

Social Change Communication and Message Production of Transgender Individuals Through TikTok Social Media Activities

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ABSTRACT

Social media TikTok is chosen by LGBT individuals as an appropriate medium to voice their existence so that they can be accepted by the broader society, at least to gain recognition & equal basic rights as ordinary human beings. Some TikTok users known to be LGBT adherents are no longer ashamed to open up and admit their orientation to the public. This study uses a qualitative content analysis method. Content analysis provides new insights, increases the researcher's understanding of a particular phenomenon, or informs practical actions. TikTok influencers who show personal activity and uploads their personal life as an LGBT person, specifically transgender. Using TikTok to upload daily life videos is a new diplomacy approach in communicating the lifestyle they adhere to and representing the concerns felt by many LGBT adherents. Every individual is born with their own circumstances, and by appreciating and accepting their condition, they will be happy and spread happiness to those around them

INTRODUCTION

The current development of communication technology has introduced various new media based on the internet and digital systems. These innovations ultimately provide convenience and ease for society as a whole. The presence of these new media offers flexibility for the public to choose and encourages the emergence of specific motivations and interests.

According to McQuail (2006), new media is a term used to describe the convergence between computerized digital communication technology that is connected to a network. New media is anything that can channel information (mediator) from the source of information to the receiver. "New media has two main elements, namely digitization and convergence. The internet is proof of convergence because it combines several functions of other media such as audio, video, and text" (in Efendi et al., 2017).

Currently, TikTok has become a popular social media platform among the Indonesian public. This social media platform, originating from China, has shown significant growth and has even surpassed the popularity of Instagram. In 2019, TikTok was downloaded more than 740 million times on Google Play Store and Apple Store, making it the second most downloaded application worldwide according to data from Sensor Tower. Within three years, this application, developed by ByteDance, a Chinese digital start-up company, achieved over 15 billion downloads. With short video features ranging from 15 seconds to 60 seconds, TikTok offers easy application usage as well as various features such as filters, background audio, and diverse stickers. All of these make TikTok very appealing to users.

This social media platform, which has been around since 2017, has become the fastest-growing application and ranks as the most downloaded in the United States. TikTok allows users to produce short videos on a wide range of themes which can then be shared with the broader TikTok community (Zhu, 2019). Indonesia itself is a large target market for TikTok. On average, TikTok users in Indonesia watch 100 videos per day and spend 29 minutes per day accessing the TikTok application.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The presence of TikTok creates a new community that allows individuals to make friends freely and access various information easily. The continually developed features by TikTok make it easy for users to interact with others in a short period. This platform provides an easy means of communication among users through the comment section, private messages, duet collaborations, and short video creation. TikTok has become a social media trend facilitating interaction and information exchange among various societal layers.

However, on the other hand, TikTok also brings risks such as the spread of hate speech and fake news. This issue occurs not only among teenagers, who are the majority users but also among adults, including transgender individuals who use the platform to express themselves.

The development of sexual deviance behaviors such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) in Indonesia has existed since the 1960s. The presence of LGBT individuals in Indonesia remains controversial because the

majority of the population is Muslim and upholds moral values. LGBT is still considered taboo and frightening by most of society. For many people, LGBT is seen as a social aberration, a psychological disorder, and a mental illness that needs to be corrected (cured) to prevent social impacts on young generations and the social order of humanity from heading towards the extinction of the human species. Therefore, LGBT individuals rarely want to open up and easily admit their orientation in their environment.

Social media TikTok is chosen by LGBT individuals as an appropriate medium to voice their existence so that they can be accepted by the broader society, at least to gain recognition & equal basic rights as ordinary human beings. Some TikTok users known to be LGBT adherents are no longer ashamed to open up and admit their orientation to the public. They usually write hashtags like *gayindonesia*, *lesbian*, *LGBT*, or symbolized with a rainbow image in their profile descriptions and content.

One of the famous TikTok users in Indonesia known to adhere to LGBT views is @millencyrus. In this study, the author will link the discussion to the video content uploaded by this account. Millendaru, also known as Millen Cyrus, is a celebrity and content creator from Indonesia known for his presence on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok. He is also a transgender woman who has openly shared his journey as a transgender person on his social media.

