

## **Cancel Culture and the Reconfiguration of Public Legitimacy in Indonesia's Digital Public Sphere**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to examine how cancel culture operates as a structured mechanism of digital power that produces material consequences within Indonesia's creative industry, using the controversy surrounding actor Abidzar Al Ghifari in the Indonesian adaptation of *A Business Proposal* as a study. The urgency of this research lies in a significant gap in the literature, which predominantly frames cancel culture as a psychological or moral phenomenon without systematically mapping its power relations, operational patterns, and economic impacts within networked publics. This study employs a qualitative approach using a virtual ethnography design. Data were collected from 300 primary posts on the X platform between January and March 2025, supplemented by interaction metrics. The findings demonstrate that cancel culture in the Abidzar case unfolded through five operational stages: the triggering controversial statement, narrative diffusion through fandom and anonymous accounts, public opinion consolidation dominated by professionalism criticism (53.67%), collective action in the form of boycott calls (9.67%), and discursive normalization within digital memory. The accumulation of interactions reached 57.5 million views, 523,274 likes, and 95,028 retweets, indicating the dominance of propagative rather than deliberative communication patterns. This digital public opinion hegemony translated into tangible economic consequences, including a reduction in cinema screens from 1,270 to 551 and a decline in the IMDb rating to 1/10. The study argues that digital participation can transform symbolic capital into measurable economic outcomes through algorithmic amplification. Theoretically, this research contributes by formulating an operational cycle of cancel culture and demonstrating the integration of capillary power relations, algorithmic mediation, and symbolic capital struggles within the digital public sphere. Practically, it recommends strengthening platform moderation policies, developing algorithmic literacy-based crisis communication systems, and promoting critical digital literacy programs. The originality of this study lies in its empirical demonstration of the conversion of symbolic power into commercial failure within Indonesia's creative industry.

**Keywords:** Algorithmic Amplification; Cancel Culture; Digital Power Relations; Indonesian Creative Industry; Symbolic Capital.

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membahas *cancel culture* beroperasi sebagai mekanisme kuasa digital yang terstruktur serta menghasilkan konsekuensi material dalam industri kreatif Indonesia, dengan studi kontroversi aktor Abidzar Al Ghifari terkait film adaptasi *A Business Proposal* versi Indonesia. Urgensi penelitian ini terletak pada kesenjangan literatur yang masih memandang *cancel culture* terutama sebagai fenomena psikologis atau moral, tanpa memetakan secara sistematis relasi kuasa, pola operasional, dan dampak ekonominya dalam konteks publik berjejaring. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain etnografi virtual. Data dikumpulkan dari 300 unggahan utama di platform X selama periode Januari–Maret 2025, dilengkapi dengan metrik interaksi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa *cancel culture* dalam kasus Abidzar berlangsung melalui lima tahap operasional: pemicu pernyataan kontroversial, difusi narasi melalui akun fandom dan anonim, konsolidasi opini publik berbasis kritik

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profesionalisme (53,67%), aksi kolektif berupa seruan boikot (9,67%), dan normalisasi diskursus dalam memori digital. Akumulasi interaksi mencapai 57,5 juta tayangan, 523.274 likes, dan 95.028 retweet, yang menunjukkan dominasi pola komunikasi propagatif dibanding deliberatif. Hegemoni opini publik digital tersebut berkonversi menjadi dampak ekonomi nyata, yakni penurunan jumlah layar bioskop dari 1.270 menjadi 551 serta anjloknya rating IMDb menjadi 1/10. Penelitian ini menyatakan bahwa partisipasi digital mampu mentransformasikan modal simbolik menjadi konsekuensi ekonomi terukur melalui amplifikasi algoritmik. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini berkontribusi dengan merumuskan siklus operasional *cancel culture* serta menunjukkan integrasi antara relasi kuasa kapiler, mediasi algoritmik, dan pertarungan modal simbolik dalam ruang publik digital. Secara praktis, penelitian ini merekomendasikan penguatan kebijakan moderasi platform, sistem komunikasi krisis berbasis literasi algoritmik, dan program literasi digital kritis. Orisinalitas penelitian ini terletak pada pembuktian empiris konversi kuasa simbolik menjadi kegagalan komersial dalam industri kreatif Indonesia.

**Kata Kunci:** Amplifikasi Algoritmik; *Cancel Culture*, Relasi Kuasa Digital, M Industri Kreatif Indonesia; Modal Simbolik.

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## INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of social media has fundamentally transformed the architecture of public communication and opinion formation. Globally, DataReportal (2025) reports that social media users reached 5.31 billion in April 2025, representing nearly 65% of the world's population, with an annual growth rate of 4.7% (Kemp, 2025). This scale of connectivity has redefined the public sphere, shifting it from institutionally mediated communication toward digitally networked participation. In Indonesia, this transformation is particularly significant. According to We Are Social (2025), active users of the platform X alone reached 25.4 million in early 2025, positioning Indonesia among the most dynamic digital markets in Southeast Asia. The density of digital participation has created new forms of collective mobilization, enabling netizens to respond rapidly to public controversies and shape reputational outcomes in real time.

One notable consequence of this transformation is the emergence of cancel culture, defined as a collective digital practice in which online users publicly withdraw support, criticize, or boycott individuals or institutions perceived to have violated moral, cultural, or social norms (Scheinbaum, 2024). Cancel culture illustrates how digital participation extends beyond expression into coordinated social sanctioning. In Indonesia's creative industry, this phenomenon has moved beyond symbolic protest to measurable economic consequences. The controversy surrounding Abidzar Al Ghifari during the promotion of the Indonesian adaptation of *A Business Proposal* demonstrates this dynamic. Following public statements in a podcast that were interpreted as dismissive of the original South Korean intellectual property and its fan base, a wave of criticism escalated on X and TikTok into organized calls for boycott. Ministry of National Development Planning/Bappenas (Kementerian PPN/Bappenas) (2025) reported that the resulting negative sentiment contributed to a 40% decline in opening-week box office performance compared to initial projections. This case illustrates that digital collective action is capable of generating direct economic and reputational disruption, indicating the formation of a new "digital power space" in which netizens exercise a form of participatory sovereignty.

