

CYBER CLASH: INFLUENCERS VS NETIZENS ON TIKTOK SOCIAL MEDIA AGAINST VERBAL VIOLENCE

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Abstract: The development of social media presents new challenges related to the dynamics of digital communication, one of which is the cyber clashes between influencers and netizens on the TikTok platform. This phenomenon can be seen in the increase in violence on social media, one of which is verbal violence, such as abusive comments, threats, or insults to hate speech. Researchers conducted interviews with four influencers aged 19-26 years who have experienced violence on social TikTok. In addition, researchers also interviewed five netizens who are active on TikTok. Researchers want to examine the cyber clash between influencers and netizens more deeply in the context of verbal violence. Using descriptive qualitative research methods and interview approaches, researchers want to reveal the factors that drive cyber clashes and the impacts on the parties involved. The results showed that verbal violence occurs because there are differences in views, cancel culture and hyper-reactivity, as well as anonymity and impurity, and with that, the results showed. All informants received indirect types of verbal violence through their social media in the form of ridicule, body shaming, and bullying. This research is expected to provide recommendations to reduce verbal violence in the digital space and promote ethics.

Keywords: *cyber clash, social media, tiktok, verbal violence*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information technology, especially in Tiktok media, has changed the way people communicate and interact online. Tiktok as a short video sharing platform, offers space for individuals to express themselves and become influencers with

huge number followers. However, the existence of Tiktok social media has also given rise to a new phenomenon, namely cyber clash or clashes, between influencers and netizens which often lead to verbal violence.

Violence that occurs in the cyber world comes in forms ranging from abusive or hateful comments, threats of insults, or what is commonly known as verbal violence to things that lead to criminal acts or types of cyber cases known to the public, including bullying, illegal access, fraud to cases of terrorism (Puti, 2022).

In the context of verbal violence, especially on Tik Tok social media, this study or research is still being carried out, because verbal violence and cyber clash are forms of psychological violence that use verbal language which includes insults and hate speech (Wibowo et al., 2018). Phenomena like this are relevant to be studied more deeply, especially in the context of the increasing number of cases of verbal violence reported on social media. According to WHO in 2024 cases of verbal violence quadrupled from 2023.

Research in the tiktok social media account found that abusive comments appeared in the form of swearing, hyperbole, defeminism, stigmatization, negative nicknames, sarcastic words and associations with animals (Nurhidayah & Nurhayati, 2022). Similar things were also found in the research Adelia and Pratiwi (2021) which analyzed various types of verbal violence in the comments column of the Instagram accounts of transgender women who are public figures in Indonesia. This study analyzed abusive comments made by netizens in the scheme of body shaming, insults, blasphemy, and sexual harassment. In addition, verbal abuse also often appears on sports-themed social media accounts, such as soccer and badminton (Putri et al., 2021). Swearing is written by netizens because they are disappointed with the results of the match and the performance of the athletes who do not match the expectations of netizens.

A fact that proves that verbal crimes continue to occur is the existence of Law Number 19 of 2016, an amendment to Law Number 11 and Electronic Transactions as a law that regulates cyber crime in electronic media (Adelia & Pratiwi, 2021). The establishment of this legal regulation aims to provide limits to the actions of people in a country who are aware of violating norms, including verbal crimes in the form of judging, insulting, bullying, and expressing hatred to other users without paying attention to the negative impact of their actions on both victims and perpetrators. This is done because of the increase in verbal violence on social media (Sulubere et al., 2023).

As a foam plate dominated by young people, Tiktok provides an active field so that influencers and netizens can interact more deeply, but instead of being a forum for positive and constructive discussions, the interactions that occur often lead to debating comments that in fact drop one party, especially if the content shared triggers controversy or contains netizen opinions (Baryadi, 2018). This phenomenon illustrates how digital space is not only a forum for creative expression but also a field of social conflict that presents the dynamics between influencers and netizens.

