

# Symbolic Interactionism of Tahilalats' Collaborative Comic "Nyaman dan Sederhana" in the Culture of Globalization in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

Human existence in the current era of globalization is shown by the number of *followers*, *likes*, and responses in social media accounts that have become part of human life. The great desire of people from teenagers to adults to pursue fame and popularity through social media is a concern both individually and in the surrounding environment. In the Tahilalats collaboration comic with ABC Coffee with the caption "Nyaman dan Sederhana" posted on Instagram, conveys a message of unrest related to the problem of social media influence on society. In the story there is the concept of Stoicism Marcus Aurelius with the narrative that it is not bad to be an ordinary person who is able to control himself. This comic also reflects the influence of global culture that is relevant to everyday life in Indonesian society. The purpose of this research is to analyze the message conveyed through the comic about simplicity to achieve personal comfort as an ordinary person and analyze the public's response to the comic strip "Nyaman dan Sederhana" with the study of symbolic interactionism so that the comic can influence people's mindset. This research is a qualitative research with a literature study approach. Data collection techniques were carried out by reviewing books, journals, literature, notes, articles, and documents relevant to the focus of the research. The research method uses Miles and Huberman. The results showed the pros and cons of the community's response to the concept of stoicism in the comic and how global culture influenced the response.

**Keywords:** globalization, culture, comics, symbolic interactionism, stoicism

## Introduction

Social media has now become a part of life for most people in the world. The exchange of information, the spread of *trends*, the sharing of knowledge and knowledge, news notifications such as news to phenomena that are happening around human life are increasingly affordable with the internet and social media. In addition, the use of social media is also used as a promotional or advertising tool in sales from small to large companies. The impact caused by the existence of social media is indeed very large and significant, such as the social changes that occur in society in Indonesia. Based on data taken from *We Are Social*, active social media users in Indonesia reached 167 million. The average time spent accessing social media is around 3 hours every day. The largest percentage of the reason for using social

media is to spend leisure time, which is 58.9%. This shows that some people in Indonesia use social media to spend their leisure time.

Excessive use of social media can affect both the social and psychology of the individual himself, especially in adolescents who are still unstable in personality. If person using social media too often, that can lead to mental disorders or depression. There is a relationship between depression symptoms with addictive social media use (Brailovskaia, 2020). Mentally unstable adolescents can be trapped in digital social life with a variety of lifestyles due to multicultural communication both from their own country but have a different culture of life and influences from abroad. The ease of communicating through social media has an impact on the thinning of boundaries from initially private to public. Seeing too much content from inappropriate social media can cause an individual to experience a crisis of confidence and reduce self-confidence because they compare their own experiences with other people who are better (Awang et al., 2021).

The high competition to get *likes*, *views*, and comments that affect the psychic became the concern of comic artist Tahilalats to make a comic strip with the title "Nyaman dan Sederhana" in collaboration with ABC Coffee. The story presented in the comic shows the concept of stoicism of Marcus Aurelius where it is okay to be an ordinary person who is able to control himself. This comic was *published* by Tahilalats and ABC Coffee on July 4, 2024 on Instagram. The post certainly invited so many responses from various circles of society, especially in Indonesia. The message to be conveyed from this comic has received many pros and cons. The debate over the message in the comic "Nyaman dan Sederhana" produces symbolic interactionism based on the opinions of each individual's thoughts. Therefore, this research conducted to analyze the message that the narrative of Tahilalats' comic 'Nyaman dan Sederhana' wants to convey, as well as to examine the community's response to the comic and how global culture affects that response.

### **Research Methods**

This research is a qualitative research that uses a library research approach. In this research, the data collection method is carried out through literature study. The library study itself involves collecting data relevant to the research from sources such as scientific journals, literature books, notes, photos, images, and other electronic documents. This data collection aims to obtain theoretical information so that the research results obtained later have a solid theoretical basis (Moto, 2019). The technique used in data collection is the documentation method, which involves written documents such as books, journals, articles, theses, theses, and other documents relevant to the focus of the study. The data collected in this research is secondary data. After the research data is collected from literature studies or literature studies,

the next stage is data analysis using data analysis techniques developed by Miles and Huberman (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). In this data analysis process, the data will be examined using the theory of symbolic interactionism. Two figures who have a major contribution in the development of this theory are George Herbert Mead as the initiator and Herbert Blummer as the developer. This theory will be used to analyze phenomena that occur in society on a small scale through symbols (Shidarta, 2019).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Stoicism in the View of Marcus Aurelius**

