

The Phenomenon of Cancel Culture: Gus Miftah's Insult Towards an Iced Tea Seller in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to analyze the interaction and social impact of religious figures who become subjects of cancel culture, with a focus on how religious messages can strengthen support for humanity and social justice rather than triggering radicalism. **Method:** Using a qualitative research methodology, this study applies Social Identity Theory and Social Construction of Reality Theory, employing virtual ethnographic analysis to examine netizens' conversations, comments, and interactions across various social media platforms. Data was collected through participatory observation and content analysis of relevant online discussions. **Results:** The study reveals that cancel culture significantly impacts both the virtual and real-world perceptions of public figures. Netizen interactions in the digital era show how society enforces norms and shapes digital communication. Additionally, the study identifies patterns of netizen strategies in expressing opinions and their role in the social dynamics of cancel culture. **Novelty:** This research contributes to understanding the social impact of cancel culture on religious figures, offering insights into how online communities influence public perception and enforce social norms, with a focus on the broader implications for digital communication in the context of social justice.

INTRODUCTION

Religious figures play a significant role in social life. They embody human values such as manners, compassion, tolerance, and respect for others. They are not only a reference in spiritual matters, but also serve as role models in character building, spreading human values, and strengthening relationships among members of society [1]. Cancel Culture practiced by society not only has a temporary impact on social media, but can also have real consequences for the individuals who are targeted. One of the most popular social media platforms discussing the phenomenon of Cancel Culture is TikTok [2]. In today's digital age, TikTok has become a key tool in religious communication, allowing religious figures to directly reach and influence the public. TikTok, currently one of the most popular social media platforms in the digital age, provides a space for religious scholars to shape their public image [3].

Change is an inevitable phenomenon that cannot be stopped or slowed down. This change is closely related to technological developments, changing lifestyle trends, and the widening gap between modern and traditional societies. As part of social transformation, individuals' views on various aspects of life have also changed. One form of this change can be seen in the public's reaction to phenomena in the entertainment world and incidents involving public figures. According to Anjarini (2020), "cancel culture" refers to a phenomenon in which support for public figures or companies is

withdrawn due to their involvement in actions or statements that are considered offensive or unpleasant [4].

The phenomenon of cancel culture in Indonesia is growing along with the increasing use of social media. As a theory of social control that regulates human behavior through norms, rules, laws, and social structures, the phenomenon of cancel culture indirectly regulates human behavior, especially in social media activities [5]. The culture of cancel culture on TikTok risks increasing polarization, especially when religious issues are used to bring down or discredit certain groups [6]. Netizens now have the freedom to easily express criticism and dissatisfaction with public figures, including religious leaders. The importance of this topic lies in its impact on the reputation and legitimacy of religious leaders. On the one hand, cancel culture can serve as a mechanism of social control, encouraging public accountability [7].



Figure 1.

In an increasingly connected digital age, Indonesia, as a country with 204.7 million internet users (We Are Social 2023 data), has not escaped the wave of cancel culture. Several cases have shown that this movement is beginning to take hold in the country's digital public sphere.

Micro-influencers, content creators, and even ordinary people can be caught up in the wave of cancellation within hours, simply because of one controversial post or statement.

An example of this can be seen in the case of Gus Miftah in December 2024. Just because of one statement that drew negative responses, a wave of criticism emerged on social media. Public pressure continued to intensify until there were calls for him to step down from several strategic positions he held. This incident serves as a clear illustration of how swift and powerful the cancel culture movement is in today's digital age. Social media, as the primary driver of cancel culture, enables the rapid spread of information

[6]. The phenomenon of cancel culture can be analyzed using **Social Construction Theory and Social Identity Theory**.

Social Construction Theory of Reality, developed by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, explains that social reality is shaped through interaction and mutual agreement within society. Humans have the freedom to act in response to stimuli they receive in their daily lives. Therefore, this shows that humans are decisive individuals in a social world that is shaped according to their will [8]. In the social construction of social reality, communication plays an important role in shaping, maintaining, and changing social reality [9]. In the context of cancel culture, acts of cancellation arise as a result of social constructs that develop on social media, where perceptions of right and wrong are shaped by an ever-evolving public discourse.