This research aims to analyze the phenomenon of cyber clash between influencers and netizens on TikTok social media platform, focusing on the forms of verbal violence that occur, experienced and the triggering factors and their impact on the parties involved. This research is important to understand the interaction patterns and the impact of people's digital behavior, besides that the results of this study are expected to contribute to formulating digital conflict strategies and in order to create a healthy communication culture on social media.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The phenomenon of cyber clash on TikTok social media is a contemporary issue that attracts the attention of researchers, especially digital communication. The interaction between influencers and netizens on the TikTok platform not only reflects the development of communication technology, but also illustrates social and psychological dynamics in the digital space. Some previous studies that have discussed this phenomenon include researchers written by Mendoza and Duffy (2021) with the title "Navigating Tiktok Fame: The Emotional Labor of Digital Creators in the Age of Visibility". This study examines the exploration of the emotional pressures faced by influencers on TikTok social media. With a focus on which netizens often utilize the comment space to express dislike or sharp criticism, which sometimes develops into verbal violence.

Then research with a similar theme was also written by Akbar and Hariyanto (2024) with the title "Procedia of Social Sciences and Humanities International Conference on Emerging New Media and Social Science The Influence of Tiktok Media's Popular Language on Students Communication Styles Procedia of Social Sciences and Humanities International Conference on Emerging New Media and Social Science" This

study examines that TikTok's social media algorithms often prioritize content that triggers negative emotional involvement. With the comment field feature in the TikTok application, netizens can attack influencers using harsh words without fear of social consequences because the attack is only carried out in cyberspace.

Abidin (2015) also do a research with the title “Aren’t These Just Young, Rich Women Doing Vain Things Online: Influencer selfies as Subversive Frivolity”. This study discusses how influencers are often the target of verbal violence because they are considered to show a lifestyle that is too luxurious from the reality of ordinary netizens; this imbalance often leads to cyber clash. Based on some of the previous research that has been attached, either about cyber clash between influencers and netizens or about verbal violence on social media is an important topic to be explored further. This research is expected to enrich digital communication studies in contributing to creating a healthier social media ecosystem.

METHOD

The research method used in this paper is qualitative research and uses a descriptive approach to understand in depth the phenomenon of cyber clash influencers vs netizens on TikTok social media against verbal violence. The descriptive approach is used to provide a detailed description of the cyber clash between influencers and netizens. The informants in this study are influencers and netizens who work at PT Global Ultima Bersama in Surabaya. The first informants is an influencer which amounted to 4 people, with details of one male influencer and three female influencers aged 22 to 26 years. With criteria, who actively using TikTok social media, having experience with netizens through comments or discussions on TikTok, and having experienced or witnessed cyber clashes and verbal violence on TikTok.

The second informants are netizens totaling five people, who work at PT Global Ultima Bersama in Surabaya, with details of two men and three women. With selection criteria, first, actively using TikTok to interact, especially with content influencers. Have been involved in cyber clash or verbal conflict with influencers.

The data collection technique uses semi-structured interviews, with the first informants in which, the researcher will explore the experience of the first informants, namely influencers regarding the cyber clash and verbal violence they experienced on the

TikTok platform and how they responded to the conflict, and the perceived impact. In the second informant, we will explore netizens' perspectives on their interactions with influencers on the TikTok platform, including the motivations behind their verbally abusive comments or actions. Interviews were conducted online through the Zoom application to adjust to the time and situation of the informant. With the data collection stage through interviews and the data analysis stage, which includes data reduction, data presentation and conclusions.

In this study, the data validation technique used data source triangulation where researchers compared data from the main informant (influencer) and the second informant (netizen). And combine the results of interviews that have been conducted.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding

In this study, we explore the phenomenon of cyber clashes between influencers and netizens on the TikTok social media platform, focusing on the verbal violence that occurs in their interactions. This study used interview method to collect data from nine informants consisting of four TikTok influencers and five netizens who actively interact on the platform.

There are several key findings that reveal the dynamics of verbal violence in cyber clashes:

Forms of Verbal Violence

The majority of respondents, both influencers and netizens, reported verbal violence in the form of negative comments that lead to personal insults, excessive criticism of physical appearance, and attacks on individual character. This verbal violence often occurs in response to videos or content uploaded by influencers.

Physical Humiliation: Some netizens make derogatory comments about the influencer's physical appearance, such as "ugly face," "really fat," or "you should diet."