Stoicism is an ancient Greek school of philosophy that centers on developing good character, resilience, and maintaining inner peace in order to achieve happiness. It teaches us to focus on what we can control, such as our thoughts, actions, and reactions to external events. Stoicism explains that the main purpose of human life lies in the development of virtue and rational moral character (Sellars, J. (2009). Marcus Aurelius was one of the figures of stoicism philosophy with the title of Roman Emperor in 161 AD. He applied the teachings of stoicism to his daily life, especially when he experienced various challenges in military leadership and imperial rule. "Meditations" is a personal writing created by Marcus Aurelius that shows his belief that basically everyone has the ability to live freely without pressure and with a sense of peace in mind, even if everyone is shouting against him (Aurelius, 2021). This provides a unique perspective as it is set against the backdrop of a life different from that of his two stoic predecessors, Seneca and Epictetus, as the thoughts of an emperor who sought to face the challenges of leadership and achieve virtue in the midst of crisis.

In the book *Filsafat Manusia: Memahami Manusia sebagai Homo Complexus* written by Gede Agus Siswadi (2024: 114-115), there are ways to obtain happiness from the point of view of Marcus Aurelius' stoicism. Happiness can be achieved through the virtues of wisdom, courage, justice, and self-awareness. Wisdom is the main axis in separating what can be controlled from what cannot, so as to be free from unnecessary worries.

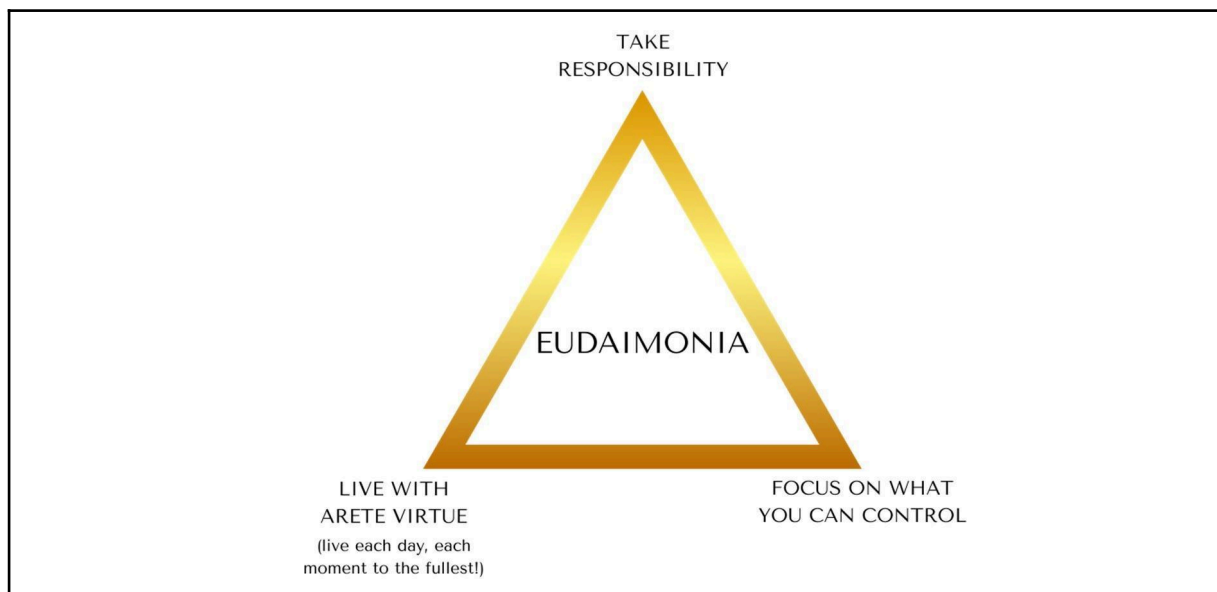
Wisdom is linked to courage as the next virtue. When wisdom is used to choose what to do, courage is the attitude to act so as to turn obstacles into opportunities to improve oneself in overcoming the unpredictable forces of fate. Justice itself as the third virtue is a trait that builds affection for others. Where with fair behavior can build a moral society, positive relationships between individuals, and contribute to the overall improvement of society (Siswadi, 2024:114).

Self-awareness, is about self-discipline. Aurelius taught that through discipline or self-awareness, one's control over excessive pleasure results in dissatisfaction. Equanimity through pleasure and suffering prevents the individual from being hedonistic and achieving

happiness. Temperance becomes a virtue that correlates with self-awareness to be able to free oneself from the pressure of societal expectations and self-satisfaction by letting go of the desire for popularity, wealth, and external recognition (Siswadi, 2024:115).

