

## 2. CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING

FAG is one of the characters in Rage Guy comic that becomes so popular after its first appearance in 2009. Since its first appearance, there are over than 23.000 images in Funny Junk and over 50.000 in Tumblr. Moreover, in Indonesia, there are many comic strips that use FAG character as the main character. In the comic strips made by local users, this character is also used to “express loneliness and disappointment with life” (Kip, 2010). Represented negatively as someone who is alone, single and lonely, there seems to be some negative perspectives embedded inside of the text. Hence, in this chapter, I would like to analyse how the concept and meaning of aloneness are embedded within the text by using the theory of representation suggested by Stuart Hall (1997, 2003) combined with the theory of discourse suggested by Foucault (1989, 2003).

To make this analysis clear and understandable, I will divide this chapter into two subchapters. The first subchapter discusses about the language and signs of the text while the second subchapter discusses the conceptual maps or mental representation of the text. The division of this chapter is made by referring to system of representation concept coined by Stuart Hall (2003). Based on Stuart Hall, representation is “the production of the meaning of the concept in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary world of fictional objects, people, and events” (p.3.). This concept states that representation is the manifestation of the concept in a form many things such as objects, people, events, etc.

FAG character represented in the comic strip is actually the manifestation of aloneness that is mirrored from the societies’ perspectives, and can be seen through signs. Thus, the first subchapter discusses the language and signs used in the text to find out the formation of sign (icon) and language (indexical) which are used as tools to represent the concept of aloneness. This subchapter is also the analysis of how societies’ perspectives are mirrored through iconic and indexical signs found in FAG character. The second subchapter discusses

the mental representation attached to FAG character through plots and characterization. This subchapter is also the analysis of how system of representation works in shaping certain “meanings” attached to a character.

## **2.1 Sign and language**

Language is an important element in representation analysis since language is “the second system of representation involved in the overall process in constructing meaning” (Hall, 2013, p. 4). Language in this sense is not only in a form of written words, but also sign. In this sub chapter, I will discuss more about the “signs” used in representing FAG. The signs used here can be in a form of written words, spoken sounds or visual images. However, because the main data used are comic strips, I limit my research by focusing more in the visual images and written words.

To make this chapter understandable, I will divide this sub chapter into two: the discussion of the visual sign and the discussion of written words that are found within the text.

### **2.1.1 Visual sign**

Visual signs or images are always used to represent a concept or a thing. Although visual signs and images draw a close resemblance to the things they refer to, they are still signs. They “carry meaning and thus have to be interpreted” (Hall, 2013, p. 5). Visual signs, or often called as iconic signs, have certain resemblances with the object, event, or person that they represent. As an example, whenever we observe the picture of a tree, we will see a picture of dark-brown trunk, some branches, twigs and also green or brown leaves. The image of this tree resemblances the reality of a tree itself. Whenever we see a picture of a tree, we will directly say it is a tree, although in another sense, we know that it is not a real one.

There is an assumption described in the background that FAG is used to represent the concept of aloneness in a negative way. Therefore, this subchapter is aimed to find the representation of FAG through visual signs or iconic signs,

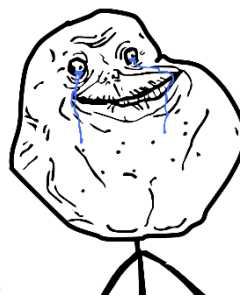
then the next one is continued with the analysis of written or spoken signs which is called as indexical.

The drawing of rage comic, one of which is FAG, is rather simple. However, there are reasons why each character is said as best to represent each meaning intended to the character. This subchapter discusses two important functions which are embedded to the icon of FAG character: reflecting and representing.

### 2.1.1.1 Reflecting

As described in the first subchapter, FAG is used to reflect “loneliness and disappointment with life” (refer to page 2). Thus, this subchapter discusses the way FAG is used to aloneness through its iconic element, which is drawing style. Moreover, this subchapter focuses more in the using of FAG icon as a reflection of alone people.

McCloud (1993) stated that the way the cartoonist draws a character in a comic is a form of “amplification through simplification” (p. 30). People may think that many of the cartoonist simplify things through their drawing. At the previous era, most of cartoonists tried to draw as realistic as possible. However, recently, many of the cartoonists choose to draw a simple face by stripping down an image to its essential meaning. One of the examples is those on meme characters or rage comics. By doing this, they can represent something that realistic art unable to do. FAG is one of the examples of how an image is used to reflect alone people or singles. Although the “icon” used is rather simple, which is an imperfect round face with sad and creepy eyes, flat nose, big mouth and pointed jaw, the meaning embedded inside of this character is deep, and it is able to show how alone people or singles is reflected through a character in a meme. The icon of FAG can be seen as below,



Picture 6: The icon of FAG

The drawing style of this character's face is rather simple, however it is intended for certain meaning. This kind of drawing is called as "cartoony" face. With this kind of face, the more people "it could be said to describe" or reflect someone or someone's life (McCloud, 1993, p. 31). For instance, if the face of a character is drawn as specific or realistic as possible, there is a boundary that separates the readers to the character itself. This separation happens because of the features attached to that character: gender, face characteristics and mimic. However, if the face drawn is more into "cartoony" style and even far from the realistic, it allows every person to refer herself/himself to that character. Therefore, this kind of face is best to reflect any meaning attached to it, and in this case to represent the concept of aloneness.