The Social Identity Theory proposed by Henri Tajfel explains that individuals form their identities based on their membership in a social group. According to Postmes, Haslam, and Jans (2013), social identity refers to a group as a perceived unity. This unity includes members, norms, and the group's relationship with outside groups [10]. In addition, social identity theory believes that what individuals do, think, and feel is a manifestation of the collective values acquired in certain social groups and/or organizations to which individuals belong. Social identity theory also looks at how group members strive to elevate their own position and that of their group [11].

One of the most recent cases that has attracted attention is an incident involving Gus Miftah, a well-known preacher in Indonesia. In November 2024, during an event in Magelang, Gus Miftah made a statement that was considered derogatory to a sweet iced tea seller. His statement, which was recorded and widely circulated on social media, generated many responses from netizens. Many considered his words inappropriate, especially given his position as a religious figure and the President's special envoy for religious harmony. However, attention was not only focused on the preacher's words, but also on the reactions of his friends around him, who laughed at the joke. Laughter is not just a meaningless reaction. In the context of a study that should uphold moral and ethical values, the laughter of his colleagues on stage reflects how class bias and social superiority can arise unconsciously. When a profession becomes the subject of jokes and others join in laughing, it indirectly reinforces the negative stigma that has long been attached to jobs that are often looked down upon. When the bad image of someone with a good reputation in the digital world is exposed, the public can react by causing various upheavals in the digital world [12]. Public pressure through social media then prompted Gus Miftah to apologize directly to the seller and resign from his position. Victims of cancel culture can jeopardize a person's career [13]. This case is analyzed in the context of Social Construction Theory. Social media, online forums, and various other digital tools open up opportunities for broader and more responsive participation in public discourse. Religious figures are often the target of cancel culture because of their statements or actions that are considered controversial or incompatible with the values held by the majority of society [14]. This case is analyzed in the context of *Social Identity Theory – Tajfel & Turner*.

Given that society places them in a high position with the expectation that they will uphold prevailing norms and values. When those expectations are betrayed, netizens tend to respond quickly and sharply, which often damages their reputation with a significant and dramatic impact. Cancel culture typically occurs on social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok, where netizens can directly criticize and cancel specific individuals and groups. Features on social media such as comments, likes, and shares enable the rapid spread of information and the reinforcement of public opinion through algorithms that support viral content [15].

In a previous study by Muhammad Fikri, Ishak Hariyanto, and Donie Kadewardana (2022), recent data indicates a sharp increase in cancel culture targeting religious figures. One example is the case of Tuan Guru Mizan Qudsiyah in Lombok, who faced a cancel culture attack after his statements sparked controversy. This phenomenon reflects how netizens can act as if they are replacing the role of the law, hurling insults and hate speech without considering the chain reaction of consequences that befall the individuals who are targeted [16].

Previous research by Fikri (2023) identified several public figures in Indonesia who have experienced cancel culture, such as Ahmad Dhani, Luna Maya, Gisel Anastasya, Rizki Billar, Tuan Guru Mizan Qudsiyah, and Panji Gumilang. This phenomenon can trigger social exclusion, psychological pressure, and even threaten freedom of expression. When targeting religious figures, the implications become even more complicated, given their role as moral role models for their communities. Research by Fikri (2023) reveals that cancel culture, from the perspective of Islamic law and public policy in the digital age, presents various complex and profound challenges [17].

The novelty of this study compared to previous studies is that it shows that this phenomenon is not limited to public figures, but also extends to various religious figures. The impact of cancel culture on society at large is so significant that it is difficult to ignore. This study highlights the specific interaction between cancel culture and religious figures in the digital age, which has not been explored in depth in the two previous studies. The main focus is how netizens respond to religious figures based on their moral and spiritual roles in society. This study will answer how social media plays a role in spreading or reinforcing cancel culture against religious figures.

Religiousness is a spiritual feeling related to a person's beliefs and inner relationship with God [18]. Religious leaders were often the focal point of society before the digital age. They were known for their lectures, sermons, and social events involving the community. Sometimes, statements made by religious leaders through various online media platforms actually sparked new controversies within society [19]. In general, they are respected and considered moral role models. They can build strong bonds with their followers through face-to-face interactions, fostering mutual trust and close relationships. In this situation, religious leaders act as a bridge between religious teachings and everyday life.