The phenomenon of self-disclosure on social media TikTok can be seen from the perspective of Communication Privacy Management (CPM). This theory, developed by Sandra Petronio, focuses on the negotiation process someone goes through in disclosing personal information in the private sphere (Littlejohn, 2017). This theory posits that humans are decision-makers, rule-makers, and rule-followers; choices and rules are based on a person's considerations of others and their self-concept. Digital information dissemination has the characteristic of being networkable, meaning it can be simultaneously used by many users without being limited by distance.

Petronio (2002) explains that deciding what to disclose and what to keep secret is not a decision that can be made immediately, but rather a continuous balancing act. Furthermore, the concept of privacy according to Sandra Petronio is when we strive to balance the demands of the situation with our needs and those of others around us. The term privacy is often associated with unauthorized or unreasonable access to personal information.

According to Devito (2010), self-disclosure is a type of communication where information about oneself, usually kept hidden, is revealed to others. The term self-disclosure refers to the conscious disclosure of information. Two aspects need to be considered: the information disclosed, which is usually kept secret, and the fact that this information is shared with others, either orally or in writing.

Linguistically, self means oneself, and disclosure means revealing or openness, so self-disclosure means revealing something within oneself. Self-disclosure is the act of revealing personal information to others about thoughts and feelings that exist within the individual after experiencing events in the past or present.

The author also looks at how messages are produced to achieve specific goals through social media TikTok. This theory posits that individuals have different logics in communication that can affect the message production process they undertake. Barbara O'Keefe (1988) formulated three communicator models in producing messages: Expressive Logic, Conventional Logic, and Rhetorical Logic. Related to privacy management theory, message production is part of the final process for individuals to disclose (disclosure) or keep information private. When individuals disclose the information they have through the produced messages, certain risks arise, especially if the information is spread to the wrong people. For example, when an LGBT individual excessively shares their private life, the risk of bullying, humiliation, and insults may increase.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative content analysis method. According to Hsieh & Shannon (2005), qualitative research methods interpret the subjective content of textual data through a systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use. Content analysis provides new insights, increases the researcher's understanding of a particular phenomenon, or informs practical actions.

This method focuses on the characteristics of language as communication, with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text. Qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method for the subjective interpretation of content data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes/patterns. The material object in this study is TikTok posts on the @millencyrus account, and the unit of analysis used is the content of the posts on that account. Because this study uses a qualitative approach, the determination of the unit of analysis is taken randomly according to the categories studied.

Categories are essential in content analysis research. This study uses a directed content analysis approach that starts from theory as a guideline. After the data is collected, a coding process is conducted based on the concepts and theories that have been categorized. Then, the data is analyzed to produce answers to the research objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of LGBT behavior in Indonesia has existed since the 1960s. At that time, diverse sexual orientations and gender identities already existed in Indonesian society, although the term LGBT was not commonly used and was often known by other terms. Initially, LGBT individuals had a relatively equal position in society. However, during the New Order era, the government exerted harsh pressure on LGBT adherents with efforts to eradicate them, resulting in discrimination. Nevertheless, this did not stop their desire to be accepted and recognized as equal members of society. Secretly, they sought support and tried to voice their existence, which then grew rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s and peaked in the 2000s until today.

With the development and modernization of the times and the increasing number of LGBT individuals in Indonesia, LGBT activists and adherents strive to further introduce that LGBT is something common in society so that their existence can be respected based on humanity and not as deviant behavior. If previously LGBT individuals were reluctant to open up and admit their orientation in society, now many movements campaign for their identity and existence, hoping to be accepted by society and have equal rights as heterosexual individuals. One of the campaigns is the demand for the abolition of sexual and gender identity discrimination, fulfillment of basic rights, special treatment, and recognition of same-sex marriages, all regulated and recognized by the state. This movement is also supported by the increasing number of organizations formed to accommodate LGBT individuals.