The growing influence of cancel culture has attracted scholarly attention across multiple disciplines. Existing literature may be categorized into three major strands. The first strand conceptualizes cancel culture as a mechanism of digital social control. Altamira and Movementi (2022), Mardeson and Mardesci (2022), and Velasco (2020) argue that digital communities utilize canceling practices to enforce moral norms outside formal legal institutions. Within this perspective, cancel culture functions as a decentralized disciplinary mechanism embedded in networked publics.

The second strand focuses on the psychological and material impacts of cancel culture on its targets. Adeyemi (2025), Bromwich (2018), and Lee and Abidin (2023) demonstrate that collective online pressure can lead to reputational damage, social isolation, and long-term financial loss. These studies highlight how digital ostracism disrupts reputational capital and destabilizes professional trajectories, particularly within creative and media industries.

The third strand emphasizes the technological dimension, particularly the role of platform algorithms in amplifying conflict. Cobbe (2021), Bastian et al. (2019), Brady et al. (2023) and Donghee Shin (2024) show how algorithmic systems generate echo chambers and intensify emotional polarization, accelerating the spread of boycott narratives and limiting opportunities for deliberative negotiation. In this perspective, cancel culture is not merely a social phenomenon but also a technologically mediated process shaped by platform architecture.

Despite these important contributions, a significant gap remains. Existing research tends to treat cancel culture either as moral enforcement, psychological impact, or algorithmic amplification in isolation. Few studies integrate participatory communication patterns with power relations in specific socio-cultural contexts, particularly within Indonesia's creative industry. Moreover, the transformation of discursive participation into structured economic intervention remains underexplored. While prior studies describe behavioral dynamics, they rarely examine how platform-mediated communication produces a structured "power space" through which netizens exercise economic leverage over cultural production. The Abidzar Al Ghifari case provides an empirical opportunity to examine how digital participation becomes institutionalized as economic execution power.

To address this gap, this study aims to systematically analyze the digital communication patterns that shaped the cancel culture phenomenon in the Abidzar Al Ghifari case and to identify the mechanisms through which netizen participation operates as a form of digital sovereignty. This research seeks to generate a conceptual model of "Digital Biopolitics" in the Indonesian context, explaining how reputational regulation shifts from traditional authorities—such as producers, critics, and institutions—to networked publics operating within platform infrastructures.

This study advances the argument that cancel culture constitutes a structured practice of digital power rather than a spontaneous expression of outrage. Theoretically, it draws on Michel Foucault's (1980) concept of power relations, which emphasizes that power operates capillarily through dispersed social relations rather than remaining centralized within a single institution. In the context of cancel culture, each post, retweet, and like functions as a micro-practice of power that produces horizontal surveillance and collective disciplining. Netizens do not require formal institutional legitimacy to impose sanctions; power emerges from the accumulation of algorithmically interconnected participation that normalizes certain judgments while marginalizing others.

Nick Couldry's (2012) theory of social mediation clarifies how digital platforms operate not merely as neutral channels of communication but as sites for the production and circulation of social meaning. Platform architecture mediates collective emotions and amplifies narratives with high affective intensity, thereby shaping what becomes visible, legitimate, and dominant within the digital public sphere. The dominance of retweets over replies in this study indicates a propagative rather than deliberative communication pattern, where amplification outweighs dialogical engagement. When algorithms prioritize emotional resonance, majority narratives acquire hegemonic force and erode opportunities for balanced clarification. The interaction between platform architecture, collective affect, and discursive practices thus generates a new configuration of power: netizens act simultaneously as producers of public morality and executors of economic sanctions within a digitally mediated field of struggle.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The primary focus of this research explicitly establishes the cancel culture phenomenon as the unit of analysis, encompassing narratives, communication practices, and digital power mechanisms. Meanwhile, the unit of observation is defined as digital artifacts in the form of posts (tweets and quotes), comments (replies), threads, and viral hashtags related to Abidzar Al Ghifari's statements. Contextual boundaries are strictly limited to the X platform (formerly Twitter) to maintain data consistency, given its characteristic as the primary arena for public discourse in Indonesia compared to other platforms like TikTok or Instagram, which are more focused on audiovisual content. Based on statistical data, the selection of the X platform as the research site is justified by its 25.4 million active users in Indonesia and a conversation volume that is highly responsive to popular culture issues within the digital ecosystem.

This study employs a virtual ethnography design to explore the "Netizen Power Space" in depth. The selection of this method is superior to pure netnography because virtual ethnography does not merely focus on internet culture but also traces how power relations within a network are dynamically formed through inter-actor interactions (Hine, 2015). The use of a single method, such as critical discourse analysis, was deemed inadequate as it fails to capture the escalation of netizen interactions, while a pure Social Network Analysis (SNA) approach was not chosen because this research prioritizes the depth of meaning interpretation over the mapping of network structures. In this research, the researcher positions themselves as an outsider-observer (passive observer) to maintain objectivity and minimize filter bubble bias by using a neutral research account with no prior interaction history regarding the topic.

Data sources are categorized into three types: textual (tweet narratives), visual (interaction screenshots), and metadata (quantities of retweets, likes, and views). The volume of digital data collected includes a total of N=300 primary posts, filtered from thousands of interactions during the research period from January 10 to March 10, 2025. The analyzed data were obtained from posts using the primary keyword "Abidzar Business Proposal," with specific search parameters: "*Abidzar Business Proposal lang:id until:2025-03-10 since:2025-01-10*". Inclusion criteria encompass public accounts in Indonesian using these keywords, while exclusion criteria are applied to private accounts, automated promotional content (spam), and contextually irrelevant posts. All collected data are systematically stored in CSV log files, digital coding sheets, and screenshot archives to ensure research replicability.

