







Hate Speech in *Gus Miftah* Instagram Comment Section: An Ice Tea Seller Case Study

Naomi Sephania Br Sirait^{*1} , Raysa Purba² , Mega Uli Arta Silitonga³ , Dian Marisha Putri⁴ 

^{1,2,3,4} Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: dian.marisha@usu.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 11 Dec 2024

Revised 06 Feb 2025

Accepted 07 Feb 2025

Available online

<https://talenta.usu.ac.id/lingtersa/index>

E-ISSN: 2964-1713

P-ISSN: 2775-5622

ABSTRACT

The purposes of this research are to find the hate speech found in Islamic preacher Gus Miftah's Instagram account during the iced tea seller controversy. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. The data was collected manually from Instagram comments related to a viral incident involving Gus Miftah, ensuring the selection of comments that exhibited clear hostility or aggression. Using the theory for classifying hate speech developed by (Mondal et al., 2017) and the impoliteness strategies developed by (Culpeper's, 2015), this study distinguishes six categories of hate speech: religion (41.9%), behavior (27.5%), physical (25.06%), class (4.35%), disability (1.08%), and gender (0.2%). Furthermore, bald-on-record impoliteness was the most often used strategy (45.14%), indicating users' direct animosity. The study offers a detailed understanding of the rhetorical and ideological foundations of hate speech and contributes new insights to hate speech studies by placing the analysis within the cultural and religious context of Indonesia.

Keyword: Hate Speech, Gus Miftah, Instagram

ABSTRAK

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menemukan ujaran kebencian yang terdapat pada akun Instagram pendakwah Gus Miftah saat kontroversi penjual es teh. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Data dikumpulkan secara manual dari komentar Instagram terkait insiden viral yang melibatkan Gus Miftah, sehingga memastikan pemilihan komentar yang jelas-jelas menunjukkan permusuhan atau agresi. Dengan menggunakan teori pengklasifikasian ujaran kebencian yang dikembangkan oleh (Mondal et al., 2017) dan strategi ketidaksopanan yang dikembangkan oleh (Culpeper's, 2015), penelitian ini membedakan enam kategori ujaran kebencian: agama (41,9%), perilaku (27,5%), fisik (25,06%), kelas (4,35%), disabilitas (1,08%), dan gender (0,2%). Selain itu, ketidaksopanan yang terang-terangan adalah strategi yang paling sering digunakan (45,14%), yang menunjukkan permusuhan langsung dari pengguna. Studi ini menawarkan pemahaman rinci tentang landasan retorik dan ideologis dari ujaran kebencian dan memberikan kontribusi wawasan baru terhadap studi ujaran kebencian dengan menempatkan analisisnya dalam konteks budaya dan agama di Indonesia.

Keyword: Ujaran Kebencian, Gus Miftah, Instagram



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International.
<http://doi.org/10.26594/register.v6i1.idarticle>

1. Introduction

Hate speech generally refers to any communication that attacks people based on traits like race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. Social media becomes an essential platform for communication, allowing people to share ideas, opinions, and experiences freely. However, this openness often leads to negative interactions, including the spread of hate speech. It has become a serious problem on social media because it can lead to violence, discrimination, and social conflict. The reason hate speech spreads easily online

are the anonymity and wide audience these platforms provide. Research shows that hate speech often increases during politically sensitive times, like elections, when tensions are high. However, identifying hate speech is challenging because people interpret statements differently, and there is no clear universal definition. Even experts sometimes disagree on what qualifies as hate speech, making it difficult for automated systems to detect it (MacAvaney et al., 2019).

Hate speech on social media has become a pervasive issue that appears in various forms, including offensive comments, direct messages, and harmful posts. For example, public figures or influencers often receive hateful comments targeting their appearance or identity. Some users also spread false information or use offensive hashtags to incite hatred against certain groups. In addition, hate speech through private messages or comment sections can lead to serious emotional distress. Troll accounts and harmful memes are also commonly used to spread negativity and reinforce harmful stereotypes. These forms of hate speech not only harm individuals but also contribute to a toxic online environment.

Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms in Indonesia. The platform's extensive reach and diverse user base make it a significant channel for communication, marketing, and social interaction. As of early 2024, Indonesia had approximately 100.9 million Instagram users, accounting for about 36.2% of the country's population (Kemp. S., 2024). The user base is predominantly female, comprising 54.2% of users, while males make up 45.8% (Statista, 2024). Monitoring conducted from September 2023 to January 2024 revealed that hate speech appeared most frequently on Twitter (51.2%), followed by Facebook (45.15%), and Instagram (3.34%) (Monash University, 2024). Based on these data, Instagram is ranked third with the highest hate speech in Indonesia.

Gus Miftah, a prominent Islamic preacher in Indonesia, serves as a case study for understanding the dynamics of online hate speech. His recent controversy involving derogatory remarks about an iced tea seller provoked public backlash, flooding his Instagram comment section with polarizing and hateful reactions. This aligns with the findings of (Magu et al., 2017), who argue that controversial figures often become lightning rods for hate speech, which exploits digital platforms to engage in identity-based attacks and impoliteness strategies. The phenomenon of hate speech in Gus Miftah's Instagram comments section regarding the iced tea seller case does not only reflect individual problems, but is also part of the challenges faced by society in dealing with the phenomenon of online interaction.

This study employed (Mondal et al., 2017) framework to classify hate speech into specific categories and (Culpeper's, 2015) theory to analyze impoliteness strategies, such as bald-on-record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, and mock impoliteness. These frameworks allow for a systematic examination of the rhetorical and ideological underpinnings of hate speech in Gus Miftah's Instagram comment section.

Several studies have analyzed hate speech on social media, focusing on its forms, strategies, and broader implications. (Fauzi, W., & Harahap, N., 2024) conducted a descriptive-analytic qualitative study to investigate hate speech targeting Indonesian presidential candidates on Twitter and Instagram. They highlighted how political tensions fuel hate speech and the importance of user awareness regarding legal consequences. Similarly, (Anissa, D., & Rosita, N., 2023) examined hate speech in Denise Chariesta's Instagram comments, using Mondal et al.'s (2017) categories and Culpeper's (2015) impoliteness strategies. Their findings revealed behavior-based hate speech and bald-on-record impoliteness as the most common. (Amalia, K., & Nugraha, D. N., 2023) explored hate speech in Lucas's Instagram comments, identifying six types of hate speech, such as provoking, blasphemy, and defamation. This study also emphasized the harmful social consequences of online hostility and the need for collective efforts to promote respect and equality on digital platforms.

From the previous studies above, research about hate speech based on a case study has never been conducted before. Therefore, researchers want to find the most and least used categories of hate speech using Gus Miftah's Instagram comments column as data. In the digital era, communication is increasingly open and widespread, handling hate speech is becoming increasingly urgent and requires a comprehensive approach from various parties. By examining this phenomenon, this research contributes to a better understanding of hate speech on social media.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze hate speech in the comment section of Gus Miftah's Instagram account, specifically focusing on a post dated November 16, 2024. The data was collected manually from comments related to a viral incident involving Gus Miftah, ensuring the selection of comments that exhibited clear hostility or aggression. The analysis used Mondal et al.'s (2017) framework, which categorizes hate speech into areas such as religion, gender, and ethnicity, alongside Culpeper's (2015) impoliteness strategies to identify and interpret rhetorical patterns, including bald-on-record, positive, negative, and mock impoliteness. To maintain ethical standards, all comments were anonymized, and personally identifiable information was excluded. This study is limited to this specific incident and cultural context, which may not generalize to broader hate speech phenomena on Gus Miftah's Instagram. However, it provides valuable insights into the dynamics of digital hostility and its manifestations in Indonesia's religious and cultural landscape. By applying theoretical frameworks to real-world social media data, this research contributes to understanding how hate speech unfolds within localized online spaces.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Research Finding

There were 367 hate speech comments found from one of Gus Miftah's Instagram post comments on November 16th, 2024. After the writer found the data, the writer divided the data into types of hate speech in the table below:

Table 1. Types of Hate Speech

Types of Hate Speech	Frequency	Percentage
Religion	153	41,9%
Behavior	101	27,5%
Physical	92	25,06%
Class	16	4,35%
Disability	4	1,08%
Gender	1	0,2%
Total	367	100%

Based on the table above, the type of hate speech that was mostly used by the people who commented on Gus Miftah's Instagram post was religion with 153 comments (41,9%). The least type of hate speech used by the people who commented on Gus Miftah's Instagram post was gender with 1 comment (0,2%). Race, sexual orientation, and ethnicity were the types of hate speech that could not be found in Gus Miftah's Instagram post.

a. Religion

When hate speech utterances contain actions intended to offend other religions, they might be classified as of this type (Anissa, D., & Rosita, N., 2023).