Character Attacks: Comments that attack the influencer's personal values and integrity are also common, such as "pretending to be nice" or "just looking for attention."

General Negative Comments: Many netizens make general comments that belittle and downplay the quality of the influencer's content, such as "your content is not creative," or "not funny."

Influencers' responses to verbal abuse

Some influencers admitted that they respond to verbal abuse in different ways, with some choosing to remain silent and not respond to negative comments, while others reply to comments with sarcasm or counter-criticism. Some influencers also revealed that they try to remain professional by ignoring negative comments, even though it sometimes affects their mental state. Some influencers choose to “block” or “report” accounts that make abusive comments, although this is not always effective in avoiding repeated verbal abuse. Netizen Involvement in Verbal Abuse Based on interviews with netizens, some admitted that they feel free to make negative comments because they feel the distance between them and the influencer is great. They also felt that other netizens often supported their actions, making the culture of insults and verbal abuse more normalized on the platform. Many netizens feel that they are just expressing their opinions or criticisms, but often the words used become very harsh and hurtful. Some netizens say that they make negative comments because they feel that the influencer is behaving “pretentiously” or “showing off too much,” which makes them feel entitled to criticize.

Netizens' involvement in verbal violence

Based on interviews with netizens, some admitted that they feel free to make negative comments because they feel the distance between them and the influencer is great. They also felt that other netizens often supported their actions, making the culture of insults and verbal violence more normalized on the platform. Many netizens feel that they are just expressing their opinions or criticisms, but often the words used become very harsh and hurtful. Some netizens say that they make negative comments because they feel that the influencer is behaving “pretentiously” or “showing off too much,” which makes them feel entitled to criticize.

The following is an interview that has been conducted by researchers. The first informant is an Influencer who has an X account on TikTok social media which has 30.9K followers where the content they upload is in the form of trifting used clothes with the concept of children's fashion scene. Their content has several times experienced violations from the TikTok application itself due to the use of inappropriate words, and they also often get negative comments when uploading their content, and often netizens give bad comments or even unlike their video content. The informant said.

“I upload content that I think is positive and use current language, but often many netizens make negative comments such as trashy content, or the model is physically ugly, her body is not full enough and insults my body shape, over time I also get carried away by the netizen's comments and reply to his comments by making negative comments to the netizen as well, so that there is a conflict between us as influencers and netizens even though we don't know each other before” (interview on October 18).

According to the first informant, the influencer, it is disrespectful because the comments have led to physical bullying. Meanwhile, according to the first informant, namely netizens, it is a natural thing because it is one of the consequences of being an influencer, who must be willing to accept several types of comments, be it positive or negative.

“As a netizen, I often see content that I think is trashy and doesn't fit in the upload, especially the language used in my opinion is not polite, which is clear, I immediately blaspheme the influencer by commenting negatively” (interview dated October 20).

The incident experienced by the first informant, an influencer, can be categorized as an instance of indirect verbal violence, as it occurred through social media. The response they received focused on physical traits, such as being thin or overweight, and even made offensive comments about skin color.

The findings from the informant's interviews revealed that the verbal abuse on TikTok was primarily triggered by differing opinions between influencers and netizens, as well as by societal beauty standards in Indonesia, which often associate beauty with being fair-skinned, tall, and slim. Another factor that triggers cyber clash is controversial content, content that triggers debate, disagreement, or strong reactions from the public (Alifah, 2023). Controversial content often touches on sensitive issues, uses bad language, and raises religious, cultural, or moral issues, and can generate pros and cons among audiences or netizens. Influencers often fail to recognize that the language or attire they use may be considered impolite or inappropriate, especially among younger influencers. They may not be aware that their language does not align with the content, which can lead to negative reactions from netizens who disagree or are offended by it. This is also the case with the second informant, an influencer of ethnic minority background in Indonesia. In Surabaya, there is a diversity of ethnic groups, including Javanese, Madurese, and Chinese (Thionghoa). The second informant, a Thionghoa influencer, frequently uploads Mukbang food content, featuring both halal and non-halal foods. In the TikTok application, there are many features that can be used to sell or do

business, they often get negative comments from netizens where I upload videos of non-halal food and I include a purchase link in the yellow basket according to the use of features in the TikTok application.

