

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The uses of connecting programs of social media has increased in the last decade such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc., as the effects of gadget and internet growth have spread all around the world. In this era, social media has become a part of human life and it has changed the way humans socialize and interact with others. The fact that we can see that over millions of the users of Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter dedicated the social media not only to socialize but also for businesses and education significance, therefore, that is the main reason why social media cannot be separated from human's life. Social media provides almost all human needs, discover or learn some new information, make easy ways to interact with people around the world also share ideas, opinions, and many more. Moreover, individuals may trace or gather information from anywhere in the entire world with social media easily (Akram 2017, 348).

As the stated above, social media always provides many benefits in human everyday life, especially since COVID-19 pandemic. The major outbreak of COVID-19 has influenced media consumption. People's reliance on the social media generally increases during conflict situations or instability (McQuail and Windahl 1993, 111). The world in critical condition because of COVID-19 pandemic and the government

advised some individuals prefer work from home since they are already aware of technological devices and how to properly connect with friends and employers. In a professional setting, we may utilize social media to improve or develop our expertise in a certain sector and build our professional network by engaging with other experts in industry sectors. At the company level, social media allows company to engage with their customers, get customer reviews, and raise their branding. Since there are many benefits and privileges using social media it can be conclude that the usage of social media cannot be denied and has become an integral element to the lives of many people across the world. According to Statista, in 2019 2.95 billion people were active as the social media users worldwide and this is forecast to increase to almost 3.43 billion by 2023 (Statista 2022).

As effect of the massive uses of social media makes individuals more digitally savvy. They are becoming more sociable, and the barrier among the offline and online world is becoming progressively blurred and complicated. People also starting to realize that their nowadays business card is Twitter, Instagram, or Linked in site. The online world has evolved into the primary channel through which humans construct and present the portrait of themselves, as well as where humans interact with everyone. Since then, people who often engage with social media programs may be prone to revealing personal information (Grammenos et al. 2017, 71), for example people twitter posts or messages are becoming the primary mechanism by which individuals fully express and communicate their sentiments, opinions, and emotions, as well as their emotional states nowadays. Somehow people seemed to enjoy

spreading information on social networks than in real-life without even considering the dangerous environment of social media.

In 2019, COVID-19 has become global pandemic. As a global pandemic, COVID-19 has presented many issues that are supported by the presence of the new media. Based on data until the beginning of July 2020, hundreds of hoaxes circulated in the community (Covid19.go.id). The use of this new media has increased rapidly, including in Indonesia, especially East Java, Surabaya as the second largest city in Indonesia also the effect of the isolation as the government rule to prevent the growth of COVID-19 especially in Java. It make people to experience a great on social platforms and digital experiences result in a close emotional attachment to social networking use, building a strong urge to be online continuously (Abbas 2021, 14).

In consideration of people who use the internet, Indonesia is one of the nations with a pretty significant population. A productive youthful age dominates the user proportion. According to APJI (Association of Indonesian Internet Service Users) data from 2018, 15-19-year-olds had the highest penetration (reaching 91%). The next age group is 20-24-year-olds, with 88.5% penetration. The age groups 25-29 years old have a penetration rate of 82.7%, 30-34 years old have a penetration rate of 76.5%, and 35-39 years old have a penetration rate of 68.5%, and it keep growing each year (Setiyawan 2022, 105). The data presented above demonstrates that the nowadays youth is the most frequent internet users. The young generation's increased internet usage is closely tied to how they can use cyberspace to suit their needs.

The social networking environment makes people construct their "digital identity" through sharing or spreading biography, photographs, status, and clips which they share on social media. As a result, it has become critical to be conscious of the narrative that people present their every day on the internet, and also understand how almost every aspect adds towards that tale, as well as to the defining of social self and image. People believe that perception is significantly essential, specifically when it comes to social networks. Individuals actively as well as consistently build or construct and bargain their identities (within the limitations placed by a number of social and personal factors), and show themselves in various ways depending on the particular segmentation in which they will be going to operate (Seargeant and Tagg 2014). Virtual identity or reputation in social networks is critical since everyone may create their personal persona on social networks. Everyone can explore and express their identity in an online or virtual world (Turkle 1997, 11). Identity is an important component of human existence, and the internet was a tool to develop identity, in which the link in between became more fluid and anonymous with others.

