

Dynamics of Social Media Users in Responding to Transgender Freedom (Case Study of #I'mProudTranswoman on Twitter)

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ABSTRACT

Purpose : Transwomen or transgender woman is someone who was born as a man but then changes herself as a woman. The existence of transwomen in Indonesia is still controversy among the public, as evidenced by the support and scope for them to come out or freely stated about their sexual orientation, such as through social media. However, transwomen's existences has not been recognize yet. Most of Indonesian people are stick to the eastern culture, even though some people are starting to open up support for transwomen rights. It is trigger the rise of cyberbullying or acts of bullying on social media for those who dare to reveal the identity of sexual orientation. The study aims to analyse the dynamics that occur in social media users responding to the freedom of transwomen in the #I'mProudTranswomen case.

Methodology : Descriptive qualitative research method is used in answering the problem formulation. The author uses analysis on the theory of Encoding and Decoding in analyzing the dynamics of meaning construction in accepting transwomen.

Result : The results found that social communities experience structured dynamics from how to interpret the existence of trans women in the media, namely the audience enters into a dominant position, negotiates, and is also in opposition. The results are concluded from the audience's response to the tweets that Ian Hugen conveyed on his social media platform, namely Twitter, the audience's understanding and acceptance he existence of Transwomen based on the religious understanding and belief of the audience, the audience's knowledge of human rights who are free to make life choices and the audience. who position themselves as a minority group that has no place in society.

Keywords: *Human Rights, Social Media, Transwomen*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country that has a lot of diversity including religious, cultural, and linguistic diversity. Indonesia is also known for its adherents of the most dominant religion, namely Islam, so it is not surprising that people apply norms related to Islam. For example, accepting different sexual orientations is still difficult and is a taboo subject.

The term *transgender* or *transwoman* also has a significant social connotation, namely if previously they had a call that seemed ruder and low, namely "sissy". The word sissy was once a nickname for a man who had a style of speech and a way of dressing like a woman. Of course, the very harsh mention of the word "sissy" is considered an act of harassment to the minority group in the crisis *gender*. This is also stated by Arfanda and Sakaria (2015) who state that groups *transgender* face social problems related to their self-image where those who get the nickname as a "sissy" are often considered to bring bad luck and a source of disgrace to society and the family.

According to the journal published by UIN Raden Fatah Palembang *Vol. 7, No. 2, December 2018* under the name *Intellectualita: Islam, Social, and Science*, stated that social perspectives on transgender people are very diverse, based on their belief in their religious background, socio-culture and their group or community. Seeing the reality that is happening in Indonesian society, transgender people get social rejection because they are considered to have violated the norms of life that have been regulated by God. Those who have chosen to become transgender also receive rejection from their own families, but each rejection can vary by individual, which can be in the form of a subtle rejection that causes physical and psychological violence and there is also an open rejection so that

it does not provide space and time for transgender people to accept themselves. The insults received by transgender people are not only from the wider social community but also from their immediate environment, namely the family, making the family make the final decision by expelling them, because it is considered a source of family shame. This shows that transgender people in Indonesia are still not fully accepted by society.

In an era that is increasingly developing as it is now, it has succeeded in creating social media which is not only a medium of communication, but also makes it a place to express oneself and present an image built by a public figure. Therefore, it is possible that the role of transwomen uses social media such as YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter as a place to form their own image. Anyone can become an Influencer in today's era, only by producing works that are followed by many people and get public attention, then someone can already be called "an influencer". One of them is a writer, model, and influencer who is already well-known to the public as Ian Hugen.

Ian Hugen as an influencer who has a spotlight with an audience on social media who can attract a lot of public attention when he comes out with himself, his parents, and the community. Ian, who currently has 96 thousand followers on his Instagram, clearly has a great influence on people who follow his life through social media related to his daily life as a transgender person. Ian has shared various kinds of experiences through his social media pages, both Instagram and Twitter. However, it is not uncommon for Ian to get many different responses from the audience towards the gender he has chosen now. Ian said that since he was little when he saw himself as a woman, Ian never found a figure who could serve as an example as a hope that being part of the community and gender as he chose to have the same place and rights in the country he lives in today, namely Indonesia. Therefore, when Ian gets the spotlight from the community, Ian wants to use it wisely in his career and work to see that there is hope for people like Ian. Ian also stated that people like himself are also able to socialize with society in general, even though they are transgender. In addition, Ian also believes that he can represent and prove that the LGBTQIA community is not what people think and their choice of gender does not affect their value as a human being.