"One comment that stands out to me is, 'Wow, Chinese people have taken over Indonesia. They refuse to be called Indonesian or native, and they sell non-halal food. Maybe you should go back to your own country with your slanted eyes.' I often receive hurtful and even racist comments targeting my ethnicity, even though my sole purpose here is to share food content, and I always communicate respectfully." (interview dated October 18).

Because there were too many negative comments on one of my *mukbang* contents, I finally turned off the comment column. The action taken by the second informant in response to the incident was to limit the comment column on his TikTok posts so that netizens could no longer comment badly on the second informant's posts. According to the second informant as an influencer, the behavior of Indonesian people in using social media still only understands and sees from one point of view, and lacks literacy, so bad comments tend to appear on social media users' posts.

Meanwhile, from the point of view of netizens, the content is inappropriate because the majority of people in Indonesia are Muslims, so it is not appropriate to upload non-halal food *mukbang* content even though the language used is polite, and because this netizen does not like the ethnicity, he makes negative comments like

"China just go back to your country where mukbang food is not halal" (Interview dated October 18).

The violence experienced by the second informant belongs to the category of indirect violence, namely by delivering negative comments on social media. And the second informant as an influencer responds effectively by limiting the comment column so that there is no cyber clash between netizen in the content.

Some factors that cause cyber clash are: Cancel Culture and Hyperactivity: according to Maududi and Yunan (2023) Cancel Culture and Hyperactivity are. refer to excessive or highly sensitive responses to certain issues. In a social or cultural context, this can mean that people quickly react to statements or actions that are deemed offensive, often without considering the context or intention behind them. Hyper-reactivity can lead to an escalation of conflict, where constructive discussion becomes difficult.

Both cancel culture and hyper-reactivity show how social dynamics in the digital age can amplify emotional reactions and spark intense debates, but can also hinder healthy dialogue.

Cancel culture and the hyperactive reactions of netizens to content that does not conform to the majority view contribute to exacerbating the situation. Many netizens are quick to respond negatively in the form of hate speech, without considering the impact on the parties concerned.

Verbal aggression in the digital space, particularly on the TikTok platform, was also encountered by one of the third informants, a beauty influencer known as F, whose TikTok account has 27.8k followers.

She received negative comments, harsh words and even experienced threats, on average negative comments or verbal violence were thrown because netizens did not like her dark skin color which did not reflect her as a beauty influencer.

“I often get negative comments such as very ugly, dark skin color so the powder or foundation that is used does not blend with the skin color” (Interview dated October 21).

The fourth informant is one of the outstanding students at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang (UMM) campus and models in promotional content on the official campus account which has 20.1K followers. The mocking or sarcastic comments he received in the promotional content stated that the model only had 'too much style' to be a BA or brand ambassador.

There tends to be unkind posts, Indonesians are more willing to comment openly. Many Indonesians make comments that seem funny, but there are also those who offend others without thinking, offending certain parties and what the impact will be. The important thing is that they comment funny to get a lot of likes and become the top commenter.

However, the netizens have a different view from the influencer, the three netizens who are informants three, four, and five, are united in their opinion that.

“As influencers, we should get input from us as netizens after all, the comments that netizens give are not only about negative comments but there are also comments that are constructive and provide input” (Interview dated October 20).

The events experienced by informants in the third and fourth studies are included in indirect acts of violence because they occur in the realm of their social media.

Discussion

This study aims to examine the phenomenon of cyber clash between influencers and netizens on the TikTok platform, focusing on the forms of verbal violence that occur, experienced, and the triggering factors and their impact on the parties involved. With a qualitative approach and descriptive methods, it is hoped that researchers can provide new insights in understanding the dynamics of interaction on social media and prevent and reduce verbal violence in the digital space so that influencers can choose content that does not cause controversy so that it triggers netizens to comment that causes division.

From the results of the study, it is said that there are several things that trigger cyber clashes, one of which is the existence of Anonymity and Impurity in cyberspace (Antu et al., 2023). The anonymity provided by social media platforms such as TikTok allows users to launch verbal attacks without worrying about the consequences they face in the real world. This exacerbates the level of verbal violence that occurs online.