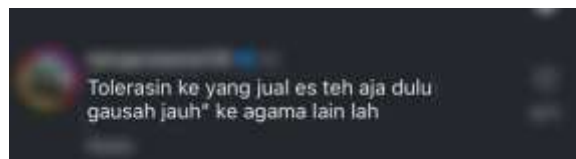


Figure 1. Religion

Translation: “Tolerance is the one who sells the iced tea first, you don’t need to go far to another religion.”

The datum above is classified into the religious types of hate speech because the hater commented about Gus Miftah who promoted the tolerance act to other religions but Gus Miftah could not respect the iced tea seller who has the same religion as him.

b. Behavior

When hate speech utterances contain actions or behaviors intended to offend others, they might be classified as of this type (Anissa, D., & Rosita, N., 2023).

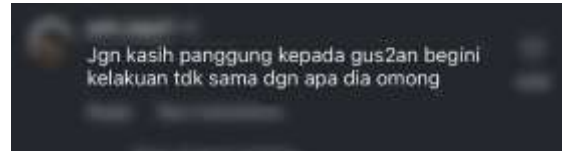


Figure 2. Behavior

Translation: “Don’t give attention to this kind of ‘Gus’ his behavior was the opposite of what he said.”

The datum above is classified into the behavior types of hate speech because the hater commented that Gus Miftah’s behavior was not the same as what he said to the public.

c. Physical

The types of hate speech statements fall under this category when they use someone's physical attributes or body parts to offend others (Anissa, D., & Rosita, N., 2023).

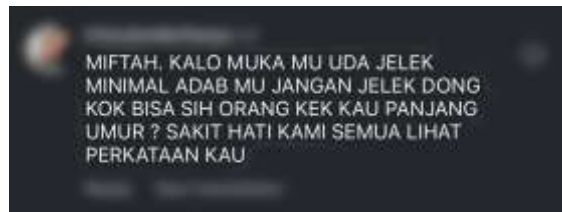


Figure 3. Physical

Translation: “Miftah, your face was already ugly, at least your attitude should not be ugly as well. How could a person like you have a long age? Our hearts hurt because of what you said.”

The datum above is classified into the physical types of hate speech because the hater commented that Gus Miftah already had an ugly face, so at least his attitude should not be ugly as well. The hater said something about Gus Miftah’s face which is the part of his body or his physical appearance.

d. Class

When someone's position or class is used to offend others, hate speech utterances might be classified as of this type (Anissa, D., & Rosita, N., 2023).

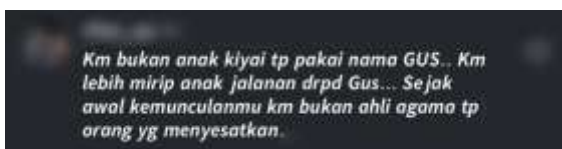


Figure 4. Class

Translation: “You’re not the son of Kiyai but you used the name Gus. You look more like a street child than Gus. From the first time of your appearance, you were not the religious expert but you were the person who misguide others.”

The datum above is classified into class types of hate speech because the hater commented that Gus Miftah looks more like a street child than Gus. This comment is classified into the class types of hate speech because, in society, a street child class is lower than ‘Gus’ or the son of Kiyai.

e. Disability

When hate speech utterances discuss someone's diseases or incapacity to offend others, they might be classified as of this type (Anissa, D., & Rosita, N., 2023).



Figure 5. Disability

Translation: “Tolerance you blind, Miftah you dog.”

The datum above classified into disability types of hate speech because the hater commented something about being blind. He said that Gus Miftah must be blind to think that his action was an act of tolerance.

f. Gender

When someone's gender is used to offend others, hate speech statements might be classified as of this type (Anissa, D., & Rosita, N., 2023).