Changes in LGBT Communication Behavior and Their Reasons

The discourse on LGBT developed in the 1990s when the AIDS epidemic was rampant, and LGBT activities were blamed as one of the causes of the spread of the disease. An interview conducted by Kompas with the Chairman of the Lesbian and Gay Nusantara Task Force (KKLGN), Dede Oetomo, regarding the disclosure of orientation and his romantic life with his gay partner, received significant appreciation from readers because he dared to reveal himself as gay, although there was a concern it might lead young people astray. In 1995, the discussion about LGBT began to surface when one of the television channels issued a circular prohibiting the portrayal of flamboyant or drag characters to prevent the mental development of the younger generation from being influenced. This was done because previously, the role of transvestites in television began to flourish since the films of the Benyamin Suaeb era, such as "Betty Bencong Slebor," Didi Petet in "Catatan Si Boy," and comedic shows featuring characters like Ade Juwita, Tata Dado, and Dorce Gamalama.

By the 2000s, the presence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was used by LGBT activists and organizations to disseminate information, develop, and showcase their potential. Recently, many organizations have evolved from online groups, especially within the LBT community. Moreover, LGBT writers have been creating fictional and non-fictional works and publishing them on blogs. Amateur LGBT filmmakers also upload their videos on platforms like YouTube. Some well-established LGBT organizations maintain websites, although some are not well-maintained due to being voluntary. For instance, two websites related to HIV treatment services for

gays and transvestites are proyekcinta.com, aimed at the general public, and brondongmanis.com for the younger generation. In mass media, there are varied perspectives on covering LGBT issues in Indonesia; some are balanced like *The Jakarta Post*, others sensationalize the sexual aspects like *Pos Kota*, and some take a conservative, fundamentalist Islamic approach like *Republika*. Therefore, training on sexual orientation and gender identity issues is needed for LGBT activists and media workers. Despite the pros and cons, media portrayals show the potential to foster the development of the LGBT community.

Entering the social media era in the 2010s, with the advancement of ICT, young Indonesians, including LGBT individuals, are among the most connected in the world, especially with the proliferation of smartphones and the rapid increase in social media usage, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Social media is a popular and favored communication platform among most people. Social media offers diverse features, such as creating profiles, uploading photos and videos, adding friends, and sending messages. Social media encourages users to interact with each other and create new communities, allowing individuals to make friends freely and access various information easily.

The current phenomenon is that individuals can easily express their feelings and thoughts on social media, including LGBT adherents. Social media is often used by LGBT individuals to reveal what they feel and experience. When they disclose themselves on social media, a different side of LGBT individuals can be seen that is not found when interacting face-to-face. Besides, they feel safer opening up about who they are, although self-disclosure on social media sometimes poses risks, such as losing privacy. Social media is chosen by LGBT individuals as an appropriate medium to voice their existence to be accepted by society, at least to gain recognition and equality as ordinary human beings. Some social media users known to be LGBT adherents are no longer ashamed to open up and admit their orientation to society. This is done by creating disclosure content or writing hashtags like LGBT, homo, or rainbow on their social media.

Changing Public Views on LGBT

Public views on LGBT issues still vary depending on cultural background, religion, social group, communication media, family, peer associations, gender, and interactions with LGBT individuals (Lehman & Thornwell, 2010). The level of rejection and acceptance of LGBT also depends on these factors.

Most Indonesians reject the presence of LGBT individuals, especially in their residential areas. Generally, people see their presence as negative, abnormal, and wrong. These rejections and views are based on the religious teachings followed by most Indonesians and the strong belief that Indonesia is a religious country. Additionally, the fatwa issued by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) rejecting same-sex relationships and marriages further strengthens this view. The lack of interaction or information about LGBT individuals also reinforces this perception. So far, the information received is that LGBT individuals are always associated with sinful acts.

Knowledge background also significantly determines people's attitudes towards LGBT individuals in their residential areas. Generally, people condemn and avoid them in all social activities. Most consider LGBT as a disease that must be eradicated and are also afraid of them, thinking they are contagious. This opinion is based on religious teachings where Allah destroyed the people of LGBT (the story of Prophet Lot). Therefore, people fear being affected by a disaster due to their presence in the environment where they live. This causes the majority of Indonesians to still carry out discriminatory actions against LGBT individuals, such as exclusion, expulsion, and even violence.

However, over time and with the changes in era supported by ICT advancements, although some still reject LGBT individuals, there are also some who can understand and accept their presence. The role of communication media significantly influences changing some people's views on LGBT today, and it is far more accepting compared to the previous conditions. The millennial generation has better information, knowledge, and reasoning about LGBT. This information is obtained from the LGBT movement's changes through the formation of LGBT organizations using the role of print, electronic, and online media. Therefore, society sees LGBT as people who are different and have their own world, thus not discriminating or supporting them.