Following on from the virtues discussed, the trichotomy of control is a Stoic concept to help focus on what an individual can control. There are three groups namely: Things that are completely controllable (Group 1), Things that are completely uncontrollable (Group 2), and Things that are partially controllable (Group 3).

In addition to the application of the virtue trait and the trichotomy of control, the attitude of being responsible for what one controls in the goal of self-improvement. With the principle of responsibility, an individual can have the power to make the best choice in every situation. In these three things, it produces *The Stoic Happiness Triangle* in achieving life prosperity or referred to as *Eudaimonia* (Kien, 2024).



**Image 1.** The Stoic Happiness Triangle, Eudaimonia  
**Source:** Google

Globally, the Stoic teachings of Marcus Aurelius in achieving happiness in life require the development of virtues such as wisdom, courage, justice, and self-awareness, so as to be able to face the complexities of life firmly. The application of the trichotomy of control is able to develop emotional calmness against temporary fluctuations in the influence of external circumstances. While the attitude of responsibility is the power of what is chosen from all situations.

## Reflections on Tahilalats' Comic Strip "Nyaman dan Sederhana"

The rise of social media today has changed the mindset of the community, especially teenagers. Where the rapid and instant dissemination of information can cause a person or an event to become famous easily. In addition to having a positive impact such as making it easier for users to interact with many people, expanding social networks, eliminating distance and time constraints, and making it easier to express themselves, social media also allows the rapid dissemination of information at a lower cost. Social media has a major influence on mental health, especially related to self-esteem and well-being, especially in children and adolescents. Social media has undergone a transformation from a private place to a public space for adolescents. Young people are now experiencing a cultural shift, where to create self-identity, they use social media accounts to share personal and non- personal activities (Zakirah, 2020). This has resulted in people from both teenagers and adults doing everything they can to become famous instantly. These behaviors can impact the psychological state and result in high stress.

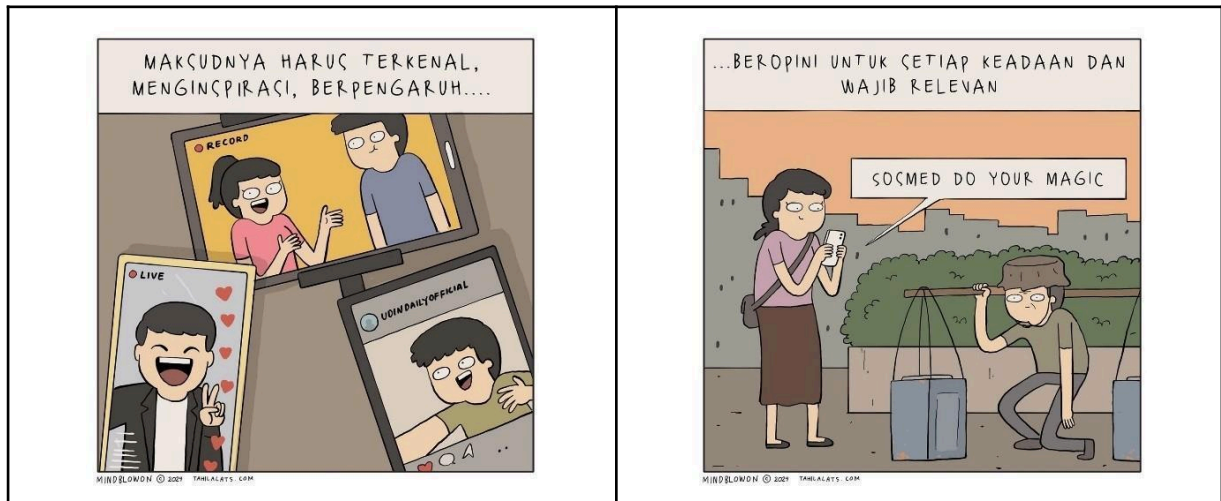
Tahilalats, is a comic strip that contains simple stories, interspersed with funny things that intersect with events that are being discussed or related to everyday life. His works have been published on social media platforms, namely Instagram since 2014. For approximately 10 years taking part in the world of comics and social media, on July 4, 2024 Tahilalats expressed the comic artist's anxiety through a comic strip he made entitled "Nyaman dan Sederhana" in collaboration with ABC Coffee, what is being experienced by people who are competing to become 'someone' who is considered to have a role in the eyes of the community through social media.