Examples of indirect verbal abuse faced by the informants include body shaming, defamation, stigmatization, and stereotyping. This can be observed in the comments or direct messages sent by perpetrators to the informants through their TikTok accounts (Antu et al., 2023).

The informants' reactions varied across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. These responses included remaining silent, responding to comments, muting stories or statuses, and directly engaging with netizens to clarify the issue. Victims of cyber violence have various ways to protect themselves, such as choosing not to respond, documenting evidence, seeking help from superiors, contacting law enforcement, confiding in trusted individuals, consulting legal advisors, reporting incidents using website features, unfriending the offender, blocking the person, or even changing their social media details (Hindura & Patchin, 2018).

Additionally, social control plays a key role in preventing cyberbullying by overseeing and imposing social sanctions on offenders, ensuring they follow proper norms (Maududi & Yunan, 2023). Efforts to prevent verbal abuse can also include early character education, which helps individuals distinguish between good and bad behavior, fostering humanist qualities (Febriyanto et al., 2020). The goal of such education is to cultivate strong moral values in children, encouraging self-respect, respect for others,

tolerance, courtesy, and virtuous behavior. This version maintains the original meaning but uses different phrasing and structure.

The effects of verbal abuse also extend to the mental well-being of both influencers and netizens. The second informant, who is an influencer, shared that he limited his comment section due to feeling terrorized, as reading harmful comments from netizens negatively impacted his mental (Sitepu et al., 2022). This aligns with the experience of the first informant, also an influencer, who, unable to withstand the harsh comments from netizens, became emotionally affected and responded with negative remarks, which further harmed his mental state and emotions.

While netizens involved in this conflict also feel feelings of anxiety and stress, the five informants compactly said that after they commented negatively, there was a feeling of anxiety when their comments went viral, or many other netizens responded.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

Based on the findings in this study, cyber clashes between influencers and netizens on TikTok social media are closely related to the emergence of verbal violence that often takes the form of physical insults, character attacks, and excessive criticism. This phenomenon is fueled by the platform's powerlessness to regulate interactions between its users, as well as the tendency for individuals to feel freer to comment anonymously. Although influencers try to ignore or respond to negative comments in a professional manner, the psychological impact of the verbal abuse they receive remains significant.

The importance of freedom of expression on social media cannot be denied, but this must be balanced with the responsibility to maintain communication ethics. Therefore, promoting more ethical communication between influencers and netizens is necessary to reduce the intensity of verbal abuse on TikTok

Suggestions

Educate Social Media Users: One step that can be taken is to organize a more specific and structured education program on the ethics of communicating on social media. This program should include training for netizens and influencers on the psychological impact of verbal abuse, as well as how to interact in a more constructive

and polite manner. TikTok could work with mental health organizations or psychology experts to run campaigns that highlight the importance of mutual respect in commenting.

Improved Reporting and Moderation System: TikTok needs to develop a more effective moderation system, both automated and manual, to detect and handle verbally abusive comments. The addition of a feature that allows influencers or netizens to report verbal abuse more easily, along with clear sanctions, could be one step towards reducing verbal abuse. TikTok also needs to improve transparency on how the algorithm that determines sanctions for offending users works.

Encouraging Constructive Dialogue in the TikTok Community: In addition to introducing stricter policies and regulations, TikTok could encourage the creation of a community that supports positive and educational interactions. For example, TikTok could launch a “positive comments” feature that encourages netizens to support or appreciate influencers in a healthier and more constructive manner. This could reduce negative comments and reinforce a more ethical communication culture.

Increased Support for Influencers: TikTok should provide more support to influencers who are subjected to verbal abuse. One step could be to provide access to counseling or psychological support for influencers who experience negative impacts from online interactions. This way, influencers can feel more empowered in the face of negative comments, while reducing the mental distress they feel.

Overall, while there is potential for increased freedom of communication on social media, it is important to balance such freedom with responsibility and efforts to minimize the impact of verbal violence. Implementing the above recommendations requires collaboration between TikTok, the user community, and other relevant parties to create a safer and more respectful digital environment.

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