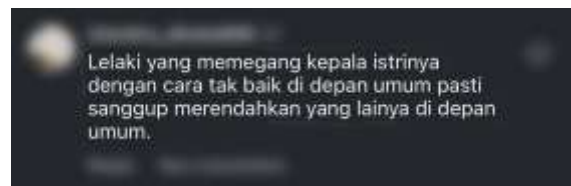


Figure 6. Gender

Translation: “A man who disrespectfully held his wife’s head in front of the public must be able to disrespect other people in front of the public as well.”

The datum above was classified into gender types of hate speech because the hater mentioned the gender of Gus Miftah in the comment to judge Gus Miftah’s attitude.

Table 2. Strategies of Hate Speech

Strategies of Hate Speech	Frequency	Percentage
Bald-on Record Impoliteness	166	45,14%
Positive Impoliteness	57	15,5%
Negative Impoliteness	12	3,2%
Off-record Impoliteness	8	2,28%
Withhold Impoliteness	112	30,58%
Sarcasm/Mock Politeness	12	3,3%
Total	367	100%

Based on the table above, it can be seen that strategy of hate speech that was mostly used by haters on Gus Miftah's Instagram comments is bald on record impoliteness with 166 comments (45,14,29%), then followed by withhold impoliteness with 112 comments (30,58%).

a. Bald-on Record Impoliteness

Bald on record is supposedly performed in a simple and straightforward way in situations where face threat is minimal (Culpeper, 2011).

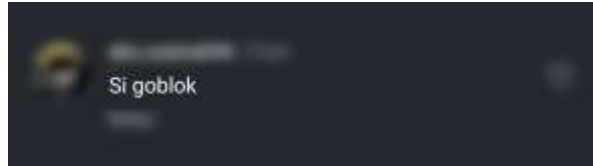


Figure 7. Bald-on Impoliteness

Translation: "The idiot"

The datum above is represented as hate speech utterances that used bald on record impoliteness strategies. The hater went after Gus Miftah by calling him stupid because he was being rude to the iced tea vendor and calling the man 'Goblok'. The commenter clapped back at Miftah's comment 'Goblok'. In this utterance, the hater showed that he did not agree with Miftah's impoliteness and just straight to the point by writing "Si goblok" in the comment section, so it is categorized as bald on record impoliteness.

b. Positive Impoliteness

The use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants by using insult words, improper identity markers, offensive words and another name to degrade the target (Culpeper, 1996).

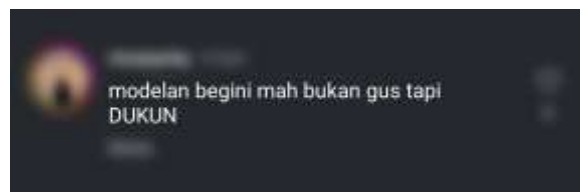


Figure 8. Positive Impoliteness

Translation: "This kind of model is not gus but a WITCH"

The datum above represented hate speech utterances that used positive impoliteness strategies. The person who left this message used the inappropriate identifier 'Dukun' to insult Miftah. The profession of Gus Miftah goes against what the word 'Dukun' means, which is someone who has spiritual understanding and does a certain kind of ritual. Where Gus is the name of a religious leader or muslim scholar who is very important in the community. In some places, the title 'Dukun' is still respected but it is rude to call a scholar 'Dukun'.

Based on that, ‘Dukun’ is related to a bad identity marker for Miftah, so it is categorized as positive impoliteness.

c. Negative Impoliteness

The use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants - associate it with negative aspects (Culpeper, 1996).

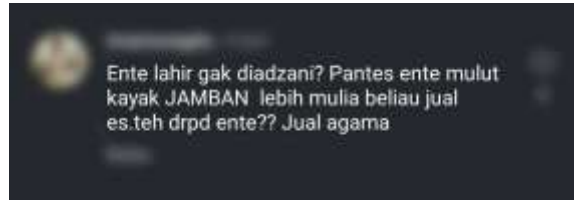


Figure 9. Negative Impoliteness

Translation: “Were you born without being called to prayer? It's no wonder your mouth is like a TOILET. He who sells iced tea is more honorable than you? Who sells religion.