**Image 2.** First Panel of Tahilalats Comic "Nyaman dan Sederhana"

**Source:** Instagram

In first panel, it depicts a background where people are focusing on how to create content and trying to be someone who has a role. In addition to the visuals, there is a narration that reads “Rasanya sekarang semua orang merasa harus jadi sesuatu”. That is mean “It feels like now everyone feels like they have to be something”. In the narrative, it can be explained that the main character (as if it is the comic artist himself) feels that the people around him are trying to have a role like the main character in their respective worlds.



**Image 3.** Second Panel (Left Side Picture) and Third Panel (Right Side Picture) of Tahilalats Comic "Nyaman dan Sederhana"

**Source:** Instagram

The second panel, emphasized through the narration, “Maksudnya harus terkenal, menginspirasi, berpengaruh...”. That is mean "It means to be famous, inspiring, influential...", that 'being something' must be famous, inspiring, and influential in society. Whereas in the third panel, the narration continues with “Beropini untuk setiap keadaan dan wajib relevan”, that is means "Opinion for every situation and must be relevant", which is where people must always have an opinion on every condition that occurs, be it a trivial condition or even a big one and is supported by a text balloon containing "Sosmed do your magic". A typical sentence when people today are asking for help to others through social media. Here people who use social media feel, if what they post is able to influence people, then they are like a great person because they have done something big.



**Image 4.** Fourth Panel of Tahilalats Comic "Nyaman dan Sederhana"

**Source:** Instagram

But in the fourth panel, we see the impact if the people who are posting have other intentions behind it as described in the first and second panels. When a person forces himself to pursue fame, become an individual who must inspire others, or be influential, it will actually plunge him into negativity. As visualized in the male character with curly hair, there is a thought balloon that shows the number of likes only 3, comment only 1, and even no one reposts it, indicating that what he has uploaded does not make him known to people in the social media world. The disappointed expression indicates that he is not satisfied with it and there is a possibility of looking for other things that make him get much more satisfying results.

Meanwhile, in the next character, there is a woman who also shows a more disappointed expression because what she gets is a far greater number of dislikes than the likes she wants. This can happen if what she is posting is only looking to become famous or viral without considering whether what she is spreading violates the norms of society or there is no morality. In such cases, the Stoic teachings of the virtues of wisdom and self-awareness are needed here so that humans are able to control themselves in their actions.



**Image 5.** Fifth Panel of Tahilalats Comic "Nyaman dan Sederhana"  
**Source:** Instagram

In the fifth panel, a cheerful, bustling atmosphere is depicted, where people seem to enjoy interacting with each other casually without having to chase something. There is a narration that says, "Padahal nggak apa-apa jadi orang biasa dengan pekerjaan biasa". That is means "It's okay to be an ordinary person with an ordinary job". This emphasizes that human life will not be disturbed or destroyed just by being an ordinary person. The principle of Stoicism taught by Marcus Aurelius enters at the peak of the story here. Being simple is something that can provide a happier human life and not experience the pressure that adversely affects psychology. The trichotomy of control can be an alternative related to the virtue of wisdom so that humans are able to sort out what they can and cannot control, what they cannot consider when it is partly under their control.



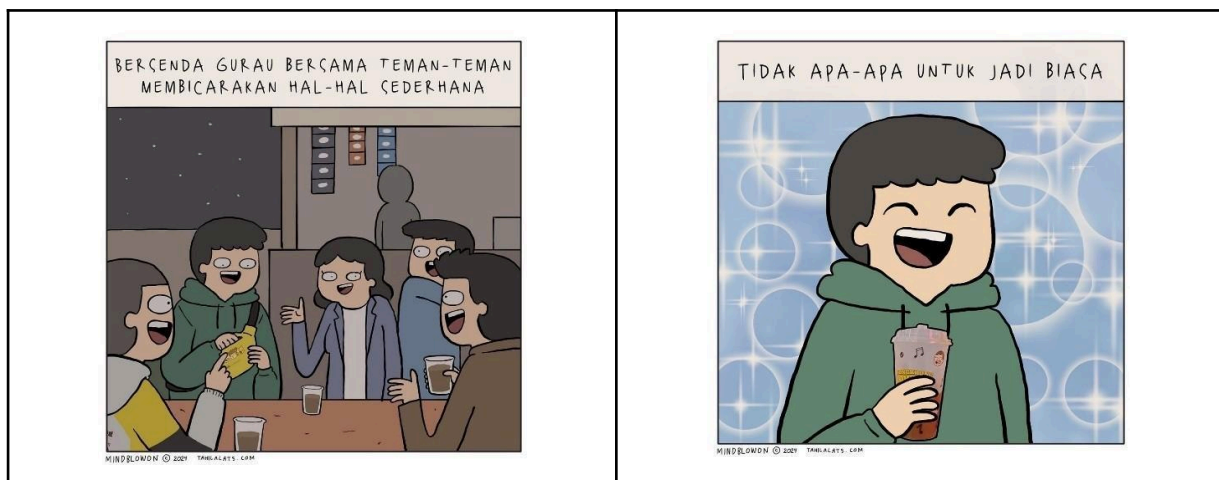
**Image 6.** Sixth Panel (Left Side Image) and Seventh Panel (Right Side Image)  
of Tahilalats Comic "Nyaman dan Sederhana"  
**Source:** Instagram