Thus, with this kind of drawing, it can be said that the icon used is functioned as the reflection of the concept of aloneness itself. FAG icon is not only meant to one or two persons, yet this icon is used to reflect the life of everyone who shares the same feelings that they have as an effect of their aloneness. This icon is also used to reflect how they see their aloneness and what kind of emotions, expressions or even actions that they have and do as a reaction of their aloneness.

#### **2.1.1.2 Representing**

The second one is representing. As stated above, FAG character is drawn with an imperfect round face with sad and creepy eyes, pimples, acnes and dark spots, flat nose, big mouth and pointed jaw. These kinds of representation show that FAG is drawn to represent some perspectives attributed to the icon as someone who is unattractive seen from some criteria: age, face features and countenance

##### **2.1.1.2.1 Age**

The first one is age, which is represented by FAG's wrinkles. In Asia, specifically Indonesia, age becomes one of the elements that determine someone's attractiveness. Therefore, there are so many beauty products offered

to the costumers (mostly women) to get rid of their wrinkles in just a blink. However, this kind of perspective makes sense since in Asia, the beauty of the skin becomes the most important thing.

In another sense, age is also considered as an important thing for the concept of “attractiveness” because young women and men in Indonesia are more needed to work on some job fields. That is because youngsters are said to be best to represent the image of some companies. Again, this seems to be okay since youngsters are proved to be more productive than the rest of the ages.

However, this becomes a problem when the concept of “old” and “unattractive” are combined with the concept of “aloneness”. In Indonesia, there are some standards set to women and men in general for their life. One of them is the standard of being married. Indonesia government family institution, *Badan Kependudukan dan Keluarga Berencana (BKKBN)* stated that the best age for a person to marry is around 20-21 years old for woman and 25 years old for man. Thus, if someone is not married up to the standard set, then, s/he will be encouraged to marry as soon as possible. Meanwhile, if s/he cannot marry up to the standard, even choose to be single for the rest of their life, then they will be labelled as *perawan tua* or *perjaka tua* (spinster: woman/ old bachelor: man).

Therefore, with this kind of situation those spinsters and old bachelors are seen as the members of the society who cannot live up to the standards, and because of that, they are seen as less than the others. Thus, FAG character is used to represent the first unattractiveness of the singles from a small part of the icon, wrinkles.

#### **2.1.1.2.2 Ugliness**

Secondly, the next icon used to represent the unattractiveness, specifically the concept of ugliness, is face feature. If this character is compared to another characters such as Derp or Derpina, this one can be said as the ugliest among all rage comic characters. The representation of ugly and unattractive is done through several ways such as attaching those elements that are considered ugly in the society. Those elements are shapes and flaws.

The first one is shape. FAG is drawn with weird face shape, big jaw, small eyes and flat nose. In the previous subchapter, it is written that FAG is drawn in a “cartoony” face so that every person can attach or refer to this character. However, in this point, I want to show that there are specific kind of icons that symbolize the ugliness of this character, shown through the concept of shape.

In Indonesia, there are some beauty standards set, whether it is for a man or a woman in general. In some periods, the Caucasian beauty is said as the standard of beauty itself. Some models in Indonesia have the Caucasian beauty with fair skin, tall and slim body, pointed nose, thin lips and beautiful hair. However, at present, the standard of beauty changes its axis to the east, specifically to Korea because of Korean Wave or *hallyu*. However, even the new standard of *hallyu* beauty itself still refers to Caucasian beauty, since most and the original of Asian people have the physical or face feature that differs from Caucasian beauty itself.

Caucasian beauty is not only being the standard of beauty in Asia, but also western countries too. That is why, many of the contestants of any beauty pageant have the same beauty, which is Caucasian beauty. Therefore, it can be concluded that the standard of beauty that is still commonly used is actually Caucasian beauty itself.



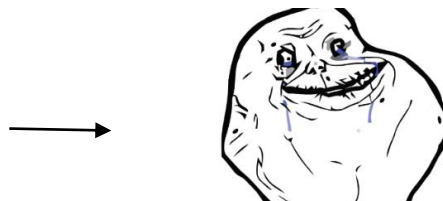
Picture 7: Caucasian beauty



Picture 8: Caucasian-Asian beauty



Picture 9: Original Asian face



Picture 10: FAG face

However, FAG character does not resemble any desirable features of Caucasian standard. The first one is the weird face shape. In Caucasian beauty,

oval or heart shaped face is more desirable than the other face shapes. Meanwhile, FAG character has weird face shape, just like a potato head, which does not represent beauty at all. The face shape itself more resemble to the original Asian face shape rather than Caucasian shape (see Picture 9 and Picture 10). The second one is big jaw. Caucasian beauty shows that the best jaw is the V-shaped jaw. In contrast, FAG character jaw is pointed but it does not have any V-shaped. The third one is small eyes. Caucasian beauty is represented with beautiful, bold, big and large eyes. However, the FAG character has small and creepy eyes that shows its unattractiveness more. The last one is the flat nose. Caucasian beauty is well known with its small but pointed nose. Meanwhile, FAG character has small and flat nose that strengthen its unattractiveness. Thus, it can be concluded that the unattractiveness of this character is shown through the face feature, iconized through the concept of shape, which are weird face shape, big jaw, small and creepy eyes, and flat nose.