The datum above represented hate speech utterances that used negative impoliteness strategies. The commenter used the word ‘Jamban’ as a suitable metaphorical term for Miftah’s mouth that called the iced tea seller ‘goblok’. The commenter also mentioned how Miftah, as someone who plays a big role in the religious community, behaved horribly and asked if he was even being called to prayer when he was born. Therefore, in this utterance, it was categorized as negative impoliteness.

d. Off-record Impoliteness

This strategy can be used on hate speech when someone wants to attack the target indirectly with an utterance that has more than one purpose. Off record is for situations in which face threat is great (Culpeper, 1996).



Figure 10. Off-record Impoliteness

Translation: “This is the first time I’ve really enjoyed bullying people. Because before it was just a feeling, but it turned out to be true.”

The datum above represented as hate speech utterance which used off-record impoliteness strategies. The hater used an utterance to attack Miftah, but the comment had two purposes. The hater used words to attack Miftah indirectly, such as how the commenter thought it was just the feeling by seeing Miftah - the commenter doesn't feel right and hated Miftah. The commenter might be wrong in interpreting it, but it turned out it was right to hate Miftah. The commenter left an impolite comment in a quiet way. But on the other side the hater

said that the commenter felt a joy this time when it comes to bullying. Meaning the hater indirectly enjoyed hating on Miftah. So, it is categorized as off-record impoliteness.

e. Withhold Impoliteness

Use of polite utterance, but in fact it has an impolite intention. The strategies used in the absence of politeness work where it would be expected (Culpeper, 1996).



Figure 11. Withhold Impoliteness

Translation: "Don't talk about tolerance if your manners towards iced tea sellers are like that. Surprise."

The datum above represented as hate speech utterances which used withhold impoliteness strategies. The hater did not directly attack Miftah. This is a kind of criticism to Miftah for not talking about 'tolerance' in his Instagram post if Miftah himself was being rude to the iced tea man. The commenter was technically saying Miftah was talking about something he didn't understand. So, this utterance is categorized as impoliteness because it still looks like a polite utterance, even if it has an impolite meaning.

f. Sarcasm/Mock Politeness

It is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realisations. Irony can be used to attack (Culpeper, 1996).

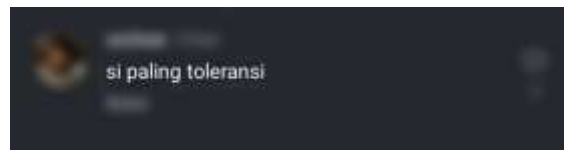


Figure 12. Sarcasm/Mock Politeness

Translation: "The most tolerant"

The datum above represented hate speech utterances which used sarcasm strategies. The hater used the sarcastic comment to attack Miftah. In this comment, the hater used a phrase which is currently trending on social media. Namely the use of "Si paling ..." in a mocking sense. Instead of feeling happy when getting comments like this, netizens consider the use of this phrase to be a form of mockery. Simply put, this phrase is used to mock certain people who want to be considered "the most" in something, making them overly confident. It can be seen clearly that the commenter wanted to be sarcastic by saying that Miftah was trying to build his personality on his Instagram post as 'si paling toleransi', when in reality he couldn't act like that. Because of that, it was categorized as sarcasm or mock politeness.

3.2. Discussion

Six types of hate speech were found in Gus Miftah's Instagram account as can be seen from the tables above. There were 153 comments on religion, 101 comments on behavior, 92 comments on physical, 16 comments on class, 4 comments on disability, and 1 comment on gender found on one of the Instagram posts of Gus Miftah's account. Religion was the most common type of hate speech, while gender was the least common. Religion dominated hate speech because Gus Miftah, known as a religious figure, often contradicted his preachings with his actions. Gus Miftah often said something about tolerance, but he could not tolerate others' jobs. Next in line was hate speech based on religion, followed by hate speech based on behavior, physical appearance, class, and disability. Gender hate speech is the least used; that's because it can be

considered discriminatory or irrelevant to the issue at hand, which is Gus Miftah mocking an old man working. They both are men.