**Image 7.** Eight panel Tahilalats Comic “Nyaman dan Sederhana”  
**Source:** Instagram

The sixth panel depicts an atmosphere that is not much different from the fifth panel, except that it is depicted more clearly with a pleasant crowd with friends or people around. The narration says, “Tanpa ada kamera, atensi, atau tuntutan untuk jadi sesuatu” or that is means "Without any cameras, attention, or demands to be something", here explaining that humans are also able to walk well without the harsh demands of having to be 'something' in their lives. Doing activities as humans now live life, as in the narration in the seventh panel, “beraktivitas dari pagi, dan pulang di sore harinya”. That is means, "doing activities from morning, and going home in the afternoon". Most humans work from morning to evening. Then the narration in the eighth panel adds, “Biarlah malam jadi waktu yang tenang untuk melepas penat...”, or it means "Let the night be a quiet time to unwind..." After working morning, noon, and finishing in the afternoon, people mingle at night in order to enjoy a time of rest and relaxation before welcoming the next day to work or do other activities.



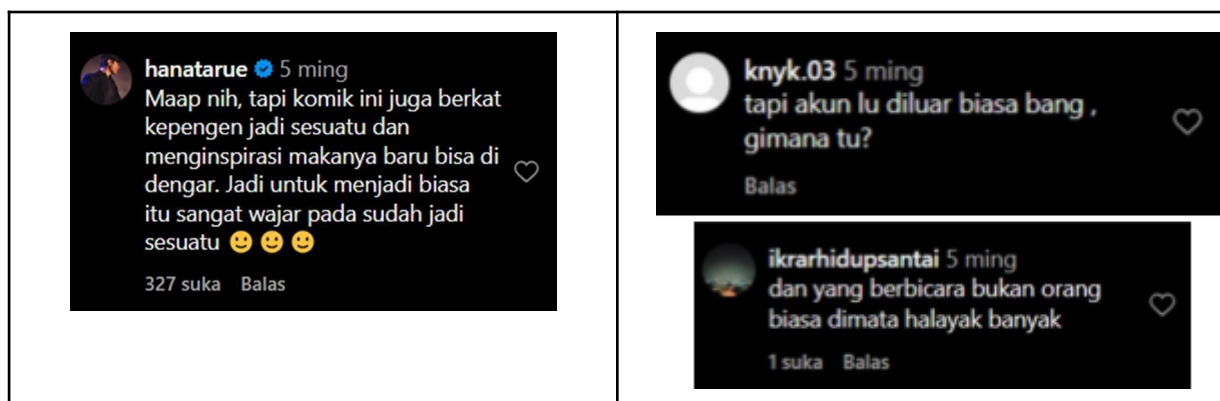
**Image 8.** Ninth Panel (Left Side Image) and Tenth Panel (Right Side Image)  
of Tahilalats Comic "Nyaman dan Sederhana"

**Source:** Instagram

The ninth panel shows that unwinding can be achieved by talking about simple things with friends. Visually and narratively, it is very clearly described. Finally, in the last panel, it is reaffirmed that being an ordinary person is no problem. So it can be seen here, the narrative of the comic "Nyaman dan Sederhana" in this Tahilalats comic shows the application of the Stoic teachings of Marcus Aurelius, where people can develop their character for the better when they are able to introspect to be wise in action, dare to make decisions, be fair with others, and be able to discipline themselves so that dissatisfaction actually plunges them into actions that have negative consequences.

