

The Influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among Generation Z in Medan on Cancel Culture and Herd Mentality (Mob Mentality) as a Form of Social Control over Public Figures.

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini berjudul The Influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among Generation Z in Medan on Cancel Culture and Herd Mentality (Mob Mentality) as a Form of Social Control over Public Figures yang bertujuan untuk menganalisis apakah terdapat pengaruh fear of missing out generasi z di kota Medan terhadap cancel culture sebagai publik figur, untuk menganalisis apakah FoMo generasi z di Kota Medan memiliki pengaruh terhadap cancel culture dan herd mentality (mob mentality) sebagai pengendali sosial publik figure. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif. Lokasi penelitian terdapat di dua kecamatan di Kota medan, yaitu Kecamatan Medan Area dan Kecamatan Medan Selayang. Kecamatan Medan Area memiliki jumlah populasi 117.029 jiwa sedangkan Kecamatan Medan Selayang memiliki jumlah populasi sebanyak 109.926 jiwa. Penelitian ini menggunakan cluster random sampling sebagai Teknik pengambilan sampel dengan hasil 52 responden yang mewakili Kecamatan medan area dan 48 responden mewakili Kecamatan Medan Selayang. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa korelasi Fear of Missing out (FoMo) dengan Cancel Culture diperoleh $r=0.884$ dan $p=0.000$ ($p<0.05$) maka H_01 ditolak dan H_{a1} diterima dengan taraf signifikansi variabel signifikan 0.01, korelasi Fear of Missing Out (FoMo) dengan Herd Mentality (Mob Mentality) diperoleh $r= 0.822$ dan $p= 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$) maka H_02 ditolak dan H_{a2} diterima dengan taraf signifikan di level 0,01.

Kata kunci: FoMo, Cancel Culture, Herd Mentality, Pengendali Sosial

ABSTRACT

This research entitled The Influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among Generation Z in Medan on Cancel Culture and Herd Mentality (Mob Mentality) as a Form of Social Control over Public Figures. A quantitative study that aims to analyze Fear of Missing Out from gen z in Medan whether having the effect to cancel culture as the social control for public figure, to analyze fear of missing out from gen z in Medan whether having the effect to herd mentality (mob mentality) as the social control for public figure, and to analyze fear of missing

out from gen z in Medan whether having the effect to cancel culture and herd mentality (mob mentality) as the social control public figure. This research took place in two subdistricts in Medan, that are Medan Area Subdistrict and Medan Selayang Subdistrict. Medan Area Subdistrict has 119.029 population and Medan Selayang Subdistrict has 109.926 population. This research uses cluster random sampling as the sampling technique. The results are 52 samples represent for Medan area Subdistrict and 48 samples represent from Medan Selayang Subdistrict. The result of this research indicates that the correlation between fear of missing out and cancel culture is obtained for $r=0,884$ and $p=0,000$ ($p<0.09$) therefore H_{01} is being rejected and H_{a1} is being accepted in addition to the standard of signification variable. The correlation between fear of missing out and herd mentality (mob mentality) is obtained from $r=0.822$ and $p=0,000$ ($p<0.05$) therefore H_{02} is being rejected and H_{a2} is being accepted in addition to the standard variable of significance $=0,01$.

Keywords: FoMO, Cancel Culture, Herd Mentality, Social Control

1. Introduction

The rapid development of communication technology over the past few decades has had a massive impact on the progress of the communication field. Daily communication is greatly facilitated by the emergence of various media, both electronic and conventional. Along with the development of media, whose dissemination is so widespread, the users also come from different demographics.

The presence of gadgets as one of the advances in technology has caused significant changes in people's lives, especially adolescents, at the level of civilization and culture (Bauman, 2016; Krasnova et al., 2016). Aykana et al. (2016) found that smartphone usage in Turkey University for 24 hours was less than 1 hour (23.4%), 1–2 hours (27%), 2–3 hours (13.1%), 3–4 hours (5.1%), 4–5 hours (4.9%), and more than 5 hours (14.4%). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, research by Karthik Vankatakrisman, Regional Director of Digital GF Asia, a leading research institution from Germany, stated that Indonesians spend an average of 5.5 hours per day in front of smartphones, with 96% of them being internet users. Children in Taiwan spend 11 hours per week using either smartphones or tablets (Chang et al., 2019). The prevalence of smartphone addiction among fifth graders is 15.2%.

Excessive access to social media can cause anxiety about missing out on certain information. As stated by Przybylski (2013), this phenomenon is called the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), which can be interpreted as social anxiety characterized by the urge to remain constantly connected to what others are doing. FoMO is a form of social anxiety that exists due to the development of social media (JWT Intelligence, 2013). Abel et al. (2019) stated that individuals with FoMO tendencies may experience symptoms such as difficulty detaching from smartphones, feeling anxious when not checking social media, and considering online communication with friends more important than offline friendships.