The data collection technique was executed using a hybrid approach, combining scraping tools via Google Colab with manual searching to ensure the quality of contextual data that machines might overlook. The researcher documented the observation process through a digital logbook, recording daily login frequencies during the 60-day observation period and the duration of observation during the peak virality of the issue. To minimize algorithmic bias, data triangulation (comparing various types of account interactions) and theoretical triangulation were performed. Ethical reflection was strictly applied by anonymizing user identities through a coding system (e.g., Individual-Account 1, Fandom-Account 2, Media-Account 3, etc.) and recontextualizing data to avoid harming the subjects, despite the data being public in the digital sphere.

Data analysis was conducted systematically through thematic analysis integrated with Foucault's perspective on power and Couldry's social mediation. The analytical stages began with coding, followed by categorization based on interaction patterns, and finally the development of themes concerning forms of digital sovereignty. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was utilized during the final interpretation stage to dissect how language serves as an instrument of digital power (Fairclough, 2013). To ensure reliability, a peer-debriefing procedure was conducted to verify the coding results. This integration ensures that the

research findings are not merely descriptive but are theoretically capable of explaining the distribution of power within the digital space.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Communication Patterns and the Operational Mechanism of Cancel Culture on Social Media

The study shows that cancel culture on social media does not emerge randomly but follows a the initial phase of analysis in this study began by mapping the digital data profiles collected during the observation period from January 10 to March 10, 2025. From a total of 300 key posts (tweets) analyzed through virtual ethnography, empirical evidence was found regarding the massive mobilization of public opinion on the X platform. The researcher positioned themselves as a passive observer to maintain data authenticity until data saturation was reached in the fourth week, at which point narrative patterns began to repeat. Although the sample quantity was limited to 300 primary posts to maintain the depth of qualitative analysis, the resulting accumulation of interactions showed extraordinary figures, as summarized in the following table.

**Table 1. Accumulation of Digital Interactions in the Abidzar Al Ghifari Case**

Interaction Category	Accumulated Total	Descriptive Explanation
Replies (Quotes & Comments)	44,175	Interactive discussion and negotiation of meaning among users.
Retweets (Diffusion)	95,028	Narrative escalation and expansion of boycott information reach.
Likes (Appreciation)	523,274	A form of social validation and collective approval of the narrative.
Views (Reach)	57,523,565	Total visual exposure of content on users' screens.

Source: Researcher's Analysis, 2025

The initial evidence indicates a massive escalation of interaction with the following quantitative data accumulation: 57,523,565 views, 523,274 likes, 95,028 retweets, and 44,175 replies. Data saturation was achieved in the fourth week of observation, where narrative patterns became repetitive, and no new analytical theme categories were identified from the digital informants.

The reach (Views) exceeding 57.5 million exposures confirms that the Abidzar Al Ghifari controversy transcended specific fandom boundaries and transformed into a massive national discourse. The volume of views, which is more than double the number of active X users in Indonesia, indicates that the content was consumed repeatedly and distributed across networks by the platform's aggressive algorithms. The dominance of Retweets (95,028) over Replies (44,175) suggests that the occurring communication pattern tended toward narrative propagation. Netizens did not merely stop at the discussion stage; they actively took on roles as information-disseminating agents to expand the reach of the boycott movement. Meanwhile, the number of Likes (523,274) serves as a crucial indicator of a digital consensus that provides moral legitimacy for the public to pressure the individuals and institutions involved.

To deeply dissect the dynamics behind these figures, the researcher systematically coded the 300 posts into two levels of classification. First, the Netizen Reaction Category, which includes: (1) Professionalism criticism; (2) Moral and social value criticism; (3) Sarcastic humor and satire; (4) Support or defense of the target; (5) Neutralization and fact-finding; (6) Boycott and cancellation calls; (7) Polarization and inter-netizen conflict; (8) Amplification and passive participation; and (9) Meta-reflection on cancel culture. This categorization shows that public reactions were highly diverse, ranging from frontal attacks to critical reflections on the phenomenon itself.

Second, the Analytical Theme Category, used to observe the working power structures, consists of: (1) Normalization and moral disciplining of public figures; (2) Professional delegitimization and symbolic authority; (3) Satire and humor as symbolic punishment; (4) Production and contestation of public morals; (5) Mobilization and collective social sanctions; (6) Resistance and counter-narratives; (7) Polarization and fragmentation of the public sphere; (8) Amplification and the attention economy; and (9) Reflection on netizen power and cancel culture. The integration of massive interaction data with detailed thematic categories is a vital foundation for understanding how digital power mechanisms work in directing public opinion and imposing social sanctions in Indonesia.

The analysis of the operational mechanism of cancel culture cannot be separated from the identification of the digital actors involved. In Foucault's (1980) perspective, power is not centralized in a single entity but spreads capillarily through social relations. In the context of the X platform, this power is manifested through the ability of various actors to produce, amplify, and validate the cancellation narrative. To dissect how these dynamics work empirically, the researcher developed a matrix of actor typologies based on the data sample, classifying their specific roles and communication characteristics. This mapping is crucial to prove that cancel culture is a structured network operation, where each actor has a strategic function in undermining the target's symbolic authority.

**Table 2. Matrix of Actor Typologies and Role Distribution in the Cancel Culture Network**

Actor Typology	Role in the Network	Communication Characteristics	Description
Fanbase/Fandom Accounts	Hub (Information Center)	Amplifying trigger narratives anonymously and collectively via "menfess" or quote systems.	Fandom Account 1 quote-tweeted a post reaching 223,100 views, acting as a gateway. Fandom Account 2 posted about Abidzar and the film poster, generating 3.1M views, 28k replies, 33k retweets, and 15k likes.
Individual Accounts	Agitator	Producing moral criticism, satire, and frontal boycott narratives without personal reputation burdens.	A single post from an individual account reached 4.7M views, 1.4k replies, 10k retweets, and 7.2k likes, proving organic voice power.
Media/Influencer Accounts	Validator	Providing legitimacy through re-reporting or quoting statements	Media Account 17 became a massive interaction hub where netizens delegitimized film quality.

		to increase engagement.	
Film Support Accounts	Resister	Attempting neutralization or defense, but often becoming "ratioed" (outvoiced).	Appeared in the "Support/Defense" category, but volume was significantly lower than Moral Criticism (21%).

