

THE EFFECT OF LGBT'S CONTENT IN TIK TOK ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF LGBT BY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN A CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

As a platform, TikTok is more open to people positing queer content. For example, seeing two men embracing each other, doing make-up on a trans person, or else. Although there are questions about censorship of LGBTQ content, the videos in that space are supportive and sometimes surprisingly confessional. The present study aims to describe the effects of gay content on TikTok social media on students' acceptance about the presence of gays in the campus environment. The research method used is descriptive quantitative to explain a causal relationship of two variables by collecting data that has been distributed from 100 respondents who were randomly selected using a multistage random sampling. The results of present research show that despite feeling anxious about the existence of gay contents in TikTok social media, the participants accept the existence of gays due to several factors such as the existing culture in those places and peer groups. In addition, there is a relationship between the influence of social media content and the level of self-acceptance with the direction of the relationship being unidirectional because the correlation is positive. Furthermore, the level of influence of social media content correlates with the level of acceptance of gay identity among students.

Keyword: TikTok, Gay, Social Media Content.

1. INTRODUCTION

LGBT seems to be a controversial issue that has been discussed around the world, especially in Indonesia. LGBT is still debated in Indonesia because it is considered violating religious and Indonesian social norms which dictate that men should only pair with women or vice versa. As a country with Islam as a major religion and strict social norms, LGBT seems to be less supported and tend to be subjected to social intimidation. In 2020, several cases of LGBT's persecution seemed to draw back the rights of LGBT in Indonesia. In addition, those cases show the stigma and discrimination of being LGBT in Indonesia (Saputra, 2020). It can be said that LGBT in Indonesia can be considered as a controversial case.

Despite the stigma as mentioned in the above paragraph, social media has been used a medium to propagate LGBT in this new media era. Although Indonesian mainstream media may play a significant role in manufacturing

negative stigma against LGBT communities, it encourages LGBT to be more visible in public and media spaces such as social media. Through the latter medium, LGBT communities share their personal stories, experiences, emotions as well as attitudes in order to create creative and positive images for the communities among the public. Such strategies are also expected to build public awareness and reduce negative stigma toward LGBT communities (Triastuti, 2021). It can be said that LGBT communities resort to social media to create public' acceptance and awareness.

Social media websites such as TikTok, have become central to spreading the LGBT's culture and movement. TikTok has become a tool to encourage the LGBT community to come out of their hidden shells and join a movement to make their voices heard and want others to accept them. Due to the less supportive environment in Indonesia, LGBT people use TikTok to spread their lifestyles. TikTok is a

popular social media site among young people around 14-24 years old, especially during Covid-19 pandemic. TikTok seems to be used by them as a platform to show their existence. One of content creators who uses TikTok to spread his LGBT's lifestyle is Ragil Mahardika, an Indonesian who resides in Germany with his husband. He uses TikTok as a platform to share his personal stories about his sexual preferences, coming out stories and his daily life with his husband. Despite getting negative comments from other users, he is followed by 2 million

TikTok users. The numbers show that some people may accept his lifestyle. Looking at Ragil Mahardika's phenomenon, investigating the effects of LGBT contents in TikTok may shed more understanding toward how Indonesians, especially younger generation perceive LGBT communities. It is why the present study aims to examine the effects of TikTok videos related to LGBT contents toward the acceptances of LGBT communities among a group of college students in Indonesia.

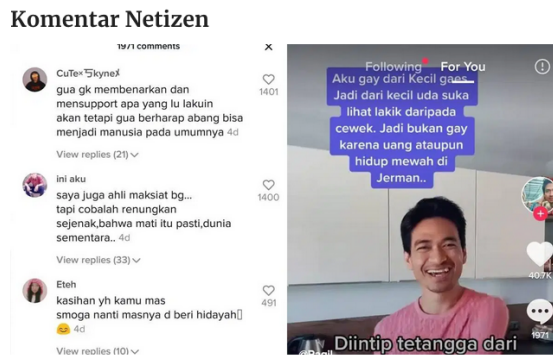


Figure 1: TikTok @ragilmahardika

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Hypodermic Needle Theory

The hypodermic needle theory was the initial concept of the mass

communication effect by communication experts in the 1970s. This theory was later shown in 1950, after the CBS broadcast in America with