According to data published by Tirto.id, which conducted research on 1,200 respondents (ages 7–21) in Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Tangerang, and Denpasar between March 9 and June 16, 2017, 35.2% of Generation Z preferred social media as their primary source of information, with an average daily internet usage of 3–5 hours.

Agustina (2020) defines Generation Z or Post-Millennials as the youngest group of humans in the world today, those born between 1995 and 2010. In Indonesia, in 2010, the number of Generation Z exceeded 68 million people, nearly double the quantity of Generation X, born between 1965 and 1976. General characteristics of Generation Z include: digital natives, social lives mostly spent online, multitasking abilities, a desire for recognition, big ambitions, and an interest in trendy campaigns.

Lately, mass boycott campaigns have gone viral on social media, especially on Twitter. Yayang & Yuhastina (2022), in their journal *Cancel Culture: Case Study of Sexual Harassment on Followers*



Autobase Twitter @Areajulid, concluded that informants canceled sexual harassment perpetrators in different ways, and that cancel culture serves as a tool of social control on social media.

Picture 1. Screenshot content of Case Study of Social Harassment Content
Source: Instagram account of @Areajulid

Cancel culture is currently trending in Indonesia due to several celebrity scandals deemed by the majority of society as inconsistent with prevailing norms, particularly moral norms. Reported by Twitter

account @Areajulid, which often shares sensitive news that is widely responded to by society, some of the latest shocking cases include domestic violence (KDRT) committed by actor Rizky Billar against his



wife Lesti Kejora. A few weeks later, Lesti withdrew her report, angering the public, especially housewives. This sparked responses, including tweets from account @tanyakanrl, addressing the issue.

Picture 2. Table 2. Screenshot content of Lesti Kejora Content
Source: Instagram account of @tanyakanrl

2. Methods

This research uses a positivist paradigm with a quantitative approach. It is a quantitative study employing correlational methods, which aim to examine the relationships among variables. Correlational methods are used to measure relationships among variables, predict dependent variables, and facilitate insights for experimental research (Rakhmat, 2004: 43, 62).

The population in this study consists of all individuals categorized as Generation Z in Medan City. However, the study was limited to two districts: Medan Area and Medan Selayang. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency, Medan Area has 117,029 residents, while Medan Selayang has 109,926 residents.

Using Slovin's formula with a 10% margin of error, the sample size was calculated to be approximately 100. This research used cluster random sampling. The criteria for participants included: being part of Generation Z (born between 1995–2010), residing in Medan Area or Medan Selayang, owning a social media account, and actively using social media. The supported criteria was male/ female and age range 30 until 15 years old.

Data collection was conducted through online questionnaires using Google Forms, physical questionnaires, and library research. The questionnaires were validated and tested for reliability to qualify as research instruments. An instrument is considered valid if it can measure the intended variables accurately (Arifin, 2011:23). Data analysis techniques included single table analysis, cross-tabulation, hypothesis testing, and correlation coefficient analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

This study aims to analyze whether the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among Generation Z in Medan influences cancel culture as a form of social control over public figures; to examine whether FoMO among Generation Z in Medan influences herd mentality (mob mentality) as a form of social control over public figures; and to determine whether FoMO among Generation Z in Medan simultaneously influences both cancel culture and herd mentality (mob mentality) as mechanisms of social control over public figures.

3.1. The Influence of FoMO among Generation Z in Medan on Cancel Culture

This study found that the variable Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among Generation Z in Medan influences cancel culture as a form of social control over public figures, with a positive correlation. In simpler terms, FoMO positively affects cancel culture. FoMO can be understood as the fear of being left behind by others, which creates anxiety in those experiencing it—such as anxiety over missing out on information compared to peers. Meanwhile, cancel culture refers to the collective action intended to stop supporting an individual or public figure due to perceived violations of prevailing social or moral values.

Individuals experiencing FoMO tend to ensure that they are always updated with the latest information, including keeping track of public figures on social media. As a result, public figures are constantly under scrutiny. When they commit mistakes or behaviors that contradict widely accepted social and moral values, they receive criticism, withdrawal of support, or even boycotts, which this study identifies as cancel culture.

This argument is reinforced by cross-tabulation analysis conducted in this research. Approximately 72% of respondents reported that Generation Z in Medan makes every effort to obtain information through social media, particularly updates related to their favored public figures.

The connection between FoMO and cancel culture can be drawn as follows: the anxiety of missing out on information (FoMO) drives social media users to remain constantly engaged with social platforms, where the search and exchange of information about public figures is central. This ongoing scrutiny exposes public figures to the risk of being judged for inconsistent behaviors, inviting criticism, rejection, or boycotts from Generation Z social media users, leading to cancel culture.

3.2. The Influence of FoMO among Generation Z in Medan on Herd Mentality (Mob Mentality)

This study also found that FoMO among Generation Z in Medan influences herd mentality (mob mentality), with a positive correlation. The anxiety of being left behind in terms of information compared to others tends to drive individuals, particularly Generation Z, to maximize efforts to stay informed and remain socially connected. One common means is through active social media participation.