The emergence of the internet and social media has revolutionized the way religious leaders interact with their followers. In the digital age, it is easy to reach a wider

audience through online platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. This creates opportunities to spread religious teachings and values in more innovative and interesting ways.

Before the digital age, criticism of religious figures tended to spread slowly and was limited in scope, making it easier for religious institutions and the figures themselves to control or suppress it. Limited traditional media meant that public opinion developed gradually, allowing time for clarification or restoration of reputation. However, in the digital age, this dynamic has changed dramatically. Information spreads in seconds through social media, creating an instant and widespread impact on reputation.

Religious figures are now under constant scrutiny, where a single controversial statement can trigger a massive wave of cancel culture, making caution in speech and action an absolute necessity amid the relentless digital tide. On the other hand, the current digital era also raises concerns. Every individual in society has the potential to be a direct target of the impact of digital media. This can be an obstacle to developing the ability to communicate openly and manage conflict in a healthy way [20].

This study will examine how public responses on social media to these statements reflect the practice of cancel culture in the digital age, and how the dissemination of public and media opinion shapes perceptions and social impacts on Gus Miftah's reputation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with virtual ethnographic analysis. According to Moleong, qualitative methods are scientific research aimed at understanding phenomena in natural social relationships, with a focus on the process of deep communicative interaction between researchers and the phenomena being studied [21]. This methodology was chosen to explore in depth the dynamics of netizen interactions on social media in relation to the phenomenon of cancel culture involving Gus Miftah, a religious figure who was recently involved in controversy. Through observation and online interviews. According to Jorgen, the virtual ethnography method describes more specific community habits regarding the use of technology in communication [22]. Data analysis in virtual ethnography can be seen in the following table and description.

Table 1. Analysis in Virtual Ethnography

Level	Object
Media Space is a technical application	The structure of media devices and their appearance are related to procedures.
Media archieve	The content and meaning of texts as cultural artifacts

Level	Object
Media object	Interactions that occur on social media and communication between community members through comments and forums
Experiential Stories	Motives, effects, benefits connected online and offline in the form of recommendations

Media Space

This medium is a place for community interaction. Researchers position themselves as observers. Researchers describe from a technological perspective how medium devices on the internet work and the rules on social media. Researchers begin with how to create an account, connect to a network, communicate, and the procedures that exist on social media.

Media Archive

Researchers view content as text and the meaning contained therein, produced and disseminated via the internet. Text not only represents the opinions of internet users, but also reveals their ideology, social background, political views, cultural uniqueness, and even represents the identity of the community. Text also proves the existence of context, situations, or exchanges of values within the community.

Media Object

Researchers observe user and inter-user activities and interactions. Research data comes from texts and contexts on social media. Researchers focus on responses to texts posted on social media in the form of views, likes, comments, and even subscriptions.

Experiential Stories

Researchers can connect the reality that occurs in the virtual world with the reality that exists in the real world. According to Hine (2015), what happens on the internet is not much different from what happens in the real world of everyday life, such as the depiction of time, place, and people's behavior, which is transformed on the internet.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

At the end of 2024, TikTok, with its short content format, made Gus Miftah's insult against the iced tea seller easier to consume and spread, accelerating the formation of public opinion and responses from various parties. Most of the data collected in social media-based research such as TikTok is subjective. The content that is spread has often been edited, cut, or narrated by users who may not necessarily reflect the whole truth.

Based on the level of virtual ethnographic analysis, these results are described according to the existing levels. This is especially true in viral cases such as **cancel culture against Gus Miftah**. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis was conducted and conclusions were drawn that refer to the issues in this study.

Media Space Level. TikTok is not just an entertainment platform, but also forms a social media ecosystem with specific policies tailored to the characteristics of its main users, namely the younger generation. A number of unique rules, such as the prohibition of filters that manipulate body shape, strict supervision of risky challenges, and extra protection for underage users, are characteristics that distinguish it from other platforms. With a decisive and innovative approach to managing content and user interactions, TikTok has succeeded in creating a digital space that is not only creative, but also safe and socially responsible.