Up to this point, it can be concluded that the representation of unattractiveness, which can be seen from the face feature, is drawn from the resemblances of FAG face to original Asian face. Thus, it can be concluded that original Asian face is considered as less attractive than Caucasian face, seen from the face feature, and in this case from the shape.

The second element used in the icon to represent unattractiveness is flaw (see picture 10). Flaw is never seen as something beautiful in any culture. Ugliness is sometimes represented by things like dark spots, pimples and scars. Therefore, there are so many beauty products that offer the “miracle” of diminishing dark spots, wrinkles and scars. They even offer the result of “flawless” beauty itself. However, in FAG drawing, there are a lot of pimples, dark spots and scars which represent ugliness than beauty. Therefore, the icon like dark spots, pimples and scars strengthen the representation of FAG character as an unattractive figure.

### **2.1.1.2.3 Countenance**

The last icon used is countenance. Countenance is described as “appearance, especially the look or expression of the face” (“Countenance”, 2016). In FAG

character, there are two distinct emotions or expressions shown by FAG character: sadness and desperation. Thus, these two emotions are used as the object or signs to examine the representation.

The first countenance shown is sadness. Sadness means “affected by unhappiness or grief; sorrowful or mournful” (“sad”, 2016). This first countenance is iconized from the symbol of tears in FAG character (see Picture 6). What makes it more interesting is that the blue color used for tears in FAG character is outstanding compared to the dominant black and white. Moreover, there is a term of “feeling blue” in western society that means “be depressed or sad” (Zeto, 2008). Thus, the concept of color here is used to strengthen the main idea of FAG as a character which represent sadness, shown from the icon of blue tears.

The second countenance shown is desperation. Desperation is defined as “the state of being desperate or of having the recklessness of despair” (“Desperation”, 2016). This second countenance is shown through the icon of smile (see Picture 6). FAG character is an unique character since it represents a more complex countenance than just sadness. Beside sadness, this character also shows the desperation itself through an icon of smile. Most of the time, smile is used as an icon of happiness and not sadness. However, if an icon of smile is combined with the icon of tears, I conclude that it is a strong icon of desperation. Desperate is a feeling when someone is unable to change something on his/her life. A feeling when someone really gives up with everything, and s/he just puts his/her burden away and try to entertain his/her condition by doing simplest thing just like smiling. Thus, the best icon used to represent this countenance is the icon of smile itself.

To conclude, there are two countenances that are shown in FAG characters through the icons used: blue tears and smile. These icons are used to represent FAG character as a character with distinct emotions, and in this case, sadness and desperation. The process of iconizing the elements are done by implementing some ‘truths’ that exist in the society. For instance, the icon of ‘tears’ that represent sadness. The process of making tears as the icon of sadness is done by referring to a symbol that is ‘agreed’ and well known by the members

of the culture. In short, the members of society agree that sadness is best represented with the icon of tears. Thus, by embedding some icons that are well known and also ‘agreed’ by the members of the society, the process of iconizing the ‘icons’ work well.

### 2.1.2 Written words

Written word is the second elements in the theory of language and signs described by Stuart Hall (2013). Written word is often referred as “indexical” in the theory of signs. There are several indexical elements that can be used to examine the representation of FAG characters such as name, dialogue between the characters and plot. However, this subchapter only uses name as the main subject in order to find out the meanings attached in FAG’s name.

Name is important. Fridman (2015) states that name is important in reflecting the brand because of several reasons: first, it is the first thing people see. Second, it sums up everything about a company (or a character). Last, it is the identity of the brand or character. When these ideas are used in examining the representation of FAG, I conclude that Forever Alone Guy as a name is also used for several reasons, especially to strengthen the identity of this character itself. Therefore, I focus myself in three words included in this character’s name: Forever, Alone and Guy.

The first word is *forever*. Forever is defined as “without ever ending: eternally” (“Forever”, 2016). When this word is used as the name of FAG, people will directly think that FAG character is attached to certain feeling (and in this case, the feeling of alone) for his/her eternal life. The concept of forever or eternity here is used with the reason that singles or alone people are seen as someone who will always feel that feeling because of their own incapability to mingle with others, build a relationship, etcetera. Moreover, sometimes people who are alone or singles are often seen as being lonely over and over again, until it seems creating the sense that they cannot get rid of their loneliness. Thus, the word of *Forever* is attached with a reason to represent the “depth” of the feeling attached to FAG character.

