

## TWITTER: Expressing Hate Speech Behind Tweeting

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**Abstract.** This study explores on how Indonesian people use Twitter. Only one hundred and forty (in one tweet) characters are able to create unlimited tweets expressing an agenda, Twitter has a role as canalization of desire that their users cannot devote in offline world. This study will focus on the prosumption practice toward the use of Twitter behind tweeting to spread a variety of opinions, including hate speech, because the characters of cyberspace allow the formation of habitus toward virtual users that they can devote freely a certain emotion in cyberspace. This study critically analyzes the prosumption practices of creating hate speech behind tweeting. This study also discusses on how Twitter's characters are able to express hate speech by the users. The interaction of users to use Twitter in expressing hate speech has played a role on how the users construct the world.

**Keywords:** Habitus; Hate Speech; Prosumption; Twitter

**Abstrak.** Studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana orang Indonesia menggunakan Twitter. Hanya seratus empat puluh (dalam satu tweet) karakter yang mampu membuat tweet tak terbatas yang mengekspresikan agenda, Twitter memiliki peran sebagai kanalisasi keinginan yang tidak dapat digunakan pengguna mereka di dunia offline. Studi ini akan fokus pada praktik produksi terhadap penggunaan Twitter di balik tweeting untuk menyebarkan berbagai pendapat, termasuk pidato kebencian, karena karakter dunia maya memungkinkan pembentukan habitus terhadap pengguna virtual bahwa mereka dapat mencurahkan dengan bebas emosi tertentu di dunia maya. Penelitian ini secara kritis menganalisis praktik produksi menciptakan pidato kebencian di balik tweeting. Studi ini juga membahas tentang bagaimana karakter Twitter mampu mengekspresikan pidato kebencian oleh pengguna. Interaksi pengguna untuk menggunakan Twitter dalam mengekspresikan pidato kebencian telah memainkan peran pada bagaimana pengguna membangun dunia.

**Kata kunci:** Habitus, Kebencian, Prosumption, Tweet

### INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, there are some popular social media and the most used social media in Indonesia are Facebook and Twitter. Indonesia is in number five in the world

most Twitter users. As a social media, Twitter is an application which based on Web 2.0 to provide online facilities, such as social networks, online communities, production and sharing of information together, content production, and

consumption from users. Web 2.0 facilitates users to connect each other around the world more easily and accessible.

However, in relation between users, it is often perceived as a platform that seems to make all contents are owned by users privately, whereas their contents are can be accessible to public (Hassan, 2012). Our content which we have uploaded or tweet as if it is our private content, but in practice, that content can be accessed by other users. This can be lead to a new problem, and it can be getting worse. Our behavior that we have been doing in the private space, then unconsciously it can be accessed, seen, and read by others freely. Any problem can arise when our online behavior that we think it is not a problem, but it can be interpreted differently by others. Sometimes it triggers a conflict. By considering this condition, Twitter and its users becomes an interesting space to put in this study and criticize more about hate speech.

Hate speech itself can be described as any utterance that tries to attack others based on the certain identity, whether from race, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other moral characteristics. Yet, in this understanding, as Caleb Young (2011) argues that it can be a problematic way, because it can collide with other practices under the term, freedom of speech. For example, when a person exposes his or her opinion about a particular sexual orientation, he or she may be accused to do hate speech when the opinion is not positive.

Besides that, the users are not only producing text or consuming text alone, but it is a form of prosumption (it stands for production and consumption). This term calls a process that involves production and consumption. Prosumption is often shown when the consumer is involved in producing some or all of the things that they or other consumers consume (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010, in Denegri-Knott and Zwick, 2012: 2). An example on Twitter is when someone uploads a status and enjoys other status

which gets many likes or Retweets. That is why, users not only enjoy the behavior on the internet from what they tweet, but also what they read.

The concept of prosumption is useful for understanding the user's practices related to hate speech. Users may not only produce hate speech, but also, they can enjoy hate speech from tweets which stream online in their account's line. That is why, the analysis about hate speech is not only seen from what they tweet, but also their interpretation of what they have read.

That is why we choose Twitter as our focus than Facebook on this presentation, because the use of twitter is easier than Facebook. We can tweet something or anything in our mind in every hour, every minute or even second. Not only that, we can also enjoy other tweets in our timeline. Just scroll down for updating tweets from what we follow. This condition, it makes us keep updated with other twitter users when we use our smartphone. These tweets can shape our mind after we have read some tweets in our smartphone. We try to analyze on how the twitter users' prosumption in expressing and constructing hate speech through the diversity of their behavior in Indonesia, especially related to freedom of speech.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this study, for the footsteps, we put critical theory of technology (CTT) from Bakardjieva. CTT sees that internet technology can be used by certain parties/people to create and perpetuate a dominance. But on the other hand, internet technology can also be used to destabilize certain values (Bakardjieva, 2005: 17). Internet technology allows the user to create a new social practice and the structure of new social relation or perpetuate the existing structures. With this viewpoint, we are trying to explore on how users interpret hate

speech in their practice in using Twitter in daily activities.