In January 2021, Ian told in his interview with Ruhee.id about how he got to know himself who was trapped in the wrong body since childhood and his acceptance of himself with the title "The Beauty of Insecurities" which according to Ian he labelled himself proudly as a woman. Transwoman. "I'm a Proud Trans Woman and I'm owning it."

Ian uses his social media platforms to decide on the stigma and perspective that Indonesians create for a transgender person. He tries to provide new perspectives and knowledge through talk shows and interviews, not only in those two ways, but Ian Hugen has also succeeded in creating artworks and writings that reflect himself as a transgender person through all his social media platforms. One of the works of art that he shows is about his chosen identity. Ian hopes that those who choose to be part of the LGBT community in Indonesia will be able and bolder to speak out to the public that an LGBT person must also get equal equality.

The condition of a person who chooses to be transgender in Indonesia is very unfavourable because their existence is not legally and religiously recognized, even though they have tried various ways to get their rights recognized by the government, the acceptance is still fairly difficult. In contrast to one of the countries that is considered to be the most open-minded country towards the transgender minority group in the world, namely Thailand, which has managed to reach a point of acceptance that has developed very clearly and openly. Amanda (2019) said that the government system in Thailand is very minority-friendly, especially Transgender, even today. In 2002 the Thai government had issued a law protecting minorities stating that choosing to be gay is not a disease and this is perfectly accepted. In fact, the LGBT group in Thailand has legalized all practices related to LGBT. The Thai government did not only stop at the first regulation issued in 2002, but also changes and also the addition of new rules that function to protect minorities as a form of more attention which are still being implemented today.

There are two types of Indonesian society in dealing with this issue, namely social which is still very difficult to accept the existence of a transgender and also social who does not care about the status and orientation of a transgender person. Therefore, based on this background, researchers are interested in examining how the Dynamics of Social Media Users in Responding to Transwomen's Freedom on Ian Hugen's Social Media Platform (Twitter).

During the Pride Month movement, LGBTQ+ people received public attention that they had the right and deserved to be socially just like everyone else. However, over time with individual mind-set that tend to change, it becomes a boomerang for those with different sexual orientations to experience rejection from the public for the umpteenth time. The mind-set of a human being tends to always change, because there is something called *unlearn* or *deconstruction*, meaning that the mind-set is zeroed again and repeated again. (Hery, 2021) Therefore, the author aims to study the Dynamics of Meaning Construction in accepting Transwomen.

METHODS

Methods used is online observation, with a reception analysis approach using secondary data. According to Bogdan and Taylor (Maleong 2017:4), qualitative research is research that produces descriptive data in the form of words or words from people and observed behaviour. In this case, a qualitative approach is used to generate descriptive data in the form of written and spoken words from the audience who have responded to Ian Hugen's Tweets.

According to Stuart Hall (2006) the reception analysis method describes and explains in detail about the communication of a conceptualization in the mass media, the communication process from the sender of the message to the recipient of the message. In a Tweet delivered by Ian through his personal platform, the researcher wants to analyse the process *Encoding-Decoding* that occurs between the audience and the media. The use of the theory *Encoding-Decoding* is to find out how the audience interprets a text conveyed by Ian through his social media platform (Twitter).

The process of delivering messages or Encoding (encoder) is from the owner of a personal social media account (Twitter) belonging to Ian Hugen and the party receiving the message or decoding (decoder) is the audience, who always responds and follows the development of every tweet that Ian conveys and translates the pattern. received. Based on the Encoding Decoding theory that Stuart Hall coined, the researcher can find out how the audience interprets and accepts the contents of the writings submitted by Ian Hugen on Twitter.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Reception analysis focuses attention on the specific circumstances in which the reading occurs (Burton, 1999: 188-193). McRobie argues that reception analysis is a "Culturalism Approach" where the meaning of media is negotiated by someone based on their life experiences which means that media messages are subjectively interpreted by the audience personally. (1991 in CCMS: 2002)

Reception theory is concerned with the opinion of the audience on a media content or work, it can be a general opinion that can change towards a work. According to Fiske, the use of reception analysis theory is a supporter in the study of the masses, in fact, they want to use the audience not only passively but as cultural agents who have full power in producing meaning from various content discourses provided by the media. The meaning given by the media can be open or polysomic and can even be responded to in an oppositional way by the audience (Fiske in Tri Nugroho Adi, 2008)