The second one is *alone*. Alone is defined as “separate, apart, or isolated from others” (“Alone”, 2016). Alone here is used as both name and identity. Alone in this sense becomes the adjective of the later name, which is Guy, and describes the situation of the character. It also becomes the identity of that character as someone who has no companion or partner. It is true that each character in Rage Comic has its own name such as Mad Troll and Ultra Gay. The Adjectives like *Mad*, *Ultra*, and even *Alone* here are used to describe each character since each character represents different idea or characterization. Thus, the word or name of *Alone* here is used to sum the characterization of that character while also to give identity to this character. This name is also used to make this character distincts from the others.

The last one is *Guy*. As described in the background, FAG character is genderless, meaning that it can be used for everyone. However, sometimes the word of guy is often used to refer to a man or a boy, and because of this one, many people assume that FAG character or another characters in Rage Comic are meant for man or boys. Meanwhile, the word of *Guy* can also be defined as “persons of either sex” (“Guy”, 2016) in an informal way. Thus, with this kind of naming, it can be said that this character is used for either sex, whether it is meant for man/woman, girl/boy. This also strengthens the previous point that FAG character is drawn with cartoony face to make as many people who have the same condition refer to this character.

Once more, the process of ‘indexicalizing’ the indexical elements are done by inserting the ‘truths’ that are agreed by the society. For example, the indexicalization of the name ‘alone’. When this name is used as an identity, people will directly assume that this character has no companion/lover to be with. With this strong assumption, it shows that here, the process of indexicalizing the identity of ‘alone’ is done by referring the name to the concept that is well known by the members of culture/society.

To sum up, both iconic and indexical signs are used to create the representation of Forever Alone Guy as a character. This kind of representation is also embedded with several meanings attached to visual signs and written words to create such an identity of a character. Thus, it can be concluded that

the representation of FAG as a character is done through attaching iconic and indexical signs to the character.

## **2.2 Mental representation of FAG character**

The previous subchapter focuses more in the use of iconic and indexical meanings to create an identity of FAG as a character. As a continuation, this subchapter discusses the mental representation attached to FAG as a character. To make this analysis deeper, I try to find the mental representations attached to this character through plot and characterization. The aim of this subchapter is to find out what kind of mental representations that are shown through this character.

Mental representation is how human forms concept for things they can perceive like people or material objects. For instance, when in mind they think about a chair, they can describe what chair looks like from the representation in their mind. Therefore, mental representation is not always used for concrete things, but sometimes it can be used to represent abstract things that human cannot in any simple way see, touch or feel. One of the example is love. When describing love, a person usually cannot explain love with a concrete thing, although it is true that abstract concepts such as love, hate and friendship can be represented symbolically. Whether it is concrete or abstract, concepts or meaning can be understood from the system of representation.

Therefore, system of representation is needed here to cluster, arrange, organize and classify concepts, and of establish complex relation between them. In this system, sometimes, the one thing that can be done is by using “the principle of similarity and difference to establish relationships between concepts or to distinguish them from one another” (Hall, 2003, p. 3). In the book entitled Representation, Hall gives the example from the similarities and differences of bird and airplane. In some sense, bird and also airplane is the same because both of them can fly. However, the differences are drawn when bird and airplane are seen from the perspectives of how they made. Bird is a part of a nature while airplane is a man-made object. Therefore, to justify the concept whether bird and plane is the same or not, the tool that can be used is

finding the similarities and differences from both objects through organizing the concepts, then classify those concepts to the conceptual system. Then, it can be concluded that bird is different from plane because the differences found are more than their similarities. From the conceptual system used in this research, or it is often called as the mental representations, then I can examine the meaning and also its construction from FAG comic strips. Moreover, because the data used mostly are in Bahasa Indonesia, then I will translate the language to English and put it beside each picture.

As an assumption, I would say that FAG is represented negatively in most of FAG comic strips that I have collected. In the discussion of mental representation above, I have stated that one thing that can be done to find the construction of meaning in a text is by finding the similarities and differences on the text discussed. When I use this tool to examine FAG comic strips, I find that the negative meaning is embedded to the concept of aloneness which is constructed from some mental representations represented in the text that can be divided into three: single, alone and lonely.

### **2.2.1 Concept of Being a Single**

Single is a condition when a person is intendedly or unintendedly not involved in a romantic relationship. Dictionary.com defines single as “unmarried” and “pertaining to the unmarried states” (2016). Although the dictionary gives definition based on married state, here I would like to emphasize that the representation drawn in these comic strips for the concept of ‘single’ is more into whether a person is in a romantic relationship or not. If a person is in a romantic relationship, then, he is not single. In contrary, the one who can be said as single is a person who is not involved in any romantic relationship.

The first ‘meaning’ built in the representation of FAG is as a single. In the data collected, there are some strips that represent FAG as a single in a negative way. There are three concepts constructed for this point, which seen ‘single’ as those who desperately needs to be in a relationship, unattractive and coward.