In this study, TikTok social media became the main medium of research, specifically the TikTok account of Gus Miftah as a religious figure. The researcher will examine and analyze cases of cancel culture experienced by religious figures or preachers who are active on this digital platform. The TikTok account @gusmiftah99 has 1 million followers and various types of content that have been uploaded, making it a relevant subject for studying the phenomenon of mass criticism in the digital space against religious figures.

TikTok is known as a social media platform that presents content in short video format. This characteristic makes information more concise, easy to understand, and quickly accessible to users. In the context of the case in question, the dissemination of information through TikTok has been very effective. Short videos that get straight to the point attract public attention in a short time. As a result, the issue quickly went viral and reached many people in a relatively short time.

On the TikTok app, it has evolved from a mere entertainment app into a multifunctional platform that influences various aspects of digital life, from how we obtain information and shop to how we express our identity and interact with communities.



Figure 2. Gus Miftah's TikTok account
Source : TikTok account Gus Miftah

The TikTok app is a social networking app and music video platform from China that was first launched in September 2016 by Zhang Yiming, founder of the Toutiao app. [23]. To start using the TikTok app, users can first download the app via their smartphone, or access the web version of TikTok if using a computer or laptop. After that, users must register a new account using an email address or phone number, then fill in data such as full name, username, and create a password for the account. TikTok offers various interesting features that make it easy for users to create, edit, and share short videos, as well as interact with other users in the digital world.

Some of the main features available include the **For You Page (FYP)**, **Direct Messages**, **Live Streaming**, **TikTok Stories**, and various other creative videos. Every video posted on TikTok allows other users to comment and like it, making the comments section a place for communication between users on this platform.

Media archive. Quoting from the TikTok account @akurat.co, a video showing Gus Miftah allegedly insulting an iced tea seller has become a hot topic on social media. The incident occurred on Wednesday, November 20, 2024, when Gus Miftah was hosting a religious gathering in Magelang Regency, Central Java. In the circulating video footage, Gus Miftah appears to make a joke, mocking a vendor named Sunhaji with the statement, "Do you still have a lot of iced tea left? Still? Go sell it, you idiot!" This remark was perceived as insulting and demeaning to the profession of an iced tea vendor, sparking diverse reactions from netizens.

Many users criticized Gus Miftah's remarks, deeming them inappropriate for a religious forum. However, some netizens argued that his words were merely a joke without any intention to insult. To this day, the incident remains a topic of public interest and is widely discussed on TikTok and other social media platforms.

President Prabowo's response to Gus Miftah's resignation from his position as Special Envoy to the President has become the focus of public attention. In his statement, President Prabowo assessed that the step taken by Gus Miftah was a form of moral responsibility for the controversial statement he had made regarding ice tea sellers. Gus Miftah made this decision after his statement drew various reactions on social media, which sparked sharp criticism from the public.

Although the resignation has been officially announced, discussions about this case are still being widely discussed on various platforms. President Prabowo's response is considered firm but still respects Gus Miftah's decision. He also emphasized that every public official must be prepared to take responsibility for their actions and words, especially if they cause controversy in society. To date, even though Gus Miftah no longer holds office, discussions related to the incident are still ongoing in the public sphere.

When the issue related to the iced tea vendor arose, Gus Miftah, as a widely known religious figure, visited the vendor directly to provide clarification and personally apologize for the incident. This action was taken as a form of responsibility and an effort to maintain harmony within the community.



Figure 3. Coverage of the Gus Miftah Case on News Portals
Source : TikTok account @akurat.co



Figure 4. President Prabowo's response to Gus Miftah's resignation from his position as Special Envoy to the President on the News Portal
Source : TikTok account @tvrinasional



Figure 5. Gus Miftah Visits Iced Tea Vendors, Apologizes and Clarifies on News Portal
Source : TikTok account @jabarekspres

The case between Gus Miftah and the iced tea seller suddenly became a hot topic on social media. At first, not many people knew about it, but because it was widely discussed by netizens, the issue eventually reached President Prabowo's ears. The phenomenon of “going viral” on the internet is often a way for people to voice their disapproval of things they consider unfair or inappropriate. On the other hand, the current digital era has also given rise to concerns. Every individual in society has the potential to be directly affected by the existence of digital media [24]. The act of viralizing without permission, which is often done by the public [25].