Findings reveal that when Generation Z feels anxious due to lack of access to social networks, they are more likely to become highly active followers on social media, with 80% of respondents indicating such behavior. This suggests that when Generation Z cannot fulfill their informational needs, they turn to social media, which in turn creates dependency and transforms them into active “followers.”

This follower phenomenon is the foundation of herd mentality (mob mentality), in which individuals find it difficult to make decisions independently and instead rely on majority opinion. This study found that 59% of Generation Z in Medan reported making decisions based solely on the majority view. Rejeki (2008) explains it as a mindset in which individuals tend to imitate or conform to their surroundings, often losing their sense of individuality in order to gain acceptance within a group.

Further findings support this phenomenon: 52% of Generation Z in Medan admitted that they often join online discussions or commentaries simply because they believe their friends’ opinions to be correct. This indicates reliance on others’ judgments when commenting on social media, especially when the majority is involved. Moreover, 73% of respondents stated they quickly respond to social media notifications, particularly those concerning viral news about public figures shared by friends. Over time, this reliance fosters a pattern in which users trust and repeat the information circulated by peers without critical evaluation

From these findings, a logical conclusion can be drawn: FoMO, characterized by anxiety over being left behind, drives Generation Z to depend on social media for information. The rapid dissemination of information in the digital era makes it difficult to determine accuracy. As a result, users tend to rely on majority opinion, leading to herd mentality. Ideally, however, social media users should remain critical in assessing information and news obtained online

3.3. The Combined Influence of FoMO on Cancel Culture and Herd Mentality

Statistical analysis confirms that FoMO among Generation Z in Medan significantly influences both cancel culture and herd mentality (mob mentality) as forms of social control over public figures.

The correlation between FoMO and cancel culture is $r = 0.884$, $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$) at a significance level of 0.01, indicating a strong positive relationship. Similarly, the correlation between FoMO and herd mentality is $r = 0.822$, $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$), also at a 0.01 significance level, showing another strong positive relationship. These findings suggest that FoMO contributes to the rise of both cancel culture and herd mentality among Generation Z in Medan.

3.4. Social Media and the FoMO Phenomenon

Social media, with its practical use and appealing features, has become a key platform for communication in contrast to conventional methods. In today's era of information overload, individuals compete to access the latest updates. When informational needs are unmet, dissatisfaction and anxiety arise—what JWT Intelligence (2012) defined as FoMO: the anxious feeling that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent.

This study confirms the relevance of this definition to Generation Z in Medan. 81% of respondents admitted to feeling anxious when they could not access social networks in daily life. Dependence on social networks as sources of information reflects their fear of missing out on the latest news.

Findings also show that 56% of respondents reported thinking about social media even while engaging in face-to-face interactions with friends, underscoring their continuous psychological need to stay connected. FoMO is further reflected in anxieties about missing out on trends such as fashion and lifestyle. In fact, 59% of Generation Z respondents admitted to consistently following trending fashion and lifestyle updates on social media as a means to remain connected with others through shared preferences. This aligns with Przybylski's (2013) theory that unmet psychological needs drive individuals to social media to seek connection and information, reinforcing dependency.

Public figures play a crucial role in shaping trends through social media. Following public figures online is one way for Generation Z to ensure they remain updated on new trends. This aligns with the two-step flow of communication theory, which explains that information from mass media does not always reach the audience directly but often passes through influential intermediaries such as public figures.

3.5. Cancel Culture and Public Figures

This study also found that 54% of respondents reported being influenced to stop consuming the work of a public figure when that figure became embroiled in a viral controversy. Social media, as a curated space often showcasing ideals of beauty, virtue, and perfection, punishes public figures who fail to maintain their image. Such failures lead to loss of fans, criticism, and boycotts—key aspects of cancel culture.

Furthermore, 52% of Generation Z respondents admitted to commenting or sharing opinions on social media when a public figure faced viral controversies. This highlights their active role in enforcing cancel culture.

Because social media platforms lack strong filters or control mechanisms, responsibility for oversight falls largely on users themselves. Public figures, despite their influence, cannot be left unchecked. Thus, social media users act as a form of social control, ensuring public figures' behavior aligns with societal norms of decency and propriety.

Indeed, 84% of respondents agreed that netizens or social media users serve as a form of social control over public figures. The relationship between public figures and their audiences can be seen as a mutualistic symbiosis: public figures gain influence through fan support, while fans receive information and entertainment from the public figures' works. For this relationship to remain balanced, users—often referred to as netizens—play a vital role as informal regulators of public figures' conduct in the online sphere.

4. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that FoMO among Generation Z in Medan significantly influences both cancel culture and herd mentality as forms of social control over public figures. The correlation between FoMO and cancel culture was 0.884 (positive correlation), showing a strong linear relationship. Similarly, the correlation between FoMO and herd mentality was 0.822 (positive correlation), also strong and in the same direction. Finally, the combined correlation between FoMO and both cancel culture and herd mentality was 0.872 (positive correlation), confirming the dual influence of FoMO on these two forms of social control.

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