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5 BEHIND-THE-SCENES MASKS: FACTORS WHICH ENCOURAGES USERS TO FAKE ACCOUNTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA X

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the factors that encourage the use of fake accounts on social media X (Twitter) as part of digital social interaction practices. The research employs a descriptive quantitative approach, with data collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire distributed to active users who have used anonymous accounts. The results indicate that fake account usage is influenced by the need for security, the desire for freer self-expression, and the influence of digital environments where such practices are considered normal. Anonymous accounts are utilized to avoid social judgment, maintain real-life relationships, and provide alternative spaces for sharing personal experiences. These findings suggest that anonymity is not merely a technical condition but a social strategy for managing digital identity and adapting to the dynamics of online interaction.
Keyword: Anonymity, Digital Identity, Fake Account

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis faktor-faktor yang mendorong penggunaan fake account di media sosial X (Twitter) sebagai bagian dari praktik interaksi sosial digital. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kuantitatif deskriptif dengan pengumpulan data melalui kuesioner berbasis skala Likert kepada pengguna aktif yang pernah atau sedang menggunakan akun anonim. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan fake account dipengaruhi oleh kebutuhan akan rasa aman, keinginan untuk mengekspresikan diri secara lebih bebas, serta pengaruh lingkungan digital yang menganggap praktik tersebut sebagai hal yang wajar. Akun anonim dimanfaatkan untuk menghindari penilaian sosial, menjaga relasi di kehidupan nyata, serta menyediakan ruang alternatif untuk menyampaikan pengalaman pribadi. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa anonimitas merupakan strategi sosial dalam mengelola identitas digital dan beradaptasi dengan dinamika interaksi di media sosial.
Kata Kunci: Anonimitas Digital, Fake Account, Identitas Digital

I. PENDAHULUAN

The development of information and communication technology has brought fundamental changes in the social interaction patterns of society, where interactions that were

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previously dominated by face-to-face meetings are now increasingly shifting to the digital space through various social media platforms. One of the platforms that is quite dominant in shaping digital interaction spaces is X (Twitter), which allows users to communicate quickly, openly, and interactively through features such as threads, replies, and retweets, thus creating a dynamic and participatory discussion space. In this context, social media not only serves as a means of information exchange, but also as a social arena where individuals can build relationships, negotiate identities, and express themselves more broadly. Along with the development of the practice of digital interaction, the phenomenon of using fake accounts or anonymous accounts, namely accounts that do not represent the real identity of their users. Anonymity in the digital space provides an opportunity for individuals to separate their personal identity from their online activities, allowing them to participate in social interactions without being tied to the norms, expectations, or social pressures inherent in their original identity. Research shows that anonymity is related to increased self-disclosure, where individuals tend to be more courageous to express their personal feelings and experiences when their identity is not clearly known (Pramesti & Dewi, 2022).

Similar findings also show that anonymity is related to the courage of individuals to express opinions in the digital space due to the reduction of direct social control (Nugrahani, 2021). In addition, the use of anonymous accounts is also understood as a form of privacy management strategy, where individuals selectively control information shared in online interactions (Mu'alifah & Sumardjijati, 2022). Further, other research shows that social media users often create other identities through pseudonymous accounts to customize the way they interact with different situations or environments (Cahyani et al., 2022). In fact, the alter account phenomenon shows that anonymous accounts are used as a space for their own expression to meet needs such as emotional comfort, freedom of opinion, and avoiding social judgments (Aristyawati et al., 2023).

However, these studies tend to focus on the impact of anonymity on user behavior, such as self-openness and social interaction patterns, so they have not in-depth examined the factors behind individuals creating fake accounts as a deliberate social practice. Therefore, there is still a research gap in understanding anonymity not only as a condition, but as a social choice influenced by various factors. Thus, this study aims to analyze the factors that encourage users to create fake accounts on social media X (Twitter), so that it can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the construction of digital identity and the dynamics of social interaction in the digital space.

II. THEORETICAL STUDIES

The dramaturgical theory put forward by Goffman (1959) sees social life as a performance, in which individuals play the role of actors who present themselves in the presence of others. In this process, individuals not only act spontaneously, but also regulate how they want to be seen by the audience. Goffman divides the interaction space into two, namely the front *stage* and the back stage . The front stage is a situation where individuals present themselves according to social norms and expectations, while the back stage becomes a freer space to express themselves. In social media, the main account can be understood as a front stage because it is connected to the original identity and known audience, so users tend to maintain their self-image. Meanwhile, *fake accounts* are a freer space for individuals to express their thoughts, feelings, or experiences without thinking too much about social judgment, which shows that there is impression management in digital interactions (Cahyani et al., 2022).

User behavior in the digital space can also be explained through the concept *of Online Disinhibition Effect*, which is the tendency of individuals to be more open and brave when interacting online than in person. This condition is affected by anonymity, the absence of physical contact, and reduced social control, so that individuals feel safer to express their thoughts and feelings. In the use of *fake accounts*, this condition makes individuals more free to express opinions, share personal experiences, and express emotions without fear of social judgment. High anonymity encourages social media users' openness and reduces barriers to interaction (Hanifah & Rozi, 2022).