The first development of Cultural Research is *Encoding/Decoding*, which has a meaning namely *Encoding* as a source activity in interpreting ideas or ideas into the senses that can be received by the reader. While *Decoding* an activity to define or interpret the messages physically into a form that has meaning for the recipient (Morissan, 2013: 21)

The messages given by the media are a combination of symbols, signs and meanings which the *preferred reading* is set, but still has a chance for the message to be received differently from how it was sent. Preferred Reading is the dominant or selected meaning of a message or text. Referred to as dominant because there is a pattern of interpretation that is more accepted and this interpretation makes the ideological or political or institutional structure embedded, in reading and vice versa (Hall, 2011: 223)

Reception theory was first introduced by Stuart Hall; this theory is often used to analyse audiences who are juxtaposed with reception analysis. Stuart Hall argues that mass reception or meaning is an adaptation of the encoding-decoding model which is a communication model he discovered in 1973. In contrast to other theories that allow audience empowerment, Stuart Hall puts forward the idea that audience members can play an active role in decoding messages. because they depend on the social context that surrounds them and may be able to change messages or meanings through collective action.

There are 3 experts who study related to Reception Theory:

1. Althusser stated that reception analysis is a text that uses ideology with the aim of healing the subject or target audience and when the subject is called, he has positioned himself as the subject in question, therefore it means the audience must be ready to follow certain rituals. Therefore, it is very important to know how the messages in the media try to lead the audience towards a certain interpretation according to the media given. (Althusser: 1984:47-49)
2. Ien Ang stated that reception analysis tries to examine how the audience interprets the meaning given by the media. The initial assumption conveyed by Iena is that the meaning in the media is not something that cannot be of value in the message. The text medium appears only at the reception when the text is read, seen, or heard. In a sense, audiences are seen as producers of meaning, which are not only consumers of media content but they also interpret media texts in ways that are appropriate to continuous experience with certain situations. Reception analysis is not directly aimed at the person who tries to interpret a text but also the social meaning that surrounds it (Storey, 1993)
3. Antariksa, the receptionists stated that the dominant meaning given by the sender of the message cannot be ascertained what meaning will be concluded, understood, and also taken by the audience. In a sense, the audience is an active interpreter in interpreting a message. Audiences apply various kinds of social and cultural backgrounds that have existed before to interpret a message, so that audiences who have different characteristics, patterns, and ways of thinking in interpreting the same text can have very different meanings for each individual.

In this case study, the researcher uses reception analysis in which there are three types of audience positions. Stuart Hall explained that reception is how the audience decoding process occurs in the media. Stuart Hall saw that the masses decode the message conveyed through three positions. *First, dominant-hegemonic positions* occur when the messenger uses codes that are generally accepted, so that the audience will interpret and respond to the message with messages that have been generally accepted. In this case, it can be said that there is no difference in the meaning of the message from the audience to the sender of the message. *Second, negotiated position* in this position, there is no dominant interpretation. In this case it occurs when the code conveyed by the sender of the message is interpreted continuously between the two parties. The sender of the message uses a code or political belief held by the community, but when it is received by the audience it is not read in the general sense but the audience will use that belief and negotiate with the codes that the sender of the message wants to say. *Third, the interpretation of the opposition (oppositional code)* of this position is the opposite of the *hegemonic positions* because, in the first type of position the audience is given a general interpretation and only needs to be used in general, and the way of interpretation is the same as what the sender of the message wants to convey. While in this third type position, the audience will interpret differently or inversely with what the audience wants to convey. The reading of this

oppositional code will appear if the sender of the message does not use a reference to the beliefs and culture of the audience, so that the audience will use their own belief framework (Hall in Lowe and Willis, 1986: 129-138)

DISCUSSIONS

Researchers will thoroughly analyse some of IanHugen's tweets on Twitter which have a large audience of those who have almost the same background or some of them who support Ian Hugen's actions during *Speak up* and *Coming out*.