Firstly, FAG is represented as a single who desperately needs to be in a relationship.



Panel 2: Even Lego has a girlfriend



Picture 11: “being single”

The comic strip above is an example of how comic maker represents single (person) as someone who desperately needs to be in relationship through the comparison to another object. In the example above, FAG is compared to a couple of Legos, and behind the picture, there is a caption of “even Lego has a girlfriend”. Hence, it can be seen that actually FAG is represented negatively as a single who is really “odd” if compared to the rest of the society because he is still single when almost the rest of the society are in relationships or at least have someone to be loved.



This is Me !



Picture 12: “being single”

The urge to be “in a relationship” can also be seen in picture twelve above. In the first panel of that picture, there is a picture of a couple who are kissing, and in their t-shirts, there are the statements of “this is my Romeo” and “this is my Juliet” which the arrows point to the boy and the girl. However, in the second panel, there is a picture of FAG who is alone and says, “this is me!”

which indirectly points to himself and his aloneness. The negative representation that can be seen here, is drawn from the comparison between a couple who are in love and a single who feels sad because he has no girlfriend.

The stigma attached to single people as someone who has “the urge to be in a relationship” results from the “identity thread” that they get from their surroundings. In Indonesian context, especially in Javanese culture, there is stigma which say that “singles” are those who can be described as ‘inferior,’ ‘emotional,’ ‘childish,’ and ‘get angry easily’ (Septiana & Syafiq, 2013, p. 74). The fear of these kinds of stigma indirectly make a single seen as someone who desperately needs to be in a relationship.

Moreover, Indonesian society is well known as the collectivist society—a society which suppresses its members to hold on the norm and cultures tightly—and one of the norms is to be married when it is time. When a person is considered old enough to be married, then his/her family and friends will encourage him/her to get married as soon as possible (Hurlock, 1980 in Septiana & Syafiq, 2013, p. 72). If this person gets married not so long after, then everyone around him/her will be happy and s/he will be accepted as a “normal” member of a society. However, if this person fails to do so, s/he will be labelled as “abnormal” (Septian & Syafiq, 2013) and still becomes the outsider in the circle of “normal” member of society. The action of ‘labelling’ that is often done by the society pushes the singles to find themselves life partners, so that they will be accepted in the society and prevent themselves from the labels that they do not want to receive.

Secondly, FAG is represented as a single who is unattractive as seen in the comic strips below.



Picture 13: “being single”

Title: Staying at home is better

Panel 1: *Ah* [interjection], I will send a message to Derpina. Who knows she wants to go out with me on this weekend.

Panel 2: [screen] Hi, Derpina.

Panel 3: *Widih* [interjection], she replies my message!

Panel 3: FAG: Hi Derpina | Derpina: What’s up? | FAG: Let’s hangout. It’s Saturday night, so, it’s better than just staying at house. | Derpina: No.

In most of the strips, FAG is represented as someone who is always rejected by the others, especially by those who they like. In Picture 8, readers can see FAG’s effort in inviting Derpina to go out with him. However, Derpina only replies with short answer like “*apaan?*” [what?] and “*G*” [no] which indicates that Derpina is not interested with him. Derpina seems to be rude, and seems not to be bothered in trying to be polite when rejecting him.

Moreover, FAG is also represented as unattractive because of her physical appearance.



Picture 14: “being single”

Panel 1: Derp: *eh* [interjection] FA [Read: forever alone] | FAG: What’s the matter?

Panel 2: Derp: Do you notice that you’re beautiful? | FAG: *Wah* [interjection], thank you. Why do you call me beautiful?

Panel 3: Derp: The beautiful part runs out; the ugly side is left. You’re too confident! | Derpina: \*speechless\*

Panel 4: Derp: Escape | FAG: [swearing]

In Picture 14 above, readers can see that at first Derp appreciates FAG's beauty. After she is being appreciated by Derp, she looks so happy and says "why do you call me beautiful?". This kind of expressions indirectly show that FAG is actually aware of her own physical appearance, and it is rare for her to be called as "beautiful". Moreover, at later panels, readers can see that actually Derp is trying to mock her by calling her beautiful first before he labels her as "ugly" and "too confident".

The image of "unattractive" that is attached to FAG is in line with what is stated by one of respondents in a research done in 2013 by Ema & Syafiq. In one of the extracts, she said, "*Ya itu sih katanya gini, ah perawan tua, gak laku (tidak laku), gitu*" [They often say that I am a spinster. I am not in demand.] The label of "not in demand" or in Bahasa, *gak laku*, that is attached in the respondent is actually a kind of comparison of single and a thing that—because of several reasons—is not saleable. This kind of comparison gives a label that a single has no quality to win someone's heart, whether it is physically, emotionally and behaviourally. With this kind of label, a single is seen as someone who is not attractive or not desirable in some ways.

Moreover, we can see how Derp (in Picture 9) shows his cruelty to the FAG. This kind of cruelty is also represented the real situation of how single people are getting undesirable treatments from the people around him/her. One of the undesirable treatments is by getting the labels itself. There are so many labels attached to single people such as *perawan tua* [spinster] or *perjaka tua* [old bachelor], too emotional, or too inferior (Tioso, 1991, p.20-21).

