The application of information and communication technology ethics to millennials and gen z on social media, a case study of the Palestinian issue in Indonesia

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Abstract. Currently, social media is one of the most widely used information and communication technologies by the public, especially among the younger generation. The intensive use of social media makes this area an information field for netizens. This study will focus on the issue of Palestine that is currently emerging on social media, where the use of ethics in social media is less applied by netizens. This research method uses qualitative methods and literature studies. The application of ethics in social media in the future can avoid the negative impact of the internet. The results of this study are expected to be a lesson for the community so that they can use social media properly. Then it is hoped that this research will also spark discussions about social media among the younger generation.

1. Introduction

In today's digital era, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) has become an important part of people's daily lives. Social media is a place for people or better known as netizens to interact with each other. The social media has become one of the centers of information dissemination in the community. However, with the development of information and communication technology, an ethical use of this technology is needed to avoid various undesirable things. Based on the *Digital 2024: Indonesia* a report published by datareportal.com, there are 139 million active social media users in Indonesia or about 49.9% of the country's population [1]. Approximately 40.9% of the total data are Millennials and Gen Z. The rapid social media activity can also be caused by the covid-19 pandemic, which makes most people stay at home.

The huge activity on social media has made it a new world for people in the digital era. The popularity of this media is due to the freedom of its users to express their feelings and opinions freely, comment on someone's information/opinion, and share information widely to everyone. Social media has become a medium to connect the global community without borders. However, this has a negative impact on netizens, especially due to the amount of information received by them. One of the most prominent is political campaigns aimed at attracting support among the public. This has led to the growth of fanaticism among netizens. As a result of this fanaticism, the bad behavior of netizens is magnified if an opinion/ideology that contradicts them appears.

The application of ethical use of information and communication technology among Indonesian netizens is very low. According to Digital Civility Index released by Microsoft, Indonesia has the worst attitude netizen in Southeast Asia [2]. Cyberbullying is an issue that often emerged in the digital realm. According to UNICEF, around 45% young people aged 14-24 had experienced cyberbullying [3]. In this research, There is one particular case that caught the writer attention. On June 10, 2024, a viral video showed a group of teenage girls eating fast food while making jokes about Palestinian children. In the video, one of them was eating her food while saying " this is the bone of a Palestinian child" in a joking tone. Her friend replied "this is the blood of Palestinian children". The video ends with the recorder asking her friend Dika about the meat she ate. Dika replied "The meat of Palestinian children". Their actions sparked the outrage among Indonesian netizens. Hate speech and cyberbullying were directed at the girls. In the end, those involved in the video apologized, but the impact they received is proof of how important it is to apply ethics in social media.

2. Methods

This research uses a qualitative method approach by focusing on data collection and literature study. Data collection focuses on netizen comments related to the Palestinian issue, especially those that contain bad fanaticism such as hate speech and cyberbullying. The behavior of these netizens will be examined using a netnography approach. According to Robert V. Kozinets, Netnography is a study that focuses on studying communities of people in cyberspace. This method is observational based so that researchers must join the community [4]. This observation involved several social media accounts, specifically those that posted content that contradicted their views. The comments will then be assessed through an information and communication technology ethics approach.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Palestinian Fanaticism In Social Media

Fanatic according to the mirriam webster dictionary means someone who shows excessive enthusiasm and intense uncritical devotion to a controversial matter (as in religion or politics). This high enthusiasm is created through intense interaction between individuals/groups which then forms into an ideology that is considered true and concrete. In this digital era, social media makes it easy for individuals to get information massively so that there is no time to sort and determine whether they need the information. As a result, those who are consumed by this inciting information will consider it valid, and it is even difficult to change their views. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been going on for 76 years. During the conflict, there have been developments in waging information warfare from both sides. The intensity of the information war grew in 2014 when the Gaza War (July 8 - August 26, 2014) was raging. Both sides utilized "citizen journalists" to distribute photos and videos to the frontlines [5]. This information war succeeded in making the conflict "globalized" by raising awareness of the situation in Palestine.

The attack on October 7, 2023 made the issue of Palestine surface again. Indonesians who have always had a sense of brotherhood with the Palestinians sympathized with the Palestinian people. This was seen when Rafah, a city in Gaza, was attacked by IDF troops. Netizens from all over the world, including Indonesia, posted the hashtag #AllEyesOnRafah and spread the news about the attack.
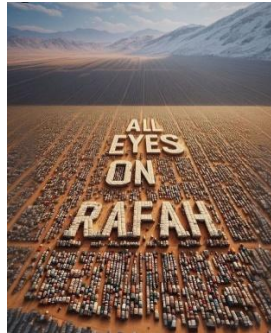

Fig. 1 Instagram Story All Eyes on Rafah

This solidarity is a positive form of fanaticism on social media. Thanks to the spread of this hashtag, many people are more aware of the situation in Palestine than before, and it even lasts longer. However, the negative impact of this solidarity arises when a person/group of netizens is perceived as disrupting what they truly believe in. The case of a group of teenagers yesterday proves this negative impact.

Netizens reacted by cyberbullying the teenagers, especially the one girl with glasses. As a result, the teenagers suffered excessive social punishment. Physical insults were the most noticeable among several other insults. Phrases such as "ugly", "similar to...", and "stupid" were most often uttered by netizens. One netizen even shared the cell phone numbers of some of the teenagers in the hope that other netizens could personally insult them. The insult lasted at least one month after the video viral, even after the girls apologized before some new viral things pop up.

Fig. 2 Netizen who leak the girl phone number

3.2 Uncivilized Netizen and Ethics

Based on Microsoft Digital Civility Index, Indonesian netizen's politeness surfing in internet ranks 29th out to 32 countries and the lowest in southeast Asia [6]. The cyberbullying case above is proof of Microsoft's assessment. The formation of netizen characteristics occurs by several factors, but the most influential are the surrounding environment, educational background, and experiences of the individual [7]. Many of them just follow along because they are afraid they will be left behind (Fear of Missing Out/FOMO). As a result, this behavior is easily repeated due to the high public attention to take part in this negative behavior. Until now, social media has been regarded as "free" and "wild" by netizens. For them, it is an escape from real life [7].

The use of ethics in social media can be a solution to this problem. Ethics in social media itself is oriented towards social norms that apply in society. However, it is also necessary to educate people about social punishment so that excessive things do not happen. Cyberbullying is a form of social punishment on social media. The resulting impact of this bullying causes a person's life to be damaged in the long term.

Legally, the government has regulated the ethical use of information and communication technology in two laws, Law Number 11 of 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions and Law Number 19 of 2016 on Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE Law). Both of these laws discuss restrictions on the use of ICT, but these laws have received opposition from the public because they are considered rubber articles and threaten freedom of speech. This opposition is also due to the view of freedom on social media shared by all netizens.

4. Conclusion

The application of ICT ethics among Indonesian netizens is quite low due to several factors, such as the surrounding environment and individual experience. The impact of using ICT or specifically social media freely makes cyberbullying cases very rampant. One of the causes of these negative actions is excessive fanaticism, in this case towards Palestine.

The Indonesian government has made a law to address this issue, but it is not well-received by netizens because it contradicts their beliefs. Based on this, education about the ethical use of ICT is very important among the public, especially those from Millennials and Gen Z as the largest internet users in Indonesia.

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