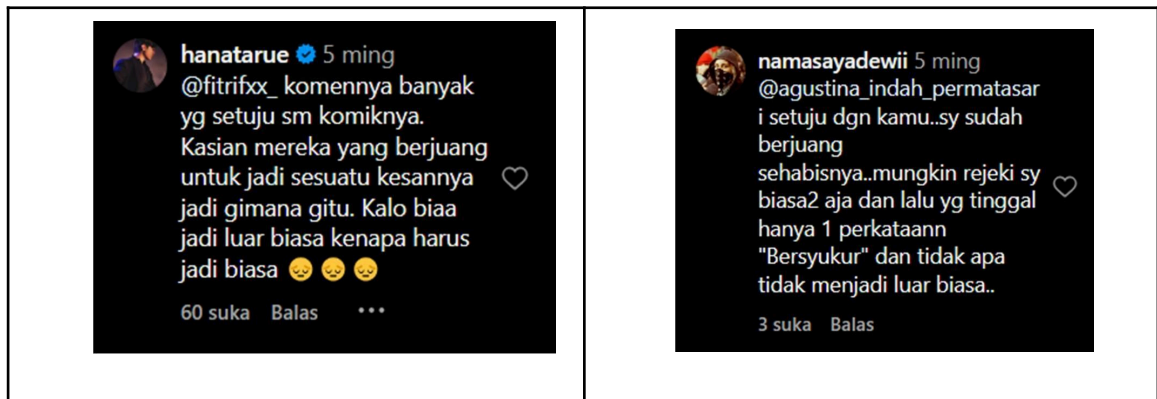
### A Symbolic Interactionism Perspective on Comic Response

Tahilalats Comic, which already has a large number of *followers* or *followers of 5.8 million* and includes a large account so that it is well known to most Indonesians, invites responses related to the comic strip work "Nyaman dan Sederhana" which was *uploaded* on July 4, 2024. Responses are divided into two categories, namely pros and cons in responding to the meaning conveyed in the comic. Counter responses are responses that refute and disagree. The pro response is a response that agrees and thinks that it is okay to be an ordinary person, but there is also a pro response on the condition that it does not make someone an individual who has no desire to progress or develop.



**Image 9.** Counter Response in the Instagram Comment Column to the Comic "Nyaman dan Sederhana" due to Anomalies

**Source:** Instagram

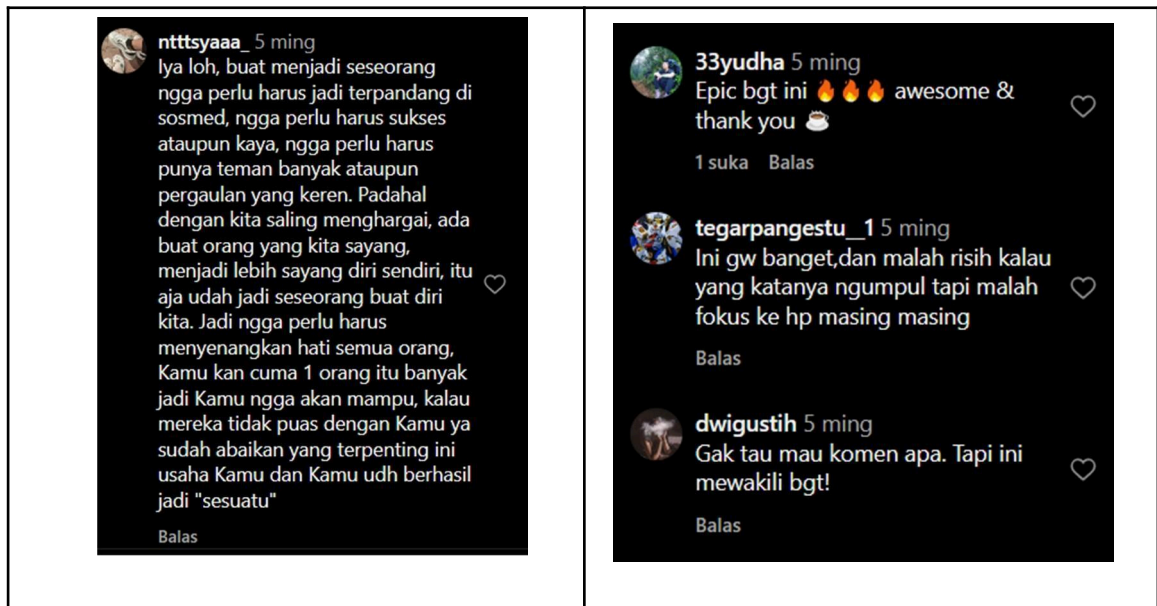


**Image 10:** Counter response in the Instagram comment section to the "Nyaman dan Sederhana" comic for demotivating those who are struggling.  
**Source:** Instagram