The phenomena of spreading personal information too much in the digital world or social media can be defined as self-disclosure. According to De Vito, self-disclosure is a communication style in which we expose information about ourselves that we normally keep hidden and become anonymous as a way to help ourselves disclose our emotions, opinions, feelings to others without being judged as who we are (De Vito 1997). Since computer-mediated environments growth, social media and

online dating apps offer us numerous chances to establish, build, and sustain interpersonal communication. Self-disclosure is as important in digital interactions as it does in face-to-face (FtF) interactions (Dindia 2000). Anonymity has been shown to encourage self-disclosure either offline and digitally. The "stranger on a train" phenomena (Rubin 1975, 233) provides early evidence that anonymity facilitates self-disclosure since individuals might self-disclose rather extensively to neighboring other train passengers. Likewise, Suler noticed the low self - control effect in online contexts, where people expose or disclose themselves more than in reality (Suler 2004)

Since there are many cases of self-disclosure in virtual environment, there has been a lack of research regarding self-disclosure of sexual topics. Sexual self-disclosure defined as the most intimate kinds of self-disclosure. Sometimes, the depth of self-disclosure bring or deals with certain area or aspects in individuals such as sexual aspect in sexual self-disclosure. Sexual self-disclosure (SSD) was considered as letting people know about one's sexual interests, habits, wants, or what one appreciates or dislikes doing during sex, as well as anything else related to sex subjects (Grasson 2018, 2). Individuals may be more open to sexual self-disclosure in online than they should be in reality. As a result, it was projected that when adolescents' profiles on the cyberspace are relatively anonymous, they would be more ready to self-disclose associated with sex details.

The fact that Indonesia has the majority of Muslim population affected the culture in Indonesia itself. In Indonesian culture perspective, sex or sexual thing is

sacred and taboo, so discussing about it publicly is categorized as impolite or uncommon. Along with the introduction and pervasive availability of the internet, it has resulted in a sexual liberation that enables individuals to conduct sexual explorations that crosses religious, cultural, sex, age, nationality, and even physically form restrictions. Individuals can express themselves erotically through mail, internet chat rooms, interacting cameras, or tactile technology (sense of touch).

In essence, the development of social media negates the feature of anonymity. Since the anonymous features were created, we can share contents, express our feelings, emotions and also opinions without being scared of what other people think about us because they see us as anonymous. The features of anonymity unintentionally make individuals let others learn further about our preferences, interests and activities, and so on. Furthermore, nowadays individuals can also access the subgenre of social media in which the primary social purpose is to communicate or interact anonymously or under anonymity of pseudonym based on web or mobile platforms. One of the famous anonymous social media or application among young-adult person is Whisper.

Whisper is a social media platform based on smartphones both available for Android or iOS users with 250 million monthly users across 187 countries including Indonesia can download this application for free through Play Store or App Store. The most significant thing that makes this platform different from the other social media is whispers claiming that the user's privacy will be kept secret with no profile identity, followers or friends shown. They can share photos or gifts and texts

anonymously and also interact with other users through private messages by sending text or photos and also interacting with the public by responding to posts through comments freely.

According to Kasakowskij believes that these tools create a safe space for people to communicate their own emotions and feelings, whether happy or bad, without having to keep track of their disclosure borders or worry about being considered as a risk factor (Kasakowskij 2018, 29). In contrast to dedicated confessional internet groups, where individuals primarily exchange confessions and secrets, users of mobile applications such as Whisper also submit witty, amusing postings. Furthermore, considering the absence of a stable and consistent set of identities, as individuals have in many online communities, participants in our sample claimed that these applications give social support and validation for their feelings, experiences, and self-identity. People are supposed to be honest and open in this situation and sometimes spread too much information about themselves. Anonymity itself typically has been defined as the inability of everyone else to identify a person or even for an individual to be identified by someone else. This can occur in a broad social specific situation, such as a large group, or even in a tinier specific situation, such as 2 different people in online communications (Christopherson 2006, 3041).

The condition due to the absence of individuals' identity to be exposed in anonymous social media could fuel the growth of so many negative activities (Agastya 2020, 234). Anonymous application covered up people's identity in social media with real life and the danger is the threats that exist in social media's

environment such as sexual self-disclosure that has been mentioned in the previous paragraph. Sexual self-disclosure might contains about anything that related to sex interest, desires, and fantasy. Since Whisper available in Indonesia, sexual topic somehow does appear in Whisper Indonesia as one of the topic that many times discussed and it is also considered to be a taboo especially in Indonesia, but somehow if it's discussed or shared on internet rather than in the real life it doesn't appear to be a taboo thing. The huge percentage of Indonesians continue to believe that something contains with sex (even for sex education) is taboo and must not be publicly discussed. Admittedly until nowadays, Indonesians generally view sex-related issues as binary. For example, sex is still only allowed to be discussed when someone is already currently in a relationship or marriage, whereas sex outside of marital relationship is assumed immoral and the biggest mistake a person could ever make. This viewpoint stemmed from his\her religious values and principles. Mostly, people who likes to do sexual self-disclosure because they do not want to be perceived adversely by the others, they will typically conceal their genuine identity. It is also a form of virtual identity construction.