Kozinets (2010) states that the selection of subjects and data in netnography should be accustomed with the situation when answering interview questions. Therefore, the subjects who will be interviewed are chosen from first observation. Then, we choose some subjects by considering their characteristics and user's identity that can enrich the data. We have chosen some subjects for this study. This study is about trying to understand people in their live experiences. So, we have conducted a small research to interview some respondents individually with six people in using Twitter and what they interpret about hate speech. They are @iyutVB (Iyut) was chosen because he is a very active labor activist on Twitter, especially regarding national politics issues, @irdun (Irdun) and @\_fersap (fersap) are selected because of their different views about Jakarta election, @Endh\_Lrasati (Endh) is chosen because of her religious identity and diversity of her tweets, @aviananda (Aviananda) account was chosen because he actively used twitter to tweet about a topic (what he learned in his university) in a sequence tweets with one hastag (kultweet), and @nelifarhati (Nelifarhati) is chosen as a user who only enjoys twitter that she follows and tends to avoid any intrigue with other users.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **Construction of Hate Speech**

For the footstep, we use the assumption that different subjects have different experiences in engaging with technology. Our subjects also have their own personal experience with Twitter. One of the subject like Endh treats Twitter same with Facebook. She has same friends in any social media. The difference is about platform, she uses twitter to get particular

interesting information. Meanwhile other subjects like Iyut, Irdun, and Fersap treat Twitter differently with other social media. They have different friends in twitter. As a microblog, they treat Twitter as a free cyberspace, so they can tweet anything that they like. Twitters users don't necessary know or ever met with their Twitter "friends". We can see that Twitter platform support this. Users do not need to confirm to be other's friend. We just need to follow to get the recent tweets from followed users. They have the opportunity to follow famous people for instant, why do have to follow our aunt and teachers when we can follow K-Pop star? That is why, some define Twitter as social media and not social network. It is different when they use Facebook for the first time. They added their parents, teachers, and some random Facebook users, because they went to the same school. It affects to users activity. Users like Irdun, IyutVB and Fersap feel freer in Twitter than other social media platform, because its selective circle in twitter. They only be friends with someone they like, or have interested with.

For these subjects, twitter is a free space, so they can practice differently than Facebook, for example. They're tweeting, retweeting, following, and liking what they like, what they want. IyutVb and Fersap for example, they enjoy twitwar, unlike other subjects. Sometimes they join the twitwar to convey they personel opinion. They can do this because they feel safer. First, rarely important person in their offline world know its activities. Second, if there is any, it is only the closed users whom have same interest. Meanwhile other subjects choose to avoid twitwar. Endh and Nelifarhati admit that they usually avoid twitwar, because it is pointless. Yet, Endh's sometimes enjoys how public bully some local public figures. She knows that it is wrong and against her religion's value, but she admits that sometimes, she cannot resist. It is interesting if we see her background. She was studied

in Islamic Boarding School, and wears hijab and veil till now. She joins feminist movement in college, but she has a relationship with man. She argues that the stereotypes about hijab and veil is silly and she used to it. She feels like it is just fashion and she is like any other young girl, “girls just want to have fun.” But she is using twitter mostly for information, whether it is music or films. Other subject, Aviananda also avoid twitwar. He uses twitter, besides for information, also for sharing information via series of tweet, or in Indonesian called *kultwit* (Indonesian term). Irdun admits that he does not really enjoy twitwar, but sometimes he pays attention for certain twitwar that suit for his interest.

All of them have different interpretations and definitions about hate speech. Twitter itself defines hate speech as any content that might be used to instigate and provoke other individuals, organization, or group based on their race, ethnicity, country, a skin colour, religion, or other status that related with certain laws (Twitter, 2017). Hate speech can be described as any utterance that tries to attack others based on the certain identity, whether from race, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other moral characteristics (Young, 2011). We need to underline that all of subjects reject hate speech. Yet, a problem arises when they define the hate speech. One subject, Fersap defines hate speech as any tweet that might threat others’ safety. Nevertheless, he considers any tweet that criticize others group, religion, race, or ethnicity is not hate speech if it is based on fact, even if it uses harsh words. For the example, if someone tweets that “Islam is terrorist”, this is not hate speech, because based on fact ISIS or another terrorist group are claimed to be Islam. This definition gives an effect on how he perceives and expresses tweets. Because in the case of hate speech, the definition is not only based on the producer, but also the object of speech, and implication. Other subject, Irdun,

Nelifarhati, and Aviananda perceive that hate speech as any content that attacks other users based on their ethnicity, race, religion, or other categorization. Iyut restricts the definition of hate speech based on the implication. If a tweet has negative implication for the society, then it is wrong. Regarding this various definition, all of subjects think that hate speech need to be limited and regulated, for the sake of society. Some subjects also add that there’s no proper regulation in Indonesia about hate speech. There is the law no 11 of 2008 in Indonesia about Electronic Information and Transactions (especially for article 27 verse 3) that regulate hate speech, but IyutVb, Aviananda, and Fersap argue that this laws is ambiguous.