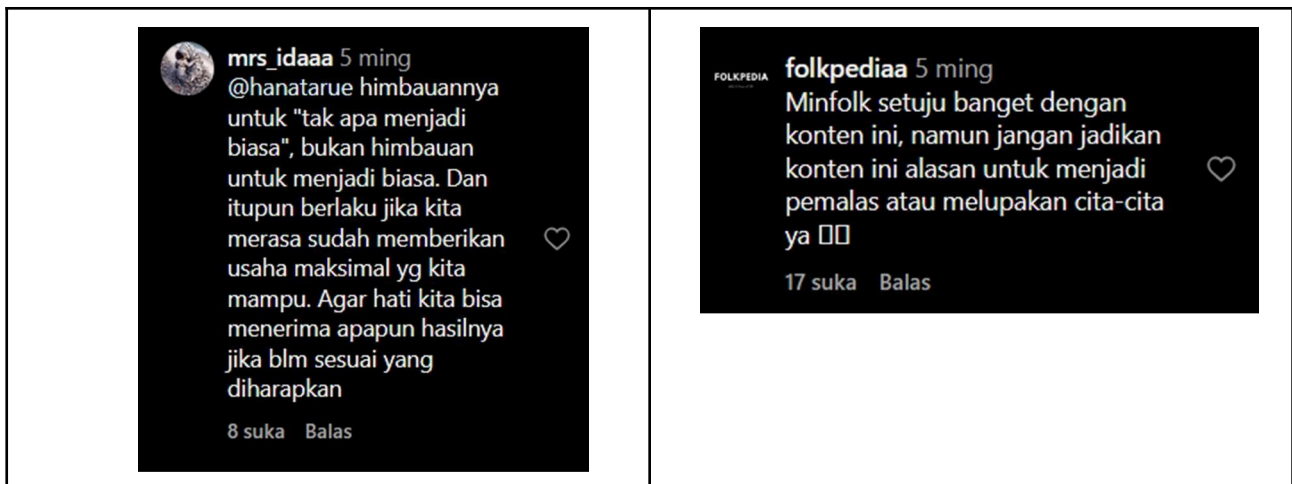
In Image 10 is a public comment from Instagram as a counter response because the meaning of the comic can create a mindset of people to become ordinary people without the willingness to develop themselves. While there are also counter responses as in Image 9 is a comment that considers that there is an anomaly from the account owner or comic artist himself because he is already considered someone who is 'unusual' again because he is known by most Indonesians, but instead he encourages people to be ordinary.



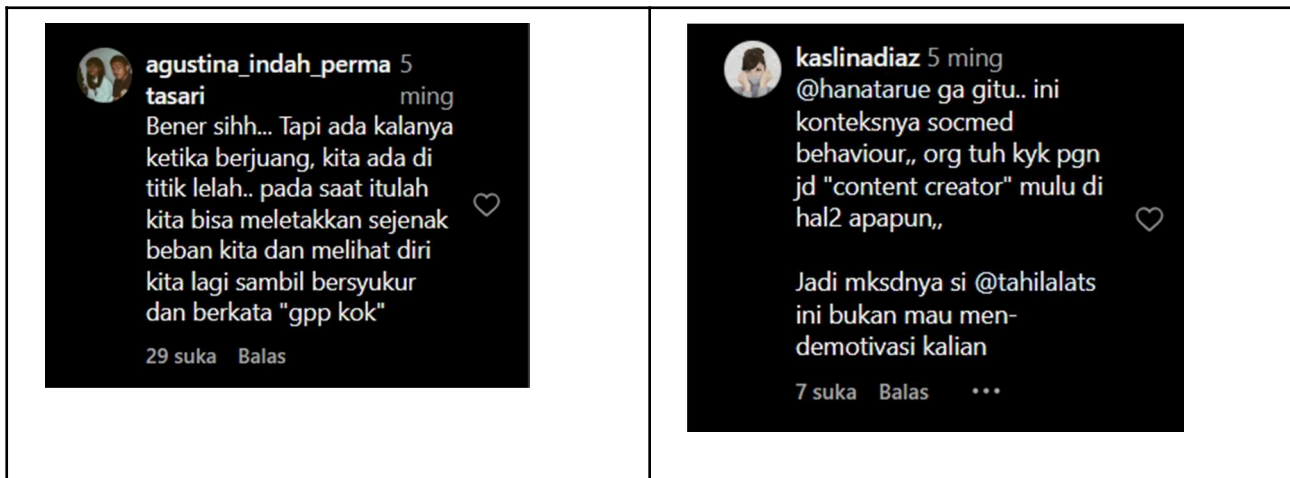
**Image 11:** Pro Response in the Instagram Comment Column to the "Nyaman dan Sederhana" Comic Agreeing that it's okay to be an ordinary person  
**Source:** Instagram