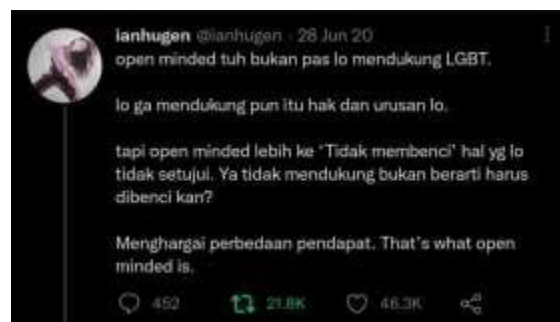
Transwomen themselves are a minority group whose existence in Indonesia, so that many Indonesians still cannot accept the existence of trans women in society. Transgender is someone who changes gender from male to female or vice versa. In this case, the grouping is Transwomen, namely those who change their orientation from male to female. Ian once said in one of his tweets that he was following his own will in the sense that he felt that the dominant hormones in his body tended to be more female. "I started to feel that I grew up as someone in the wrong body since I was

Kindergarten B." Since then he began to question his orientation which is more dominant to which gender. However, despite the people who still can't accept it, Ian is able and brave to come out in public about his identity and orientation which he usually spills through his writings on Twitter.

Through the researcher's analysis of the replies from the audience that Ian got on Twitter, it can be seen that each individual responds and accepts his existence from a different point of view. In the Theory *Encoding-Decoding* explains that there are three main types of meaning *audience* to receive and respond to text media, introduced by *Stuart Hall*, namely:

Dominant

On placement here the audience already understands or has had the same understanding and accept the meaning of the text Ian Hugen wrote. In this position, the dominant audience is more likely to respond negatively to the Tweet, namely Twitter as one of the social media that transgender people can use for Coming Out about who they are, indicating that LGBT issues, especially transgender people in Indonesia are still taboo, some of the *audience* supports it. stated that society is still not *open minded* about transgender.



Ian wrote that, "Being *open minded* is not about you having to support and accept the LGBT movement, but being *open minded* when you can respect other people's life choices without having to lead opinions." Regarding transgender people, they still haven't found a solution in any way, such as the acceptance of their sexual orientation from the surrounding community and family.

Negotiated

In this placement in *Negotiated*, the *audience* responds to the meaning of Ian Hugen's Tweet. *Audience* clearly captures the dominant code given by the sender of the message in this case Ian

Hugen, but refuses to accept to implement the message, because it adapts to a new way of thinking. Like a twitter user who thinks that Twitter media here can help or be an alternative tool for other transgender people for *Coming Out* to be socially accepted, so the desire of a transgender person to get social recognition is acceptable.



However, there was a response that Ian shared his experience too deeply which should be a private matter that cannot be shared openly with many people, because according to him this issue is a negative thing to get people's attention.

Oppositional

In placement *oppositional*, the *audience* critically rejects a message given by the message sender (Ian Hugen) regarding social media as a place for transgender people to *speak up/coming out*. This shows that the *audience* rejects the message given by the media because it is against the norms and beliefs they hold. According to one twitter user who responded to Ian Hugen's tweet, he argued that social media is not just meant to convey a message or provide entertainment, but it can be a field that can become a *boomerang* for Ian and other transgender people.

This audience reception-based research is very important because what is at the core of what is being researched is the human experience in understanding and also exploring the use of media. It can be seen how the impact, influence, and effects of the media are through the text received by the audience. In addition, research with this audience reception also show what people liked and disliked by the audience, as well as what they can receive from the meaning of the text is to be conveyed by the sender (Stokes, 2013, p.174)

CONCLUSIONS

Indonesian society is still thick with eastern culture, although some people are starting to open up to provide support for transgender rights. The results are concluded from the audience's response to the tweets that Ian Hugen conveyed on his social media platform, namely Twitter, the audience's understanding and acceptance of the existence of Transwomen based on the religious understanding and belief of the audience, the audience's knowledge of human rights who are free to make life choices and the audience. Indonesia is a country that has a lot of diversity including religious, cultural, and linguistic diversity. Indonesia is also known for its adherents of the most dominant religion, so it is not surprising that people apply norms related to Islam. The term transgender or transwoman also has a significant social connotation, if previously they had a call that seemed ruder and low, namely "sissy". Of course, the very harsh mention of the word "sissy" is considered an act of harassment to the minority group in the gender crisis.

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Through this research with reception analysis by Stuart Hall, researchers get detailed conclusions regarding various kinds of audience responses to text messages conveyed by Ian Hugen through his social media platforms. With the attached division, there are 3 types of audience positions, namely Dominant, Hegemony, and also Opposition. The researcher hopes that by analyzing this case study, readers can find useful new things in the case of social acceptance of transgender people and develop further related to mass communication on gender.

From the third meaning in sensing the presence of an audience Transgender people on social media experience structured dynamics from how their audience accepts them through their understanding of how to adjust their mind-set, then returns to a deep understanding of beliefs and also their religion, then a deep understanding of one's life choices regarding human rights.

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