Source: Researcher's Analysis based on N=300, 2025

Through the table above, it is clear that digital power operations are no longer linear. Individual/Anonymous Accounts in the data demonstrated a reach (Views) far greater than official institutional accounts. This proves Foucault's claim that in a network society, knowledge and power are produced through small, massively interconnected relations. The dominance of anonymous accounts as Agitators indicates that anonymity on the X platform provides netizens with a "weapon" to exercise social control over public figures.

To strengthen the validity of findings regarding role distribution, the researcher presents authentic evidence in the form of screenshots (captures) of key posts with the most significant impact on case escalation. The juxtaposition of this visual evidence is intended to transparently show how power structures operate on X, where the authority of truth is no longer determined by official status but by the volume of digital engagement. The following evidence illustrates the contrast between narratives produced by anonymous individuals acting as the engine (agitator) and media accounts performing massive validation. Each screenshot represents a specific actor typology identified earlier.

As an initial step to map power distribution, the researcher presents activity evidence from Fanbase or Fandom accounts acting as hubs. As seen in Figure 1, these accounts play a crucial role in collectively amplifying trigger narratives through *menfess* and *quote tweet* systems. The power of these accounts lies not in personal authority, but in their ability to act as gatekeepers who pull issues from the private sphere into the public sphere. Empirical evidence shows that a single post from Fandom Account 1 generated an instant escalation with 223,100 views, supported by 1,300 likes, 350 replies, and 342 retweets. These figures are not mere popularity metrics; they represent "amplification power" that allows a cancellation narrative to gain massive initial momentum before spreading to other actor clusters.



**Figure 1. Screenshot of Fandom Account 1's Tweet acting as an Information Hub**

Original text (Indonesian): *Pengen ngejelasin tp pasti tetep bakal ga suka, emg dari dasar nya udh ga setuju mau di jelasin kek apaan tau sepertinya akan tetap begitu. Rasisme di indonesia ternyata masih ada.*

English translation: I want to explain, but you probably still won't like it. From the beginning, you already disagreed, so no matter how I explain it, it seems it will stay that way. Apparently, racism still exists in Indonesia.

Further evidence of fandom dominance as an information hub is seen in Figure 2. In this phase, Fandom Account 2 posted a narrative linking Abidzar's controversial statement with the film's visual promotional material (poster). This post triggered a massive explosion of digital engagement, totaling 3.1 million views, 33,000 retweets, and 28,000 replies. The scale of interaction reaching millions proves that fandom accounts act as effective aggregators in transforming specific issues into national public consumption. The high number of retweets compared to likes indicates an aggressive mobilization of information dissemination. In the context of the attention economy, Figure 2 shows how fandom accounts can capture vast public attention, ensuring the cancellation narrative becomes the dominant discourse across user timelines.



**Figure 2. Screenshot of Fandom Account 2's Tweet acting as an Information Hub**

Original Text (Indonesian): *FunFact: Abidzar ciptakan karakternya sendiri di mvs Business Proposal Versi Indonesia. Gimana menurut kalian, apakah hal tersebut sah-sah saja? Tayang 6 Feb di bioskop.*

English Translation: Fun fact: Abidzar created his own version of the character in the Indonesian adaptation of *Business Proposal*. What do you think — is that acceptable? In theaters February 6.

Contrasting the role of fandoms as information bridges, Figure 3 represents the Individual Account typology acting as an Agitator. In this context, individual actors produce moral criticism, satire, and frontal boycott narratives without the personal reputation burden typically attached to institutional accounts. Empirical evidence in Figure 3 shows an extraordinary phenomenon where a single organic post from an individual account penetrated 4.7 million views, with 10,000 retweets and 7,200 likes. This achievement directly proves Foucault's (1980) thesis regarding the diffuse and non-hierarchical nature of power. The power of organic netizen voices in this case appears more dominant than official narratives, where thousands of replies to the post became a space for moral contestation that validated the cancellation. The high reach of individual accounts underscores that cancel culture is driven by "digital grassroots power" capable of creating massive social pressure through a single interaction node resonant with public anger.



**Figure 3. Individual Account as an Agitator and Manifestation of Organic Power**

Original Text (Indonesian): *abidzar, kamu kyknya perlu belajar PR yg baik. omonganmu bisa bikin mati filmnya sebelum tayang. seorang aktor yg baik bukan takut sama fans fanatik, tapi justru mengapresiasi krn karya itu besar jg andil mereka.*

English Translation: Abidzar, it seems you need to learn proper public relations. Your statement could kill the film before it even premieres. A good actor is not afraid of fanatic fans, but instead appreciates them, because they also play a significant role in the success of the work.

To understand deeply how public sentiment is constructed, the researcher categorized the entire data sample through systematic thematic coding. This step is crucial for identifying the range of netizen responses, which are not only emotional but also carry ideological and professional dimensions. The findings show broad reaction fragmentation, with strong concentration on work ethics and public figure responsibility. The integration of theme frequency and percentages in the table below provides an objective overview of the dominant narratives driving the cancel culture phenomenon against Abidzar Al Ghifari.