**Image 12:** Pro Response in the Instagram Comment Column to the "Nyaman dan Sederhana" Comic Agreeing that it's okay to be an ordinary person  
**Source:** Instagram



**Image 13:** Pro Response in the Instagram Comment Column to the "Nyaman dan Sederhana" Comic that Agrees with the Condition that Keep Developing Yourself Without Coercion  
**Source:** Instagram



**Image 14:** Pro responses in the Instagram comment section to the "Nyaman dan Sederhana" comic, agreeing that the aim is to create a more grateful person and without the intention of demotivating the public.

**Source:** Instagram

While in Image 11, 12, 13, and 14 are pro responses that agree and think that it is okay to be an ordinary person, but there are also pro responses with the condition that it does not make someone an individual who has no desire to progress or develop. There are also other pro responses that explain the purpose of the comic is to remain grateful for whatever struggles have been made and do not intend to demotivate the community.

Symbolic interactionism is basically a relationship between humans in society and society with individuals naturally that develops through symbols that are created together. Symbols that are communicated can be in the form of sound, physical movements, body expressions or body language that is done consciously (Arsiandi, 2014: 193). When symbolic interactionism occurs, each individual has a role as an actor either specifically or sometimes an individual is inconsistent so that he modifies his role to connect one role with another (Derung, 2017).

Herbert Blummer's symbolic interactionism theory, which is influenced by the ideas of George Herbert Mead, says that humans are conscious and reflective actors, who bring together the objects they know through a process called *self-indication*. *Self-indication* itself is an ongoing communication process where individuals always assess it, give meaning, and decide to act according to that meaning (Derung, 2017).

In Blumer's ideas, there are three main premises in this theory, First, humans act based on meaning, where the more meaningful the action, the more they do it. Second, meaning is created from social interactions between individuals. Third, the meaning of his actions is formed or refined in social interactions and the process of human interpretation (Derung, 2017). Therefore, the process of social interaction in this case is very vital because through it, humans can learn meanings and symbols (Raho, 2021).

In the perspective of symbolic interactionism in seeing the emergence of good comments

containing both pro and con responses to the Tahilalats comic with the title "Nyaman dan Sederhana", it is an indication of the communication process where the community provides assessment, meaning, and acts on the basis of the meaning of the story that the comic artist wants to convey. The existence of unrest from comic artists against the necessity or self-imposition of a person becomes a very influential role without paying attention to the negative impact that occurs on the individual himself or to others around him.

Herbert Blummer presents three premises in the theory of symbolic interactionism, First, humans act based on meaning. This premise can be seen in the different opinions of the pros and cons of the community in interpreting the story of the Tahilalats comic strip entitled "Nyaman dan Sederhana". Second, meaning is obtained from social interactionism carried out with other people. The comic's anxiety in responding to the current world of social media and its impact on society, both adults and teenagers, which is poured out in the form of comics, has created social interactions on the Instagram *platform*, after which they construct their respective opinions in responding to the comic. Third, the process of human interpretation in the ongoing social interactionism will perfect the meaning. The community managed to interpret the comic through the interpretation process by interacting with each other on Instagram in pro and contra comments.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of the research, the Tahilalats comic titled "Nyaman dan Sederhana" contains a message that it is okay to be an ordinary person without having to force yourself to pursue fame and popularity which will later have bad consequences both for yourself and the surrounding environment. The comic story implies the Stoic concept of Marcus Aurelius' teachings by applying virtues such as wisdom, courage, justice, discipline, and simplicity. Followed by the application of the trichotomy of control so that humans are able to determine what they can control, cannot control, and plan for some things that they can indeed control. The process of symbolic interactionism reflected in both positive and negative responses on the Instagram platform, where the \*Tahilalats\* comic was published, generates distinct messages about the comic itself. Through individual interpretations, readers derive the message that the comic suggests the importance of taking a brief pause, like an "ordinary person," when facing difficulties or challenges, while continuing to do what needs to be done. This is especially relevant when one has significant goals or aspirations to become "someone" or achieve "something."

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