Besides communication media, local cultural factors can also influence people's views on LGBT individuals. Rural communities (villages) are more accepting of LGBT individuals compared to urban areas. This is because rural communities have known LGBT individuals since they were young, unlike urban communities who may have never known LGBT individuals in their daily lives. People in rural areas are also more accepting of LGBT individuals because they have existed in historical stories and are not something new. For instance, in East Java, they are known as Gemblak, partners of Warog (a noble warrior of Raja Klana Sewandana) who maintain their strength through sexual interaction with Gemblak. In Makassar, they recognize 5 types of gender: male, female, calalai, calabai, and bissu. Calalai and calabai are transgender, while bissu can be either calalai or calabai but holds a high position because they have the power to receive revelations.

Another factor is kinship or close relationships. This factor significantly influences someone's view on LGBT compared to local culture and the millennial generation's perspective, which is generally seen as more open. Those who have family members with sexual disorientation tend to be more tolerant regarding LGBT rights. Some people also do not reject or object to living near LGBT individuals. This is usually because they have long interacted with these LGBT individuals. Therefore, these people never (or will not) discriminate against LGBT neighbors if they are well-known and have good relations with people around them.

Essentially, society's acceptance of LGBT individuals depends on their attitude towards them. Some do not care about their presence because they are used to it as long as it does not cause individual conflicts and can create comfort. However, some, although not supporting, do care about their existence and embrace them as part of society.

Regardless of the dialogue of rejection and acceptance, ultimately, whatever people's views on LGBT individuals are returned to their principles and themselves because, after all, it is an individual's right to judge, behave, and act towards social issues.

Implementation of Changes in LGBT Adherents' Attitudes

Entering the 2000s, the LGBT phenomenon showed an increase in numbers in Indonesia. Although there is no precise statistical data, Yudiyanto (2016) stated that the estimated LGBT population in Indonesia reached 3 million in 2012. This development is also accompanied by the increasing number of organizations related to this community. The movement to encourage the acceptance of their existence is also increasingly being campaigned, one of which is in early 2016. Andina (2016) revealed that LGBT activists through the LGBTIQ Forum asked for the abolition of sexual discrimination and gender identity, fulfillment of basic rights, special treatment, and recognition of same-sex marriages, all regulated and recognized by the state.

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) explained that social media consists of several types:

- **Collaborative Projects:** Websites that allow users to change, add, or remove content on the site. Example: Wikipedia.
- **Blogs and Microblogs:** Users can freely express themselves in these blogs, such as venting or criticizing government policies. Examples: Twitter, Blogspot, Tumblr, Path, and others.
- **Content Communities:** Users share media content such as videos, e-books, images, etc. Example: YouTube.
- **Social Networking Sites:** Applications that allow users to connect by creating personal information (such as photos) to connect with others. Examples: Facebook, Path, Instagram, TikTok, and others.
- **Virtual Game Worlds:** Virtual worlds replicating 3D environments where users can appear as desired avatars and interact with others as in the real world. Example: online games.
- **Virtual Social Worlds:** Users can feel as if they are in a virtual world just like virtual game worlds, interacting with others. However, Virtual Social Worlds are more towards real-life experiences. Example: Second Life.

Petronio (2002) stated that CPM is a theory describing a map showing that people make choices about revealing or hiding personal information based on criteria and conditions they consider important, and they believe they have the right to own and control access to their personal information. This theory examines the criteria for rule formation in the rule management system during disclosure. Researchers observe that men and women have different criteria for assessing when to be open and when to remain silent regarding disclosure. The idea of gender differences and the concept of privacy regulated by rules is part of the current communication privacy management theory.

The Communication Privacy Management Theory explains that individuals involved in disclosure in interpersonal relationships constantly manage the boundary between public and private. If the boundary is permeable, certain information can be disclosed; if it is not, the information will never be shared. However, the permeability of a boundary can change depending on circumstances, which will determine whether the boundary is opened or closed. The consequence of keeping the boundary closed leads to increased autonomy and security of information, while opening the boundary can enhance intimacy between individuals but also increase personal vulnerability.