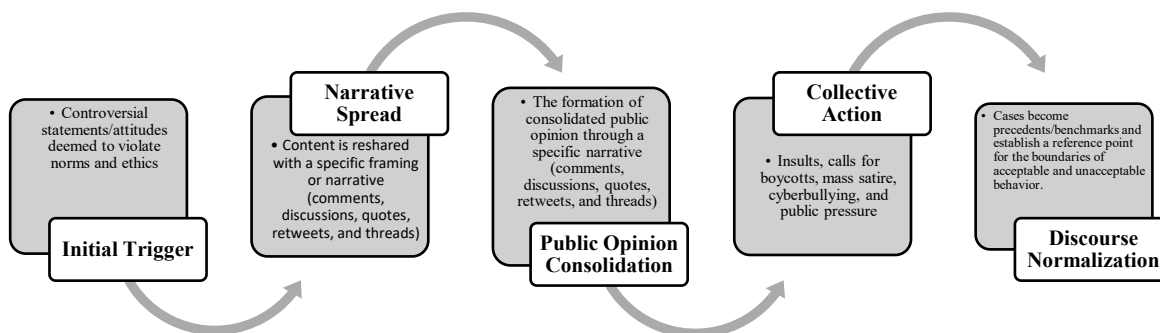
**Table 3. Distribution of Netizen Reaction Typologies and Discourse Contestation on X**

Reaction Category	Frequency	Percentage
Professionalism criticism	161	53.67%
Moral and social value criticism	36	12.00%
Sarcastic humor and satire	31	10.33%
Boycott and cancellation calls	29	9.67%
Amplification and passive participation	15	5.00%
Neutralization and fact-finding	12	4.00%
Support or defense of the target	8	2.67%
Meta-reflection on cancel culture	7	2.33%
Polarization and inter-netizen conflict	1	0.33%
Total	300	100.00%

Based on the interaction flow and thematic coding of N=300 primary data, it is revealed that the mechanism of cancel culture operates through five structured and repetitive cycle stages. This cycle begins with the triggering event, where Abidzar’s controversial statement—deemed a violation of professional norms—acts as the catalyst. Data show that the primary narrative in this phase is dominated by the perception of the subject’s failure to meet creative industry standards, recorded as Professionalism Criticism (53.67%). The open nature of the X platform accelerates content spread, where a single quote tweet can reach 223,100 views in a short time, proving that micro-events can rapidly transform into massive public discourse.

Following the trigger, the cycle continues to the narrative diffusion stage. In this phase, both public and private accounts amplify the issue through sharper moral framing, labeling the subject as “anti-research.” This is followed by the public opinion consolidation stage, marked by the formation of a collective netizen consensus. Social media algorithms play a crucial role as echo chambers that amplify negative message resonance through 523,274 likes. This dominance is reinforced by Moral and Social Value Criticism (12.00%) and Sarcastic Humor and Satire (10,33%). The use of satire here serves as a “symbolic punishment” to delegitimize the subject’s authority in the public sphere.

This consolidation is then reflected in the collective action stage, where netizen moral solidarity transforms into tangible horizontal pressure. Data confirm that the Boycott and Cancellation Calls category reached 9.67%, exerting direct reputational pressure on the related film project. Conversely, defensive efforts were minimal, with Support for the Target at only 2.67%. The sharp imbalance between critical narratives (accumulating over 75%) and defensive narratives proves a public opinion hegemony that isolates supporting voices. The cycle finally reaches the discourse normalization stage, where the case enters digital collective memory with a total reach of 57.5 million views, reshaping acceptable behavioral standards within the social media ecosystem. Figure 4 illustrates the cancel culture cycle in the Abidzar case.



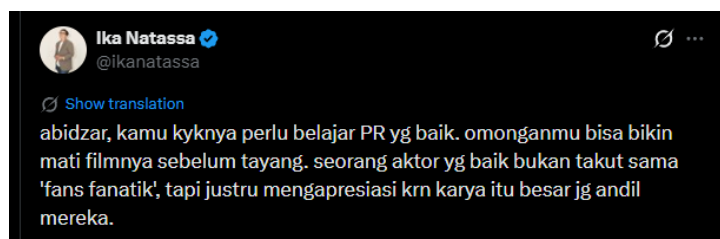
**Figure 4. The Cycle of Cancel Culture in the Abidzar Case**

This phenomenon confirms Foucault's (1980) analysis that power operates not just from above through institutions, but from below through social relations spread capillarily. Cancel culture operates as a participatory power mechanism facilitated by algorithms and massive user engagement. Consistent with Couldry's (2012) view, digital media mediates social reality where actions in the digital space become representations of collective values and morals. In this case, a single personal statement transformed into a large-scale social event, illustrating the role of netizens as new moral actors. Cancel culture is not merely a cultural symptom; it is a real, structured, and integrated power mechanism within the contemporary social media landscape.

### The Power of Netizens in Shaping Public Opinion

The Abidzar Al Ghifari controversy underscores a paradigm shift in the production of truth within the digital public sphere, where informational authority is no longer dominated by official institutions but has shifted to netizens through horizontal power mechanisms. Based on the data obtained from Table 3 regarding the Distribution of Netizen Reaction Typologies, it is evident that netizens have positioned themselves as "moral judges," exercising social control through various integrated levels of reaction. As conceptualized by Foucault (1980), this power is capillary and diffuse, where every post functions as a social surveillance instrument capable of dismantling the target's symbolic authority.

The dominance of public reaction in this case centers on work ethics, reflected in the Professionalism Criticism category with a total of 161 posts (53.67%). This volume, representing more than half of the sample, indicates that netizens are highly sensitive to the integrity of actors within the creative industry. Netizens collectively evaluate how a public figure should respect research processes and original works; failure to meet these standards triggers a delegitimization of the subject's position.



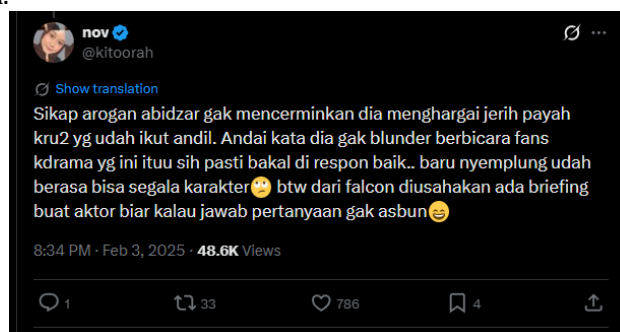
**Figure 5. Screenshot of Professionalism Criticism Tweet**

Original Text (Indonesian): *abidzar, kamu kyknya perlu belajar PR yg baik. omonganmu bisa bikin mati filmnya sebelum tayang. seorang aktor yg baik bukan takut sama fans fanatik, tapi justru mengapresiasi krn karya itu besar jg andil mereka.*

English Translation: Abidzar, it seems you need to learn proper public relations. Your statement could kill the film before it even premieres. A good actor is not afraid of fanatic fans, but instead appreciates them, because they also play a significant role in the success of the work.

