sexually deviant behavior and community surrounding their neighborhood. Family resilience is a national policy made by the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection to create a better household environment for children and women. However, Depok local government’s interpretation on that policy enforces their belief using its political legitimacy.

One of these discriminatory decisions came from the vision and mission of Depok City under the leadership of Mohammad Idris. Idris, an independent candidate supported by the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), directed Depok City to become a religious city. One of the forms of religious narratives is the declaration of Depok City as a Religious City. Although the plan was rejected by the Depok City local parliament, the submission of the plan shows that there is a narrative development effort by the city government.

The dominating discourse against LGBTQ community in Depok city affected Depok’s local government decision making to rule out “Memory of My Body” from cinemas. The film considered as a threat toward its already established anti-LGBT discourse. Muhammad Idris as the Mayor of Depok tries to create hegemony in Depok city. This decision is made to show his consistency in ruling the city. The word “reject” any “sexually deviant behavior and community” in his family resilience against sexual deviant behavior program legitimized his action on banning the movie in the city. It indicates that the movie ban consists of political intention.

5. Conclusion

This article analyzes the statement of Depok local government and MUI during the “Memory of My Body” ban. Using Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis, it is concluded that there are two main discourses that are being used by both actors: protecting younger generation and incompatibility toward Islamic values. These discourses mean that the Depok’s local government was trying to securitize and hence treating LGBTQ issue brought in the movie as a threat. On the other hand, MUI as an Islamic organization supporting the government and emphasizes Islamic value as the opposition toward the movie.

Antagonizing LGBT has become a recurring discourse in Depok’s sociocultural and political landscape. Proven by the “Implementation of Strengthening Family Resilience against Sexual Deviant Behavior and Its Impact” policy issued by the government. Through this policy, the government legitimized and encouraged its citizen to become much more resistant toward LGBT discourse. “Memory of My Body” then became a logical decision made by Muhammad Idris, Mayor of Depok. The decision to ban the movie can be seen as an attempt to maintain the domination of anti-LGBT discourse.

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