Communication Privacy Management Theory aims to resolve the conflict between openness and privacy and between the terms "public" and "private" in an interpersonal relationship. The conflict between the desire to share and the desire to protect oneself requires individuals to negotiate and coordinate boundaries. Petronio (2002) views this decision-making process as dialectical, an interaction between the desire to disclose or conceal.

Along with the advancement of technology and communication, especially through social media TikTok, educational, campaign, and propaganda messages conducted by LGBT activists have become more open and daring in voicing their life choices. It is not just through writing or simply taking to the streets to fight for their rights, but it has also reached their personal lives, documenting how they live same-sex relationships, socialize, and interact in normal human life.

The TikTok user @millencyrus is an example of a figure who uploads their personal life as an LGBT person, specifically transgender. Using TikTok to upload daily life videos is a new diplomacy approach in communicating the lifestyle they adhere to and representing the concerns felt by many LGBT adherents.

Millen Cyrus was born on August 28, 1999, with the real name Muhammad Millendaru Prakasa Samudro. He is a transgender individual who has openly shared his story with the public. He is the second of three siblings of Hambali Samudero and Rahma Aisyah. Since childhood, Millen has felt like a girl. As he grew older, he decided to become transgender and adopted a female identity.

Millen Cyrus is also known as a model and Instagram influencer and gained further recognition after representing Indonesia at the Miss Queen International 2022 in Thailand. With his courage to open up and fight for transgender rights, Millen Cyrus has become a source of inspiration for many people. Despite the disclosure and openness of Millen regarding his identity as a transgender person on his TikTok account, and with various public comments, both positive and negative, Millen certainly has specific goals in creating and producing messages in the content he shares. The message production process by the account owner @millencyrus is done with conventional logic where communication is a tool for expressing oneself according to commonly accepted rules and norms. He expresses himself as a transgender person and, despite being aware that what he does can provoke diverse reactions, he continues to create content and produce messages politely and decently regarding statements he

believes are true and responses to netizen questions or comments. This is a strategy to ensure that the message conveyed is accepted and understood by the audience.

Millen wants to educate society about his controversial content regarding his choice to be transgender. He wants people to appreciate and accept his personal condition before interacting. Every individual is born with their own circumstances, and by appreciating and accepting their condition, they will be happy and spread happiness to those around them. Even if people do not like or cannot accept his choice to be transgender, he only asks to be respected and valued as a human being.

The term privacy is usually associated with unauthorized or unreasonable access to personal information. Each individual has a sense of ownership of information about themselves and the right to control that information. Petronio (2002) explains that it is not an easy decision for individuals to immediately decide what information to disclose and what to keep secret; it requires careful and continuous consideration. Thus, the concept of privacy according to Petronio is when individuals strive to balance situational demands with their needs and those of others around them.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With the development and modernization of the times and the increasing number of LGBT individuals in Indonesia, LGBT activists strive to further introduce that LGBT is something common in society so that their existence can be respected based on humanity and not as deviant behavior. If previously LGBT individuals were reluctant to open up and admit their orientation in society, now many movements campaign for their identity and existence, hoping to be accepted by society and have equal rights as heterosexual individuals.

Changes in LGBT communication behavior started in the 1980s with LGBT mobilization through print media and the formation of small groups throughout Indonesia. In the 1990s, the development of LGBT organizations extended to electronic media through roles portrayed in films and comedy shows. In the 2000s, the advent of ICT made LGBT development more interesting, such as the formation of online groups, fictional and non-fictional works in blogs, amateur film works on YouTube, and the creation of websites related to HIV treatment services beneficial to LGBT individuals. In the 2010s, ICT advancements expanded LGBT development worldwide through social media. The reasons behind these behavior changes vary, from hoping to be accepted and treated humanely to demanding equal basic human rights through legal recognition.

Despite the controversy surrounding the content created, the author believes that the TikTok account owner @millencyrus has chosen a new and modern communication path to communicate with the general public about his condition as a transgender person while maintaining his own privacy rules.

In terms of message production, the information and responses packaged in short videos use conventional expressive logic but remain polite and respectful. Choosing TikTok as a medium follows the advancement of

Information and Communication Technology. Therefore, this is a strategy to make the communication process effective and acceptable to the audience.

FUTURE STUDY

Hopefully the next research will be better.

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