As a result, public attention grows stronger, and it often leads to boycotts or cancel culture against the party deemed guilty. Both Indonesian culture and Islam uphold the value of respecting fellow human beings. Insults are not only considered an ethical violation but also contradict moral, spiritual, and social values. In Indonesian culture, insults can damage social bonds and bring about customary sanctions. Meanwhile, in Islam, insults are regarded as sins that must be avoided to preserve dignity and brotherhood among people. By understanding these perspectives, society is expected to be wiser in speech, more sensitive in interactions, and more courteous in delivering criticism, especially in the digital era where conflicts can easily arise from words alone.

Media Object. At this stage, researchers observe the activities and interactions that occur between users and between users on social media. The data collected comes from the text and context available on the platform. The researchers focus on responses to posts on social media, as indicated by the number of views, likes, and comments from other

users on the research subject. In the case involving Gus Miftah, the response to the incident with the iced tea seller became the center of attention, triggering various negative comments and even a cancelation on Gus Miftah's TikTok account.



Figure 6. Netizen comments on Gus Miftah's TikTok comment section
Source: TikTok account Gus Miftah

The data collected from the comments section of Gus Miftah's TikTok account, as depicted in the video titled “Gus Miftah's Religious Lecture Attended by Few People” (Gus Miftah's Lecture with Few Attendees), is a clear manifestation of cancel culture in Indonesia's digital space. The comment data shows the collective response of the public in making moral judgments about the actions of public figures. Comments on the TikTok accounts @alksr & @h0tin1n, such as “prioritize manners over knowledge” and “manners first, then knowledge,” emphasize that the public demands high ethical standards from religious figures. A person's character is not formed suddenly but rather through a long process [26].

Comments from TikTok accounts @xxgrils_glx & @jidongsudahtobatt “1 word for Gus Miftah” is a form of passive-aggressive sarcasm. Comments like this usually contain implicit meanings that invite others to fill in the meaning according to their own

perceptions. These comments encourage other audiences to draw their own conclusions about Gus Miftah, which could be criticism, condemnation, or simply sharp sarcasm.

Comments like this are also part of a collective shaming strategy that often occurs in cases of cancel culture, where a person becomes the center of attention because of a certain mistake, and often the negative impact is far greater. Victims may feel alienated and worthless due to pressure from the group [27].

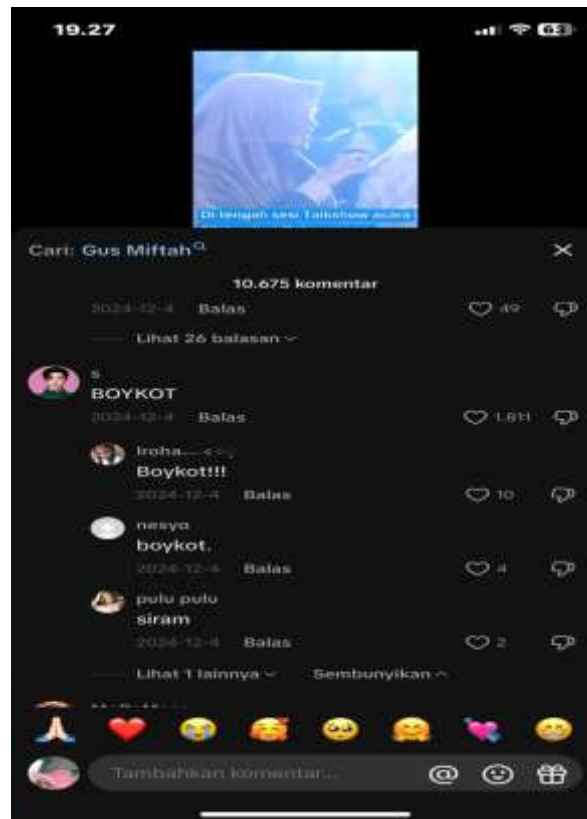


Figure 7. Netizen comments on Gus Miftah's TikTok comment section
Source : Akun TikTok account Gus Miftah

Visible in the comments section of Gus Miftah's TikTok account, particularly on TikTok.