The narrative dominance in this category suggests that netizens position themselves as authorities capable of educating the public on entertainment industry ethics. Significant evidence is seen in posts providing sharp evaluations of the subject's communication style. The screenshot above represents the peak of public pressure, reaching a massive audience volume of 4.7 million views, supported by 10,000 retweets and 7,200 likes. From a crisis communication perspective, the 1,400 replies indicate an intense discourse regarding the boundaries of an actor's appreciation for fans. This narrative explicitly constructs the subject's public relations failure as a tangible threat to the commercial viability of the film. This proves that in cancel culture, netizens utilize power in numbers to delegitimize an actor's professional credibility before the work is even widely consumed.

Beyond the professional dimension, digital social control extends into individual ethics through the Moral and Social Value Criticism category (36 posts; 12.00%). At this stage, the subject's personal statements are drawn into a broader discourse regarding Indonesian standards of public decency and social norms. Netizens act as guardians of values, viewing the subject's behavior as a deviation requiring collective normalization.



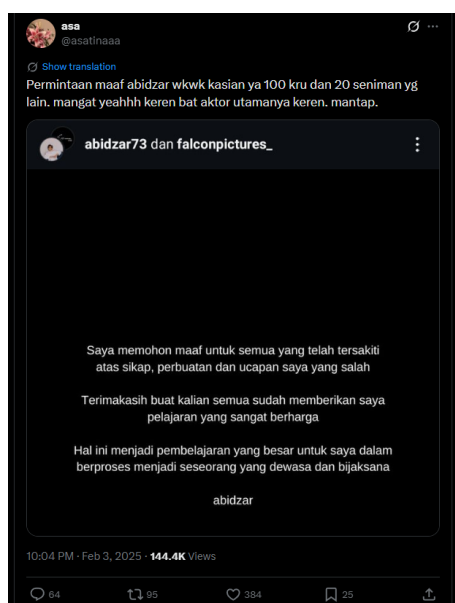
**Figure 6. Screenshot of Moral Criticism Tweet**

Original Text (Indonesian): *Sikap arogan abidzar gak mencerminkan dia menghargai jerih payah kru2 yg udah ikut andil. Andai kata dia gak blunder berbicara fans kdrama yg ini itu sih pasti bakal di respon baik.. baru nyemplung udh berasa bisa segala karakter 😏 btw dari falcon diusahakan ada briefing buat aktor biar kalau jawab pertanyaan gak asbun 😏*

English Translation : Abidzar's arrogant attitude does not reflect respect for the hard work of the crew who were involved. If he had not made a blunder in speaking about K-drama fans, it would probably have been received positively. He has only just entered the industry but already seems to think he can portray any character. By the way, Falcon should consider giving actors proper briefings so that when answering questions they do not speak carelessly.

In this category, criticism expands beyond technical professionalism to judgments of character and social ethics. Netizens perceive that a public figure's individual behavior has a moral impact on the broader work ecosystem. The data above illustrates how negative sentiment is constructed through narratives of "arrogance," deemed detrimental to the collective efforts of the film crew. This post garnered 48,000 views, 787 likes, and 33 retweets. Although the volume is lower than the previous category, specific replies demanding institutional intervention from the production house demonstrate that netizens act as moral monitors demanding institutional accountability. This confirms that in the digital space, an actor's "blunder" is no longer viewed as a private matter but as a violation of social values that harms the solidarity of artistic workers.

The mechanism of symbolic punishment is effectively present through Sarcastic Humor and Satire (31 posts; 10.33%). Satire is utilized as an instrument to degrade the subject's reputation persuasively yet destructively. Through memes and sarcastic narratives, netizens delegitimize the subject's authority while ensuring high reach due to the entertaining nature of the content.



**Figure 7. Screenshot of Sarcastic Humor or Satire Tweet**

Original Text (Indonesian): *Permintaan maaf abidzar wkwk kasian ya 100 kru dan 20 seniman yg lain. mangatt yeeahhh keren bat aktor utamanya keren. mantap.*

English Translation: Abidzar's apology, lol. I feel sorry for the 100 crew members and 20 other artists. Keep it up, yeahhh, so cool, the main actor is amazing. Great.

This category reflects the use of satire to delegitimize the subject's apologies or clarifications. The screenshot above shows how sarcastic communication mocks the subject's situation. Despite using seemingly encouraging diction, the use of phrases like “wkwk” and cynical praise like “keren bat” (so cool) indicates public rejection of the apology narrative. This post reached 144,000 views, 383 likes, and 95 retweets. The presence of 64 replies dominated by similar tones reinforces evidence that satire is effective in building collective resentment. Theoretically, humor functions as a social sanction aimed at creating shaming for public figures who fail to maintain their professional reputation.

The pinnacle of cancel culture's effectiveness is reflected in Boycott and Cancellation Calls (29 posts; 9.67%). This proves that public opinion on X possesses material power capable of mobilizing the masses for economic pressure.



**Figure 8. Screenshot of Boycott Call Tweet**

Original Text (Indonesian): Mari budayakan cancel aktor blunder nan sengak dan anti kritik  
English Translation: Let's normalize canceling actors who make blunders and act arrogantly and anti-criticism.

At this stage, public reaction reaches the collective action phase, aiming to impose direct material consequences. The narratives are no longer mere criticisms but mobilizations to ostracize the subject from the entertainment industry. The data shows directive and provocative language, such as calls to “make cancel culture a habit” (cancel culture). This post gained 31,000 views, 33 retweets, and 1,000 likes, serving as a strong indicator of collective consensus for social punishment. Negative labels such as “blunder,” “sengak” (arrogant), and “anti-criticism” serve as moral justifications for the cancellation.