Thirdly, single is represented as someone who is a 'coward' and one of the examples can be seen as below,

Title: End your single status! But when?



Picture 15: “being single”

Panel 1: FAG: Tomorrow I must confess to her! I must!

Panel 2: [text] \*I, the next morning. FAG: *jir* [swear], I’m too shy.

Panel 3: [text] \*I, at home. FAG: *jir* [swear], tomorrow I have to! I don’t care whether she says yes or no. I must confess!

Panel 4: [text] I, the next day. FAG: *Dafuk* [swear], I think it is not the right time.

Panel 5: [text] \*I, at home. FAG: *jir* [swear], tomorrow I will confess and it must! It’s better than just suck my feeling up forever.

Panel 6: [text] \*I, the next day. FAG: *jir* [swear], I don’t know what to say. I’m too shy.

In Picture 15, readers may think that FAG is a determined person, judged from how he swears that he will confess to the girl he likes. However, at later panels, readers will get the impression that actually FAG is too coward just to confess his feeling. This kind of ‘meaning’ is also drawn in the next picture as below,



Picture 16: “being single”

Panel 1: [boy] Lisa is the girl that I have admired for too long.

Panel 2: And we are closed already.

Panel 3: She often tells me about her feeling.

Panel 4: About... About the boy that she likes.

Panel 5: Yes, about the boy that she likes.

Panel 6: The boy that she likes.

In Picture 16, readers can see that there is a monologue of a boy who tells about a girl that he likes. However, he states that the girl that she likes often tells him about her feelings to another boy. This kind of plot shows the impression that

FAG (represented by the boy) is actually a coward, because he cannot express his feeling to that girl, or even winning her heart. Thus, from these two comics, reader will get the impression that single is actually a person who is too coward to say his feeling. This kind of stigma also creates the image that single is actually *cupu* (slang), or unable to do anything.

The representation of a single as someone who is ‘coward’ differs from the side of male single and female single. In the case of male single, their ‘cowardice’ can be seen as the reason why he stays single. Sometimes, a male single is also seen as someone who is less mature, that is why he is not ready for having a relationship or involved in a marriage. However, in the case of female single, people will pay more attention to her character which is too heavily unsociable. In Indonesian context, there is an assumption that a woman who stays single does not have the capability to socialize with others, closing herself from the outside world, although actually she does not intend to do so (Septiana & Syafiq, 2013, p. 75).

These stigmas build negative representation of FAG as a single who desperately needs for love, unattractive, and coward. These kinds of perspectives fit the judgement that the “singles” are seen as lesser and incomplete people than those who are in relationship. They are often judged as too inferior, selfish, less mature and responsible compared to those who are not single (“Single”, 2004).

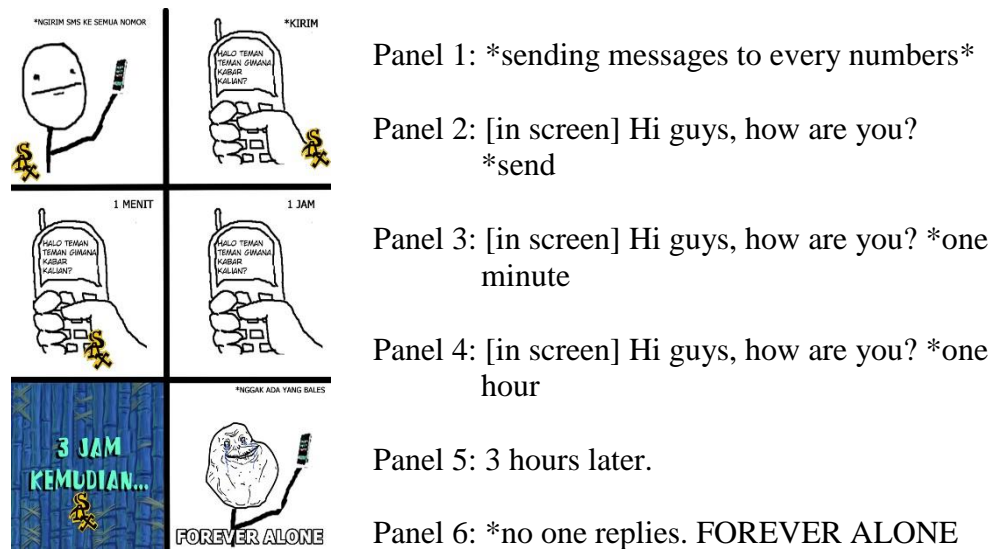
To sum up, in this analysis, I find that there is a negative representation of FAG character as a single who desperately need for love, unattractive and coward. Up to this point, I can conclude that the mental representation of “single” and “being single” itself, are embedded with the similarities of negative representation.