*“Any Person who knowingly and without authority distributes and/or transmits and/or causes to be accessible Electronic Information and/or Electronic Documents with contents of affronts and/or defamation” (Law no 11 of 2008, article 27 verse 3).*

Other subject, Nelifarhati perceives that this law is class biased. Its practice always relates with power relation. For the example, in 2014, woman student in Yogyakarta was prosecuted, because she criticized the city with harsh word. In this case, how does the city feel offended? Who have the right to represent the city? Other recently case is religion defamation by Mayor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama. Both cases became bigger, because it was blown up by media and both of the text producers were minority in that context, Basuki is minority in religion and ethnicity, while the girl is not local in Yogyakarta.

Subjects, like Fersap and Iyutbv, also argue that the uses of hate speech are really subjective. Maybe they perceive that their tweet do not contain hate speech, but others might not think so and it is problematic for them as well. Aviananda sees that recent definition of hate speech, in Indonesian context, is getting broader. We can’t criticize

freely, without any worried for being prosecuted, even if we criticize with polite words. Fersap and IyutVb, who enjoys and sometimes involves in tweetwar, also feel that hate speech definition becomes broader and the use of the law becomes more sensitive recently, unlike some past years when they did tweetwar, with various use of words. In recent situation, any dissent on twitter could be accused as hate speech.

### **Strategizing Hate Speech**

On Twitter, subjects do not only produce text, but also consume text. In the context of hate speech, they might reject these practices, but sometimes they consume it. For the example, IyutVb and Fersap enjoy tweetwar which sometimes it contains hate speech. They also sometimes respond other tweets with harsh words. All of subjects claimed they had never posted tweet that contained hate speech. Yet, we have to remember that they have their own definition and interpretation of hate speech. When Fersap sarcastically is producing tweets that insinuate certain group, some users may consider it as hate speech. But he denies that his tweets are included as hate speech, because it is based on fact and does not harm any people.

While other subject maybe does not produce hate speech, technically, but in the context of presumption, they might have a role in expressing the idea. Like Irdun for instant, he admits that he does not support any group in recent Jakarta electoral dissent, but he agrees that muslim have to choose muslim leader, because his religion said so. But when I asked that what is his opinion about the floating discourse that tries to justify muslim who do not choose muslim leader as infidel, he answered with “no comment”. Some practices maybe based on religion or personal value, but sometimes it might preserve other group’s right, like any other discourse towards LGBT community or so.

One subject, Iyutvb, admits that he sometimes produces tweets that is on the borderline of the definition of hate speech. He sometimes attacks another group harshly. In the dissent of Jakarta electoral on 2017, he usually mocks Ahok’s supporters. He does this, because he likes debating with others, and one strategy to invite other people is with provocative message. He also uses provocative message to gain attention from public. He needs to get the attention to make public discourse. He is familiar with this strategy from his capacity of labor activist and advocates. He realizes that workers, or himself on twitter, always related with power relation. They only get the attention when they destabilize dominant groups, with provoking their value, their opinion, or their belief. That is why he produces provocative tweet or discourse on Twitter. Sometimes, he attacks popular common belief, challenging religion discursive, or defaming certain social class.

Recently, all the users worry about the signification of law in Indonesia. They worry that their activities somehow could outrage some groups or individuals and being accused as hate speech. Eventually they try to discipline themselves. They usually re-read their tweet before publishing it, they always consider first, whether it might be potential to be accused as hate speech or not. Users like Fersap or Iyutvb admitted that their past tweets could be accused as hate speech in the recent moment in Indonesia. It becomes problematic, because sometimes they reluctant to criticize dominant group or government, because of the implication of the law no 11 of 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions. It affects on how they express on twitter. They also feel new trend on Twitter, that certain controversial tweet gets public attention, and the producers are bullied by public. They perceived twitter as new space and new reality to practice and express certain things, including hate speech. But recently they feel that Twitter is not that safe anymore,

because of the implication and normalization. They discipline themselves, so they can suit on the recent practice value on Twitter. IyutVb, for the example never tweets provocatively with mentioning certain subjects. He also reluctant explicitly attacks someone's religion. Hate speech is wrong when it is limiting and harming other people. Based on this recent situation in Indonesia, the topic of hate speech becomes problematic because it might be affecting on how people express themselves in cyberspace, especially in Twitter, Media attempting to dismantle ideological values conveyed (Pawito, 2014).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can see that some subjects have different interpretations about hate speech. This definition is often drawn to the border that makes subjects' behavior are not included as hate speech category or we can say that it is a subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, some subjects can express a discourse that can be included as hate speech category based on other people who become the object of discourse.

Some research subjects play text related to hate speech on Twitter as discourse strategies that support their interest. Hate speech becomes a strategy that cannot be separated from the battle logic of discourse on Twitter. However, the subjects, in this study, also restrict their behavior in order not to collide the law (rules) that can be something bad for them. In this case, there is a normalization of the definition and the presumption of hate speech, related to the rules and habitus of each user. We see that in another occasion, it can be explored related to the deeper themes of user's habitus and categories of user who use pseudonymous and anonymous twitter account(s).

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