A comment from the TikTok account @k1caww with the word “BOYCOTT” even received thousands of likes, indicating the high level of user engagement in this digital protest. The call for a “Boycott” also made by TikTok accounts @elel_lit & @nsya_ulfrh is a clear expression of netizens' dissatisfaction and disappointment over Gus Miftah's statement regarding the iced tea seller. The advancement of digital technology plays a significant role in expanding the spread of boycott calls widely and quickly [28]. This movement reflects the solidarity of netizens towards informal sector workers whom they consider to have been degraded. The netizen account @pulu-puluindonesia also included comments such as “siram” (watering), an expression of anger often used in digital slang.

In general, boycotts aim to encourage the targeted party to comply with and meet the demands made by a particular group. These demands are generally related to financial, religious, political, social, or other factors, depending on who initiated the boycott [29].

Experiential Stories, Looking at the case of Gus Miftah, who was suspected of insulting an iced tea seller, this incident can be analyzed using the theory of Social Construction of Reality as explained in the theoretical framework. Currently, the digital era has become part of a common reality, where public perceptions and judgments are collectively formed through interactions on social media. The significant increase in the number of internet users each year strengthens the position of the virtual world as a space for shaping netizen responses. The emergence of strong reactions against Gus Miftah reflects the clash of values that has developed among social media users, who actively construct meaning and social reality based on the norms and collective perspectives of netizens.

As a religious figure, Gus Miftah faces major consequences for his remarks. The widespread phenomenon of cancel culture has the potential to damage his reputation, especially among the community that has been his support base. The comments that have emerged not only reflect momentary emotions, but also illustrate the pattern of cancel culture on social media, which has developed as a form of public participation in controlling social norms and ethics. In this context, research shows that social media in the digital age has become a new arena for digital democracy that provides space for the public to collectively uphold social norms, but also leaves the potential for negative impacts on victims of cancel culture. In the context of cancel culture, individuals typically participate in boycotts as a form of solidarity with groups that share similar values or interests. Affiliation with a particular group often strengthens the motivation to boycott or impose social punishment on individuals or parties who are considered to be contrary to the principles of that group. Thus, cancel culture is not a phenomenon that arises spontaneously, but is the result of a process of social construction and collective identity formation that develops through interaction on social media platforms [30].

In the phenomenon of cancel culture, the digital community forms an ingroup, which is a community or group of social media users who share values of social justice, respect for all professions, and norms of equality. This group responds to actions or statements that are considered to violate collective norms with social sanctions, such as boycotts and insults.

The case of Gus Miftah reflects how the digital community uses the power of group identity to uphold the values they agree on. When Gus Miftah was considered to have insulted the profession of iced tea sellers, which symbolically represents the common people or the working class, members of the community who felt they were part of this group responded harshly in order to defend the group's pride.

Before the controversy arose, Gus Miftah was known as a religious figure and leader who was considered part of the religious community's ingroup and was widely respected for his role. However, after his statement went viral, some people began to

change their views and place Gus Miftah in the outgroup, i.e., a figure who was no longer considered to represent the values embraced by the group.

This phenomenon of cancel culture actually strengthens solidarity among ingroups. Netizens who feel that Gus Miftah has violated the norms they hold dear show solidarity by calling for cancel culture, offering sharp criticism, and even stopping following his lectures. These actions are their way of maintaining their group identity while upholding the moral values they consider important.

Several of Gus Miftah's actions, which were recorded in various videos on social media, have attracted public attention and sparked controversy. In addition to the case of his joke about an iced tea seller, which was considered derogatory, there are also other recordings that have become the subject of discussion among netizens.

On several occasions, Gus Miftah was seen patting or "tapping" his wife's head during lectures or public events. Although this may have been intended as a joke or a gesture of intimacy in their personal context, many netizens considered this action inappropriate. Islamic education plays an important role in shaping individuals of good character who are devoted to Allah SWT and understand and apply the teachings of Islam in their daily activities [31]. Especially considering Gus Miftah's position as a religious figure who should set an example in maintaining his attitude and behavior in front of his congregation and the public.