### **2.1.2 Concept of Being Alone**

Alone is a condition when someone does not have companion or does not belong to any group or community. Based on dictionary.com, alone is adjectively defined into three meanings: first, “separate, apart, or isolated from others”; second, “to the exclusion of all others or all else”; third and finally,

“unique; unequalled; unexcelled” (“alone”, 2016). This point can somehow be said as the continuation of the first point, because in one sense, being “alone” here is caused from the first point itself, which is being “single”.

In the text itself, there are some strips that represent FAG negatively from the perspective of being ‘alone’. There are three ideas that built the ‘meaning’ of “alone” in this text: isolated, unpopular and at loss.



Picture 17: “being alone”

In Picture 17, it can be seen how FAG is represented as an alone person who is isolated from the others. The meaning of aloneness in this comic strip can be seen from how FAG is represented as a person who tries his best to get attention from the others by sending all numbers in his contact a message, asking them “how are you?” However, no one in his contact numbers reply to his message. From this plot, I can say that actually FAG is represented as a person who is left out from the rest of the society and has never been acknowledged by the others, and it creates the impression that everyone ignores him.

This kind of representation is in line with the perspectives attached to singles in Indonesia. Tioso (1991) stated that one of the behaviours of (female) singles is trying to get attention from guys with excessive behaviours and it causes the others around her/him feel disturbed and uncomfortable near them. This kind of stigma seems like an overgeneralization because not all singles

have the same characteristics as described here. However, this kind of stigma or label is what is attached to the singles, and people feel the same way toward singles.

To strengthen this point, the second evidence used is as below,



Picture 18: “being alone”

Panel 1: \*wakes up in the morning of my birthday

Panel 2: checking Facebook account, waiting for someone who congratulates his birthday. [text] No one congratulates me yet.

Panel 3: \*one hour later. [text] There will be one.

Panel 4: \*three hours later. [text] There is none yet.

Panel 5: Many hours later.

Panel 6: \*Midnight [text] *Kampret* (translated: swearing)

From Picture 18, it can be seen that FAG is represented as someone who is unpopular because no one congratulates him or even just notices his birthday. From this kind of representation, I can say that FAG is represented as someone who is not popular because no one seems to care, even on his special day. This kind of representation is contradicted from what it usually happens to the rest characters in rage comic such as Derp. Derp somehow represents someone who is popular and needed by the others, seen from his behaviour and how other characters treat him.

This kind of representation shows the perception that singles are those who cannot mingle with others really well because of some reasons. Therefore, because of their inability to mingle with others well, they are treated as someone “unpopular,” and are not worth to get attention from the others. Moreover, this kind of representation mirrors the condition of how singles are seen as



makes them considered as ‘inferior’ but also ‘selfish’ at the same time—they cannot expand their circle and seem too attached to their own yet small circle.

Up to this point, I can say that FAG is represented as someone who always feel alone because he is always isolated, unpopular and in loss. Therefore, I can conclude that the mental representation of “alone” and “being alone” here, are embedded with the similarities of negative representation from the text.

### **2.2.3 Concept of Being Lonely**

The third mental representation is from the concept of being lonely. This differs the previous points which are “single” and “alone”. Single and alone describe more to the condition or state, but lonely describes the feeling of FAG because of his state. Lonely is “[the condition which] affected with, characterized by, or causing a depressing feeling of being alone; lonesome” (“lonely”, 2016). Therefore, there are some comic strips that are used on this point to examine the representation of the mental process of “lonely” itself.

This representation is in line with what is described in the research described by Septiana & Syaufiq (2013). One of the psychological aspects caused by society’s pressure is the feeling of loneliness itself. The pressures that are given by the society affect the feeling of “incompleteness” felt by most singles. That is why, the sense of incompleteness creates a desire in most singles to get someone to secure themselves from the “identity thread” (p.78). There are three things expressed by FAG when reacting to his loneliness. Those are imagining to be in love, comforting himself and pretending to have a companion.

The first expression represented by the comic strip is how FAG often imagine himself to be in relationship as below,



Panel 1: Boy: “I love you”  
 Girl: Honestly, I love you too

Panel 2: Boy & girl kiss

Picture 20: “being lonely”

In Picture 20, at first readers may think that there are love birds who are in love and then they kiss. However, in the later panels, readers see that actually the scenes are created by FAG who really wishes to be the man (Barbie) that he is playing with.



Panel 1: \*calling someone on Saturday night under the moonlight [balloon text] Someone on the phone: So, bla, bla, bla | FAG: [balloon text] yea, I know. Then?

Panel 2: [balloon text] someone on the phone: You're bla bla bla | [balloon text] FAG: Oh, I see. Then what should I do?

Panel 3: [balloon text] someone on the phone: Then, blab la bla | [balloon text] FAG: oh, right. Thank you.

Panel 4: [balloon text] someone on the phone: You are welcome, thank you for using our provider. Good evening.

Panel 5: Forever Alone \*calling phone officer has never been this romantic.