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive type of research. The quantitative approach was chosen because this study aims to obtain an empirical picture of the factors behind individuals in creating fake accounts on social media X (Twitter) through data that can be measured numerically. This approach allows the research team to present findings in an objective, systematic, and structured manner based on the measurement results of the respondents. Meanwhile, this type of descriptive research is used because this research focuses on trying to describe social phenomena that occur, especially related to the reasons for social media users to create anonymous accounts, without testing the cause-and-effect relationship between variables. Thus, this study is directed to provide a comprehensive description of the factors that encourage the use of fake accounts as part of social interaction practices in the digital space. The data collection technique in this study was carried out through the distribution of questionnaires and literature studies. The questionnaire is used as

the main instrument to obtain primary data from respondents who are active users of social media X (Twitter), especially those who have used or are using *fake accounts*. The questionnaire instrument was prepared in the form of a closed statement using the Likert scale to measure the level of respondents' approval of a number of research indicators, such as privacy needs, freedom of expression, efforts to avoid social judgment, emotional comfort, and digital identity management strategies. The distribution of the questionnaire was carried out online through digital platforms such as Google Form, making it easier for the research team to reach respondents more widely and efficiently according to the characteristics of the research object in the social media environment.

The sampling technique in this study uses non-probability sampling with the purposive sampling method. This technique was chosen because not all social media users X have experience in using fake accounts, so the research team set certain criteria for respondents to be sampled. These criteria include active social media user X who has used or is using an anonymous account and is willing to fill out a questionnaire voluntarily. Purposively sample selection is assessed in accordance with the research objectives because it allows for more relevant and specific data to be obtained according to the phenomenon being studied.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

Based on the data obtained, the respondents' reasons for creating and *using fake accounts* on social media X do not stand alone, but are influenced by several interrelated factors. The most dominant factor is the need for a sense of security. Most respondents feel more comfortable using anonymous accounts because they don't have to be recognized by people in their social circles. That way, they can avoid social judgments, minimize potential conflicts, and maintain relationships in real life, both in friendships, campus environments, and work. This suggests that the existence of a known audience in the main account quite influences the way individuals interact on social media. In addition, fake accounts are also used as a space to express themselves more freely. Respondents use it to express grievances, share personal experiences, and discuss topics that are considered sensitive. They feel more comfortable because they don't have to think too much about their self-image or how they will be perceived by others. Not only that, the use of anonymous accounts is also influenced by the evolving digital environment. Some respondents consider that fake accounts have become common, especially among young people. The majority of respondents in the age range of 17-23 years also showed a tendency to be more flexible in separating online and offline identities, as well as being more aware of the consequences of digital footprints. This study shows that the use of

fake accounts is more influenced by the need for a sense of security, the desire to express more freely, and adjustments to habits that develop in the digital environment. These findings also show that social media is not completely a free space, because in it there is still a social judgment felt by users.

The need for a sense of security felt by respondents can be understood as a response to social pressure in digital media. When individuals are aware that their audience is people they know, they tend to be more careful in their actions and sharing. Situations like this have prompted the emergence of the option to use anonymous accounts as a way to avoid negative judgments or potential conflicts. This is in line with Setiawati and Agustini (2022) who emphasized the role of social pressure in the use of anonymous accounts. In addition, Simanjuntak and Putri (2023) also show that social anxiety is related to the tendency of individuals to use alternative accounts, including as a form of self-protection in the digital space.

On the other hand, the use of *fake accounts* is also related to the need to have a more free space for expression. On the main account, the inherent identity often makes individuals feel the need to maintain their self-image, so not everything can be conveyed openly. Meanwhile, in an anonymous condition, the restrictions feel looser. This is what makes respondents feel more comfortable sharing personal experiences or expressing emotions. In fact, in some cases, anonymity actually makes them more courageous to come forward. These findings are in line with Anggoro and Santosa (2024), and reinforced by Diva and Indriastuti (2024) who show that alternative accounts, such as fan accounts, are often used as a safer space for *self-disclosure.*

If viewed more broadly, the increasingly common use of fake accounts also shows the influence of digital culture itself. When this practice is considered common in certain environments, individuals tend to use it as part of an established way of interacting. This is in line with the research of Kinanti and Achmad (2025). In addition, Racmadhany, Poerana, and Teguh (2024) also found that the use of cyber accounts in adolescents is not only driven by personal needs, but also because of the influence of the digital social environment that makes the practice feel natural. This phenomenon can also be seen as a way for the younger generation to manage their digital identity. They don't just display one identity, but can adjust the way they present themselves depending on the situation and the audience they are facing. In this context, *fake accounts* become a kind of "second space" that helps them limit what is personal and what is worth displaying in public spaces. This is in line with Pramudya, Sujarwo, and Safitri (2025) who stated that digital identity is dynamic and can change according to the context. Overall, the use of fake accounts cannot only be seen as an attempt to hide identity. More than that, it is

a way for individuals to adapt to social pressures in digital media, maintain relationships, while still having space to express themselves.

V. CONCLUSION

The use of *fake accounts* on social media X shows that anonymity is not just a technical choice, but a social strategy that individuals consciously use to deal with the complexity of interactions in the digital space. The need for a sense of security, the desire to express oneself more freely, and the influence of norms in the digital environment are the main interrelated factors in driving this practice. Through anonymous accounts, users can avoid social judgments, minimize potential conflicts, and maintain real-life relationships without having to completely limit self-expression. In addition, this phenomenon also reflects the ability of individuals, especially the younger generation, to manage digital identities flexibly by separating public and private spaces. Thus, *fake accounts* can be understood as a form of adaptation as well as identity negotiation in the face of social pressure in digital media. This phenomenon shows the importance of digital literacy so that individuals are able to use anonymity wisely without neglecting social responsibility in interacting in online spaces.

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