Furthermore, discursive dissemination is supported by Amplification and Passive Participation (15 posts; 5.00%), which ensures the issue remains relevant in trending topics.



**Figure 9. Screenshot of Amplification and Passive Participation Tweet**

Original Text (Indonesian): *baru kali ini inget liat ada aktor indo segoblok abidzar. usually i don't gaf tp yang ini goblok bgt ampe gw gatahan mau komen.*

English Translation: This is the first time I remember seeing an Indonesian actor as stupid as Abidzar. Usually I don't give a f\*\*\*, but this one is so stupid that I couldn't hold back from commenting.

This category demonstrates how individual emotional involvement, even without deep analytical narrative, plays a crucial role in expanding conflict reach via platform algorithms. The screenshot above represents organic amplification power; despite using emotional and profane diction, it achieved 521,000 views, 18,000 likes, and 1,300 retweets. From a media studies perspective, this interaction volume acts as "fuel" for the X algorithm to continue recommending the Abidzar cancellation to a wider audience, creating continuous and massive public pressure.

Amidst the dominant negative discourse, minor efforts for Neutralization and Fact-Finding occurred (12 posts; 4.00%), often providing additional context to dampen public anger.



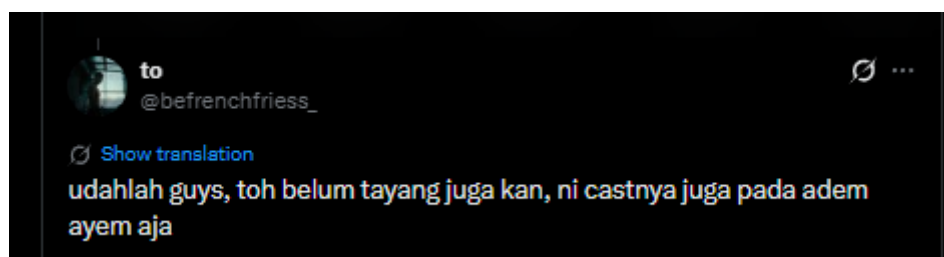
Figure 10. Screenshot of Neutralization and Fact-Finding Tweet

Original Text (Indonesian): *sebenarnya memang ga harus nyaksiin series asli / buku aslinya dulu sampai habis, kok, buat bisa ambil perannya (setuju sama pendapat Kak Ika bawahi ini). Asalkan, si aktor tau cara menempatkan diri, ngerti cara berkomunikasi yang bagus, dan bisa menghormati target penontonnya.*

English Translation: Actually, it is not necessary to finish watching the original series or reading the original book in order to take on the role (I agree with Kak Id's point here). However, the actor must know how to position himself properly, understand how to communicate well, and be able to respect the target audience.

This indicates attempts by a small segment of users to de-escalate conflict by providing objective context, shifting the discourse from personal attacks to rational discussions of acting standards. The screenshot above refers to expert opinions (e.g., Ika Natassa) to provide technical justification for the subject's stance. Although reaching 267,000 views and 5,200 likes, this category's low volume (4.00%) compared to professionalism criticism confirms that in the X ecosystem, neutral information has significantly lower reach than narratives of anger.

Finally, Support or Defense of the Target reached only 8 posts (2.67%), the lowest volume in this study. This confirms the spiral of silence phenomenon, where supporters withdraw from the conversation due to intense horizontal pressure.



**Figure 11. Support or Defense of the Target**

Original Text: *udahlah guys, toh belum tayang juga kan, ni castnya juga pada adem ayem aja.*

English Translation: Come on, everyone, it has not even been released yet, and the cast members themselves seem calm and unbothered.

The low real support—only 104 likes and 59 retweets against 95 replies—often indicates a “ratioed” phenomenon on X, where a post receives more rebuttals or bullying than support. This confirms a public opinion hegemony that creates fear among supporters, solidifying the victory of the cancel culture narrative. Theoretically, the integration of statistical data and visual evidence confirms that netizens have transformed into new moral actors with real discursive authority. As per Couldry (2012), digital media mediates social reality where every digital action becomes a representation of collective values, coordinated organically as a structured power practice to impose social discipline through strict digital surveillance and instant social sanctions.

### **The Impact of Cancel Culture on Individuals and Institutions**

Cancel culture exerts a significant impact on both individuals and institutions when public figures fail to meet the collective moral expectations of netizens. The case of Abidzar Al Ghifari serves as a primary example, particularly following his statement that he had neither watched the original South Korean drama version of *A Business Proposal* nor read the source webtoon, citing a desire to develop his own character interpretation. This statement was perceived as unprofessional and disrespectful toward the original work by both K-drama fans and webtoon readers. Furthermore, Abidzar's remark labeling K-

drama fans as “fanatical and racist” exacerbated his public image and triggered widespread boycott calls. As reported by Jasmine (2025), this statement became a primary catalyst for the controversy, generating waves of condemnation across social media.

Individually, Abidzar faced massive social media attacks in the form of insults, ridicule, and boycotts against his film projects. In the short term, his personal brand was called into question, while in the long term, cancel culture threatens to tarnish his digital reputation, impacting future employment opportunities. In an entertainment industry heavily reliant on public opinion, producers may avoid actors who have lost public support, thereby increasing the risk of lost contracts and project involvement. The position of a public figure becomes highly precarious, as a single statement can jeopardize an entire career.

The negative impact extended beyond the individual to the production institution of *A Business Proposal Indonesia*. The toxic sentiment surrounding Abidzar spread throughout the project, affecting other cast members such as Ariel Tatum, Caitlin Halderman, and Ardhito Pramono, despite their lack of direct involvement in the controversy. Boycott calls against the film were predicated on the argument that the project disrespected the original Intellectual Property (IP). Consequently, the film, which premiered on February 6, 2025, failed to attract an audience. As reported by Tempo.co, the film garnered only 6,900 viewers on its opening day—an exceptionally low figure for an adaptation with a strong pre-existing fan base. The number of cinema screens screening the film plummeted from 1,270 to 551 within a short period, eventually dwindling to only a few theaters in Jakarta (Jasmine, 2025).