Picture 21: “being lonely”

As seen in Picture 21 above, FAG is represented negatively from the “perspectives” embedded into it. In Picture 16, the feeling which is drawn as someone who feels lonely, is more explicit. As I stated before, FAG is often represented as a dreamer who wants to be in a relationship, and in Picture 16, readers can see how this character imagines the phone officer as her

girlfriend by calling romantically under the moonlight with a happy expression as if he is falling in love with someone who calls him.

This kind of representation somehow shows the desperation felt by most singles. They really want to get a companion, yet they do not know what to do. This kind of feeling indicates how they are unable to fight the stereotype and label attached to them. Furthermore, this kind of representation also shows that actually, most of singles agree with the “truth” set by the society. The “truth” states that being in a relationship is a perfect condition, while being alone and lonely is a frustrating condition that should be pushed away.

Secondly, the loneliness is often represented by how FAG comforts himself.



Picture 22: “being lonely”

Panel 1: [balloon text] FAG: This is my birthday; I am just waiting for someone to congratulates me.

Panel 2: [text] knock! Knock!

Panel 3: [balloon text] FAG: Helo, who are you? | Derp: I’m a delivery man. There is a big bouquet just for you.

Panel 4: [ballon text] FAG: yeay, where is the bouquet? | Derp: Please take it outside.

Panel 5: [ballon text] FAG: I don’t want to. FOREVER ALONE

Panel 6: [written on bouquet]: Happy birthday, Gozali! From myself.

The comic strip above represents how FAG often comforts himself by sending a present for his own. The expression of this loneliness, therefore, can be seen as the outcome because there is no one who cares with him, even on his special day. The expression of comforting his own loneliness can also be seen in the next strip below,



FAG: I'm sad, *Vroh* [slang].

Picture 23: "being lonely"

In the picture above, FAG shows his expression of comforting his own loneliness by watching a sad movie. He also sympathizes to the girl's feeling by wiping her tears. His action in wiping the girl in screen's feeling is actually his way to express his own loneliness which has no company to watch a sad movie, and has no one to comfort. Therefore, he just comforts the girl in screen's feeling.

The action of "comforting myself" is also one of the action that are done by most singles. Septiana and Syafiq (2013) stated by there are some ways that are done by singles in comforting themselves from the stigma and labels attached by the society to them. Some of the ways are thinking positively of their condition, taking a step back from people's pressure and giving up to destiny (79). However, in the representation of FAG, the actions of "comforting myself" are done through giving themselves a present or just watching romance drama. Although the actions of "comforting myself" are different, one basic thing is that singles always do something to comfort themselves from the pressures to "escape" from reality.

Lastly, the third expression done by FAG is by pretending to have a companion as can be seen below,



Picture 24: "being lonely"

Panel 1: [balloon text] Hand 2: Yes, I win!

Panel 2: [balloon text] Hand 1: Now, I win!

Panel 3: [balloon text] Hand 2: Yeah, I win again!

Panel 4: [balloon text] Hand 2: *Yah* [interjection], now we are even.

Panel 5: [balloon text] FAG: "We are?" I myself. FOREVER ALONE

In comic strips above, readers can see how FAG reacts to his loneliness, that is by playing with himself as if there is someone who plays with him. This point is also strengthened by the next picture below,



Picture 25: being lonely

When looking at Picture 25, readers may think that there is a girl's hand who gives the food to that boy. However, in the later panel, readers realize that actually that boy is doing the action by himself. This kind of representation draws an impression that FAG often expresses his loneliness by pretending to have a companion.

The representation of "playing with myself" here, shows that actually singles envy those who are in a relationship. Thus, they do silly things to express their jealousy. Tioso (1991) stated that one of negative behaviours shown by (female) singles is through showing their jealousy. They are jealous because the others have someone to accompany their lives, but they have no one (p.21). They show their jealousy by showing negative feeling to those who are in a relationship. However, in the representation of FAG, singles are shown as those who like to do silly things to mock at their condition. That is because FAG is in a format of comic strips which are made to entertain others, therefore, the impressions drawn from it are more into comedy.

Although the impression is more on comedy, the feeling of desperation shown in the plot is perfect enough to represent how singles see themselves as

someone who is “lesser” than the rest of the society, and because they are “lesser, it is usual to mock one another through behaviour, speech, or etcetera.

Up to this point, I can say that FAG’s loneliness is expressed through his action which are imagining to be in love, comforting himself, and pretending to have a companion. Therefore, I can conclude that the mental representation of “lonely” here, are embedded with the similarities of negative representation from the text.

To sum up, FAG is represented negatively through mental representation of FAG as someone who is single, alone and lonely. This kind of representation is built up from the negative stigma or behaviours embedded into the plot and characterization. Thus, it can be concluded that FAG is represented negatively in the comic strips by embedding negative stigma of the context within the text.

The overall conclusion is that FAG character is represented in a negative way by attaching signs which are meaningful and understood by members of society (in a social media) and also mental representation which are built from the clusters of negative perspectives. Therefore, I conclude that FAG character is used to represent the life of people who are alone and also singles in a negative way through attaching and building signs and mental concepts in the representation.