In addition, there is also a video showing Gus Miftah making statements that are considered insulting to a group of female singers. His jokes are considered to be demeaning to their profession, thus sparking harsh criticism from the public, especially in the digital space. Many argue that such jokes show a lack of sensitivity towards other people's work, which in fact also has value and dignity.

Gus Miftah's various actions and statements, which went viral on social media, further fueled the wave of cancel culture against him. Many netizens believe that he has violated social norms, prompting them to respond with sharp criticism, boycotts, and unfollowing his social media accounts. The phenomenon of cancel culture shows that the digital community now plays an increasingly active role in monitoring the behavior of religious figures through the social values they collectively build.

The findings of this study indicate that the phenomenon of cancel culture can occur anytime and anywhere, without boundaries. No one is truly protected from the risk of being targeted for cancellation by society as a whole. Cancel culture is very inclusive in determining who can be victimized.

The case of cancel culture that befell Gus Miftah due to his statement that was considered to be demeaning to the profession of iced tea sellers in the digital era shows how society shapes and frames social reality through the media. In the perspective of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's theory of social construction of reality, public responses on social media reflect a shared construction of the meaning of insult and demands for justice that go beyond the context of the original statement. Meanwhile, the social identity theory proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner highlights how netizens position themselves as part of certain social groups, such as lower-class workers or small

traders, and thus respond emotionally to statements that are considered to attack their collective identity.

Although terrible and capable of destroying reputations in a short time, cancel culture is generally temporary. In many cases of cancel culture, netizens' anger does not last long. Over time, public attention shifts to new issues or controversies. Those who have been "canceled" often slowly begin to rebuild their image, and some of them are even accepted back into society as before.

Discussion

The phenomenon of cancel culture in the case of Gus Miftah's statement, which was considered to be demeaning to the profession of iced tea sellers, shows the high sensitivity of today's digital society to actions or words that are deemed disrespectful of social values, especially those related to respect for all types of work. The combination of the Social Construction of Reality theory and Social Identity theory reveals that cancel culture is not just about canceling individuals, but a social process that involves identity dynamics, public perception, and the symbolization of power in the digital space. From public figures such as celebrities, influencers, and politicians, to religious figures, all are potentially facing the threat of mass boycotts. Based on a virtual ethnographic analysis at the experiential level, this study found that statements made by public figures, especially religious leaders, have a very broad and tangible social effect in the digital space. Through active interaction on social media, the public not only expresses disappointment and anger, but also constructs a collective narrative to reject any form of insult against certain social groups, especially if it is done by a figure with a high symbolic position. The responses of netizens show that this incident is not seen as a mere joke or ordinary mistake, but as a form of ethical injustice resulting from the abuse of religious authority in the public sphere. In this case, cancel culture has emerged as a new social control mechanism that demands moral responsibility from public figures. As a recommendation, religious leaders in the digital age need to be more careful and wise in their behavior, both online and offline. Public figures must realize that every word and action will be recorded, disseminated, and widely interpreted by the public. Therefore, maintaining ethics in communication, respecting every profession without discrimination, and being a role model in spreading the values of tolerance, compassion, and social justice is a must. Self-reflection needs to be done continuously so that their credibility and role as role models are not eroded by narratives or behaviors that contradict human values.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study reveals that the phenomenon of cancel culture, as demonstrated by Gus Miftah's controversial statement, highlights the heightened sensitivity of digital society to actions or words deemed disrespectful to social values, particularly regarding respect for all professions. It shows that cancel culture is not just about boycotting individuals, but is a social process that involves identity dynamics, public perception, and power symbolization in the digital space. **Implication :** The

findings suggest that cancel culture has emerged as a new form of social control, holding public figures accountable for their ethical conduct, particularly in the digital age. Religious leaders and public figures must be more cautious in their public discourse to avoid damaging their credibility and violating social norms. **Limitation** : The study's focus on one case, Gus Miftah's statement, may limit its generalizability across different social contexts or individuals in various professions. **Future Research** : Future studies could expand on this by exploring other cases of cancel culture involving public figures across different sectors, examining the long-term social and psychological effects on both the figures involved and the digital community, and analyzing the role of digital platforms in shaping collective social norms and values.

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