Since Surabaya become the second largest city in Indonesia, the researcher claimed that Surabaya online sexual activity will have similarity with the capital city, Jakarta. The researcher will not analyze deeply about the online sexual activities (cybersex), but the online sexual disclosure among Surabaya people. In conclusion, there might be differences in the construction of virtual identity on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, etc. with the anonymous one, for example Whisper. The

writer believes that we do self-disclosure through exposing ourselves on social networks because self-disclosure might happen and are more inclined to reveal to strangers because doing so reduces several of the dangers associated with openness. People attempt to inform others about themselves in many different and a unique way and with this unique identity, somehow as a human have a considerable to make friends in social media.

In social media, every day, we choose several considerations to post photos or videos regarding how we want to seem and interact in order to keep our identity and portray ourselves mostly in positive light to society (Rhodes 2012). Since whisper users are completely anonymous and many individuals use it for public confessing site social media, whisper is frequently misidentified as a secret-sharing application. But it's more like the anti-Facebook, attempting to separate its individuals' identities out from stuff users share. Based on the large number of whisper users, it is possible to deduce that there are still many individuals who have difficulties revealing their emotions. There are also many factors, motives, and effects that affected human's behavior for doing self-disclosure and creating virtual self-presentation or identity in Whisper despite Whisper application claimed as social media which is mostly the main reason people using the application is to get to know each other with stranger and socialize with another whisper users. Since the anonymous application might create a gap that promotes illegal or perhaps unlawful acts which law enforcement authorities would find difficult to identify or trace the user and it might lead the people to use the app for negativity. As

an increasing amount of people seek to strike a balance between online involvement and privacy, the phenomenon of sexual self-disclosure becomes extremely vital to comprehend and define. The findings of this study should serve as a foundation for upcoming research study or project in sexual self-disclosure especially in cyberspace, as well as the virtual identity that is created as the effects of sexual self-disclosure that is massive happen in the anonymous social media.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

According to the preceding background of study, the writer intends to analyze and investigate virtual identity construction and cybersex behavior in whisper. As a result, the following problem statement is presented for this study:

1. How is Virtual identity construction in Whisper?
2. How does sexual self-disclosure happen and the portrayal in Whisper as an anonymous social media?
3. What is motive and effect of anonymity that is created sexual self-disclosure and construct the virtual identity in Whisper?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem stated above, the purpose of the research is

1. To identify the virtual identity construction in Whisper.
2. To identify the sexual self-disclosure happen and the portrayal in Whisper as an anonymous social media.

3. To identify the motive and effect of anonymity that is created sexual self-disclosure and construct the virtual identity in Whisper.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to acknowledge the study of sexual self-disclosure and virtual identity in whisper application and also can enrich the study of the perceived sexual self-disclosure, anonymity, virtual identity, especially in cyberspace because as we know the experience of the social media users such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter would be completely different with the anonymous one, like Whisper. The most important is that main formulation problems can be answered and achieve the research goals by improving the research that previously has been done. Third, it is expected to be replicated for future research and developed and perfected. Lastly, for the relevant people, hopefully it can be important information to always remind them to be careful and wise in using anonymous social media and also can give positive benefits in other people's lives.

1.5 Definitions of Key Terms

Whisper : Whisper is a smartphone application available in Indonesia that lets the people to share their thoughts and react to other users or audience remarks in front of the images (such as Internet

- memes), while also keeping secret user identification anonymously (Wang 2014, 138).
- Self-Disclosure : Self-disclosure is an important concept by Altman and Taylor's in the concept of Social Penetration Theory. Based on this theory, individuals improve a better knowledge of one another or demonstrate trust or comfortable feelings by progressively expressing their feelings and experiences and listening to their reciprocal communication (Altman and Taylor 1975)
- Sexual self-disclosure : Sexual self-disclosure is a critical aspect of sexual communication. Sexual self-disclosure facilitates the development of sexual knowledge, or the knowledge of self and partner sexual likes and dislikes, which is related to higher levels of sexual satisfaction (La France 2010).
- Anonymity : One type of transparency is anonymity, which is the practice of concealing individuals' identity. Nevertheless, confidentiality generally involves keeping what users commonly secret,

which is only possible if investigators choose not to reveal sections of the information (Saunders 2015, 618)

Virtual identity

: A virtual identity is a customer experience feature that shows the user in a virtual environment such as a chatting room, video game interaction chatting or group, or virtual common area. According to Sherry Turkle, the dynamics of virtual identities seem to confirm poststructuralist and postmodernism views of the subject (Turkle 1995)