the title "The Invasion From Mars". The theory was later developed by Lasswell (1920) who defined it as a theory with elements that are mutually sustainable in communication. Hypodermic needle theory is a theory that became the initial concept to look at the phenomenon of the effect of mass communication in the 1970s. Uchjana (2003, p.84) mentions that literally, the word hypodermic means "under the skin". It means that the mass media or mass communication has a strong, directed, immediate and direct effect to the receivers. This theory is in line with the concept of stimulus and response communication or stimulus and stimulus (S-R) which makes people when they bring news on social media immediately believe the message, without having to think twice (Uchana, 2003, p.84). People who consume news are judged not to have enough time and ability to be able to look for other news sources that can help them to get the right information and truth. Lazarfiel in Weissman (2015) further explains that some audiences who are hit by communication bullets

may not fall for the news or even react differently from the goals. In this sense, Bauer & Gaskell (2008) state that the target audience is not passive as they actively seek what they want from the mass media. Thus, if they find what they want, they interpret it according to their predisposition and needs. Since the 1960s, there have been many studies conducted by communication experts which did not support the bullet theory mentioned above.

Related to the present study, according to the hypodermic theory, TikTok is described as a magic bullet that enters the minds of the audience and injects some special messages. This theory also explains how the media control what audiences see and what audiences hear. The use of the term needle is to describe the powerlessness of the mass audience as a result of public opinion, or public opinion built by the mass media, thereby causing behavioral changes in the mass audience. Nevertheless, the mass audience may not be influenced by what is presented or the message from TikTok

itself, as similarly stated by Lazarsfeld and Bauer in the above paragraph. The main reason, is that messages from TikTok itself are considered not according to what the user is looking for. In addition, the messages in TikTok may be considered not too important and less impactful on the lives of TikTok users. This hypodermic theory may be relevant to the TikTok phenomenon that is currently popular among young people, especially Generation Z (people born between 1995-2010). The majority of active users of the TikTok application are teenagers under the age of 22 and they are people who are easily influenced by the power of the mass media. They often do not first filter the messages conveyed by the media, so that the effect conveyed by the media is getting stronger. This may be the cause of why the TikTok phenomenon and its users labeled negatively by the public.

2.2 Media Ecology Theory

McLuhan in West & Turner (2010) state that the presence of media technology is decisive in shaping human's life. This theory is centered on

the principle that the society cannot escape the influence of technology. This theory formulates how media and communication processes affect human's perceptions, feelings, emotions as well as the values of technology that affect communication. In the perspective of this theory, it is not the message that affects our consciousness but the medium that has a greater influence on our subconscious. The medium shapes the message, not the other way around. Thus, electronic media has radically changed society. Society is very dependent on technology that uses media and that the social order of a society is based on its ability to deal with these technologies.

Related to the present study, social media such as TikTok also has a role in shaping human perceptions and emotions, especially for its active users. Those who actively use this application may be affected by the contents in TikTok, including the negative ones that may influence emotions and thoughts of its users. There is Goldberg's diagnosis of Internet Addiction Disorder to see

patterns of use that lead to addiction, which are as follows (Thurlow et al, 2004, p 151-152): (a) Tolerance, characterized by a marked increase in the amount of time using the internet to achieve satisfaction. (b) Withdrawal symptoms: anxiety, obsessive thinking about what is happening on the internet, fantasizing or dreaming about the internet, moving fingers to type voluntarily or forcefully. (c) More time spent in activities related to internet use such as buying internet books, trying new web browsers, researching internet vendors, organizing files for download. (d) Less important social, work, or recreational activities due to internet usage.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study uses a descriptive quantitative to explain a causal relationship between two variables by collecting data that has been distributed to 100 respondents who were selected randomly using Multistage Random Sampling. The present study uses a set of questionnaires which was distributed to

a group of college students in Jakarta, Indonesia using Google Forms. The validity test was carried out using the Spearmans technique and reliability analysis using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient formula which shows the relatively high reliability of the instrument. As for the effect test, a simple linear regression analysis is used to examine the results.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