Then, six strategy of hate speech were found in Gus Miftah's Instagram account. There were 166 comments on Bald-on Record Impoliteness, 112 comments in Withhold Impoliteness, 57 comments on Positive Impoliteness, 12 comments on Negative Impoliteness, 12 comments in Sarcasm/Mock Politeness, and lastly 8 comments on Off-record Impoliteness. The most used strategy of hate speech used by haters on Gus Miftah's Instagram comment was bald on-record impoliteness, while off-record was the least used strategy for hate speech. People are reluctant to say what they really think as they stand before an authority figure. A fear of disapproval and punishment from on high dampens the spirit. But online, in what feels more like a peer relationship with the appearances of authority minimized, people are much more willing to speak out and misbehave. The intolerance Miftah have made causing the netizens giving him back the 'Goblok' or some types of negative comments in the simple and straight way, therefore the Bald-on record strategy is the strategy that dominate. Next, the least strategies that found on this research was off record impoliteness It can be happened because these types of strategies are not directly attack the target. Because absent face-to-face cues combined with text communication can alter self-boundaries. As if that person's psychological presence and influence have been assimilated or introjected into one's psyche. (Suler, 2004). Some comments are seen being indirectly impoliteness shows weak hatred towards Miftah due to some self-boundaries.

4. Conclusion

Based on the data findings and discussion above, several conclusions are drawn. There are 6 types of hate speech found in Gus Miftah's Instagram account section. There are religion, behaviour, physical, class, disability, and gender. The religion is the type of hate speech used the most by the haters with 153 (41,9%) data, while gender is the type of hate speech used the least with 1 (0,2%) data. This can happen because this case is closely related to Gus Miftah's background as a prominent Islamic preacher. With his identity, he should be a good example for others.

Furthermore, there are 6 types of strategies of hate speech found in Gus Miftah's Instagram account section. There are bald-on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, off-record impoliteness, withhold impoliteness, sarcasm/mock politeness. Bald-on record politeness is the most types of strategies of hate speech used by the haters with 166 (45,14%) data, while off-record impoliteness is the least types of strategies of hate speech used by the haters with 8 (2,28%) data. This could happen because Gus Miftah, who also directly insulted the iced tea seller with the word "Idiot", caused people to also insult him with the same word in his Instagram comment section.

References

- Amalia, K., & Nugraha, D. N. (2023). An analysis of hate speech in Lucas's Instagram post: Pragmatics study. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Literature (JALL)*, 8(1), 23–35. Retrieved from <https://jurnal.unigal.ac.id/jall/article/view/13335>.
- Anissa, D., & Rosita, N. (2023). An analysis of hate speech in Denise Chariesta's Instagram comment section. *English Language and Literature (ELL)*, 12(4), 97–112. Retrieved from <https://ejournal.unp.ac.id/index.php/ell/article/download/123336/108931>.
- Culpeper, J. (1996). Towards an anatomy of impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics* 25:349-367.
- Culpeper, J. (2011). Impoliteness Using Language to Cause Offence.
- Culpeper, J. (2015). Impoliteness Strategies. Springer International Publishing Switzerland 2016, 421-445.
- Fauzi, W., & Harahap, N. (2024). Analysis of hate speech on social media (Twitter and Instagram) against the 2024 presidential candidate of the Republic of Indonesia. *International Journal of Humanities Education and Social Sciences (IJHESS)*, 3(1), 93–103. Retrieved from <https://ijhess.com/index.php/ijhess/article/view/865/723>.
- Kemp, S. (2024). Digital 2024: Indonesia. DataReportal. https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-indonesia?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- MacAvaney, S., Yao, H.-R., Yang, E., Russell, K., Goharian, N., & Frieder, O. (2019). Hate speech detection: Challenges and solutions. *PLOS ONE*, 14(8), e0221152. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0221152>
- Magu, R., Joshi, K., & Luo, J. (2017). Detecting the hate code on social media. *Proceedings of the 11th International Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM 2017)*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1609/icwsm.v11i1.14921>

- Monash University. (2024). Rising levels of hate speech on social media during the 2024 election campaign. Retrieved from <https://www.monash.edu/indonesia/news/rising-levels-of-hate-speech-on-social-media-during-the-2024-election-campaign>
- Mondal, M., Silva, L. A., & Benevenuto, F. (2017). A Measurement Study of Hate Speech in Social Media. Proceeding
- Suler, J. (2004). The Online Disinhibition Effect. *Cyberpsychology & behavior: the impact of the Internet, multimedia and virtual reality on behavior and society* 7(3):321-326
- Statista. (2024). Share of Instagram users in Indonesia as of 2024, by age group. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1078350/share-of-instagram-users-by-age-indonesia/>