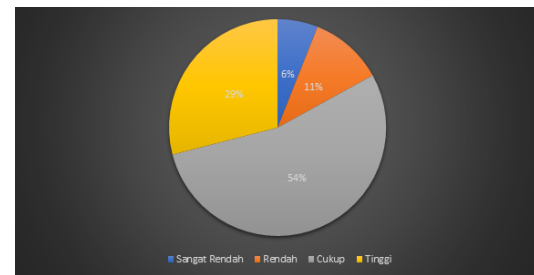


Figure 2. The acceptance level of LGBT's contents in TikTok

Figure 2 shows that more than 50% of the participants watch LGBT' contents in TikTok. It shows that most participants accept the presence of LGBT's contents in TikTok. On the other hand, the figure 3 below shows that the majority of participants feel anxious with the LGBT's contents in TikTok.

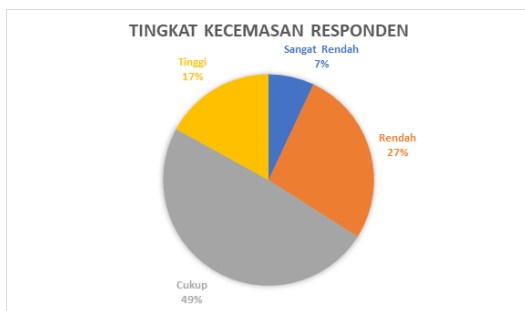


Figure 3. Anxiety level of the participants

Table.1
The results of Correlation Test between Content's Effects and the anxiety level of LGBT's Acceptance
Correlations

	(Content's effect)_X	(Anxiety)_Y
Spearman's Correlation Coefficient	.195	.195
Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001
N	100	100
Anxiety Correlation Coefficient	.195	.195
Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001
N	100	100

The relationship between the variables of the influence of TikTok's LGBT content (X) and the level of anxiety on the acceptance of LGBT's identity (Y) among students can be seen in table 1. From the results of the Spearman's rho correlation coefficient

test, it is obtained $r_s = 0.195$ or 19, 5%, with P-value = 0.001 smaller than = 0.05, then $H_0 : s= 0$ is rejected. The results of the present study show a relationship between the influence of social media content and the level of self-acceptance with the direction of the relationship being unidirectional because the correlation is positive. Thus, the higher level of influence of social media's content, the higher level of acceptance of LGBT's identity among the participants. In addition, the relationship between the two variables seem to have a fairly strong correlation.

Table.2
Hypothesis Testing on the Effects of LGBT's Contents on the Acceptance Level of LGBT's Identity among the Participants

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.352 ^a	.124	.119	.485
a. Predictors: (Constant), Konten_X				

Nevertheless, the value of R² (R Square) in table 2 shows that 12.4% of the variable level of acceptance of LGBT's identity among the participants

can be explained by the changes in the variable influence of LGBT's contents on TikTok social media with P-value = 0.001 which is much smaller than = 0.05. Despite being in the age range of digital native, the results of the present study show that the influences of social media toward the participants are relatively low. The above table shows that the acceptance of LGBT's identity among students is relatively small. However, table 2 shows that the messages in LGBT's contents seem to have relatively high levels of LGBT's contents in their social media. According to the hypodermic needle theory, continuous messages can influence the receivers subconsciously. The results of the present study suggest that TikTok allows LGBT communities are started to be accepted by its users.

5. Conclusions

LGBT issues are still considered as controversial ones in Indonesia due to the low acceptance of LGBT lifestyles in the country. It is why LGBT communities in Indonesia use social

media such as TikTok to spread their personal stories, communicate with other people and gain acceptance from the public. The present study aimed to investigate the relationship with LGBT's contents and the level of acceptance among 100 participants in Jakarta, Indonesia. The present study used a quantitative method by distributing a set of questionnaires through Google Forms. The results of the present study suggest that the LGBT's contents are gaining acceptance among the public.

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