The lack of audience enthusiasm was also reflected in the film's IMDb rating, which stood at a mere 1 out of 10 based on approximately 19,000 reviews—a stark contrast to the South Korean drama version, which holds an 8.1 out of 10 with over 31,000 reviews. In several regions, such as Bengkulu, the film was even pulled from major cinema chains due to minimal interest. This condition demonstrates that cancel culture is capable of exerting significant social, psychological, and financial pressure on institutions and creative projects.

This situation forced the production house to confront serious reputational challenges. They were compelled to issue clarifications, overhaul promotional strategies, and re-engineer marketing narratives to distance the project from the controversy. Recovering a tarnished image resulting from cancel culture demands long-term investment and significant financial resources. This process involves complex crisis management strategies, reputation reconstruction, and intensive public communication management to rebuild trust and support.

The phenomenon of cancel culture illustrates how the collective power of netizens in the digital space functions rapidly and effectively in shaping opinion and enforcing social norms. This power not only restricts the mobility and damages the careers of individuals directly but also has broad repercussions for the sustainability of institutions, projects, and the entertainment industry as a whole, which is deeply dependent on public perception and social legitimacy. Thus, cancel culture has become a social mechanism capable of drastically and sustainably altering the professional and economic landscape of the entertainment world.

### **The Role of Social Media as a Space for Social Mediation and Meaning Construction**

In the context of the cancel culture phenomenon against Abidzar Al Ghifari, social media plays a pivotal role as a space for social mediation rather than a mere communication channel. Drawing upon Nick Couldry's (2012) social mediation theory, social media is a site where social meaning is produced, negotiated, and disseminated by its users. Consequently, social media does not merely transmit messages; it shapes collective meaning structures through daily discursive practices. In this case, personal statements

by public figures are no longer viewed atomistically but are mediated into symbols representing the values or violations of collective norms in the eyes of the audience.

The primary catalyst for negative social mediation in this case was Abidzar's statement regarding his decision not to watch the original South Korean drama or read the source webtoon to maintain character originality. In the digital sphere, this narrative was swiftly constructed as a form of unprofessionalism and a lack of respect for the original work. This triggered a wave of disappointment from fan communities who hold a high emotional attachment to the source material. Thus, social media becomes an intense arena of negotiation between public values and the construction of meaning regarding a public figure's behavior, where the community's moral expectations become the primary determinant of the subject's social legitimacy.

This research identifies two crucial functions of social media as an instrument of mediation within the cancel culture phenomenon. The first, As Accelerator of Narrative Distribution and Asymmetric Information. Social media facilitates a massive flow of information that allows complaints, criticisms, and ridicule to spread widely within a short duration. Netizens actively share video clips and screenshots that reinforce the narrative of the subject's unsuitability. This dynamic is exacerbated by algorithmic logic that prioritizes content with high emotional engagement, causing the negative perception of Abidzar to go viral before a balanced clarification process can occur. Consequently, the subject experiences a loss of narrative control. The second, As Arena for Enforcing New Social Norms and Public Trial. Digital public discussions have given rise to new standards regarding the "ideal actor," "quality adaptation," and "professional ethics." Public judgment of Abidzar is no longer based on technical acting quality but on adherence to the moral boundaries of fan communities. These norms are dynamic and enforced through the opinion of the netizen majority, who, despite lacking professional industry authority, hold effective symbolic power to determine a public figure's eligibility in the digital public sphere.

Ultimately, these mediation dynamics create asymmetric power relations. As an individual, Abidzar must confront a collective construction of meaning that has already solidified within the digital ecosystem. Lacking control over the evolving narrative, he becomes a subject of a mediation process controlled by the audience and algorithmic logic. Minority voices that might provide context or defense tend to lose reach because they do not receive amplification from a social media system that favors emotional majority narratives.

Theoretically, in line with Couldry (2012), social media is proven to be a non-neutral space. Digital platforms possess the capability to amplify majority voices, accelerate the formation of stigma, and replace professional evaluation processes with emotional public sentiment. The cancel culture phenomenon against Abidzar serves as concrete evidence of how digital social mediation functions effectively, yet remains prone to bias, in shaping and enforcing public narratives comprehensively and permanently.

## **DISCUSSION**

Cancel culture in the Abidzar Al Ghifari case did not emerge as a spontaneous emotional outburst; rather, it operated as a structured digital power mechanism sustained through systematic communication patterns. Based on the analysis of 300 primary posts on the X platform, digital interactions generated more than 57.5 million views, with professionalism criticism dominating the narrative (53.67%), followed by moral and social criticism, satire, and boycott calls. The distribution of actor typologies shows that anonymous individual accounts and fandom accounts functioned as the main amplification hubs and agitators, while institutional accounts exerted relatively weaker influence. The operational mechanism of cancel culture unfolded through five cyclical stages: triggering, narrative diffusion, public opinion

consolidation, collective action, and discursive normalization. Digital participation thus transformed into a form of economic execution power, as reflected in the decline of cinema screens from 1,270 to 551 and the drop of the IMDb rating to 1/10. These findings directly address the primary research objective, namely to identify how netizen participation operates as a form of digital sovereignty capable of producing material consequences within Indonesia's creative industry.

Theoretically, this study draws on Michel Foucault's (1980) concept of power relations, which emphasizes that power operates capillarially through social relations rather than remaining centralized within a single institution. In this case, each post, retweet, and like functioned as a micro-practice of power that produced horizontal surveillance. Netizens did not require formal legitimacy to impose sanctions; power emerged from the accumulation of algorithmically interconnected participation. Nick Couldry's (2012) theory of social mediation further reinforces this interpretation by arguing that media functions not merely as a communication channel but as a site for the production of social meaning. Platform algorithms mediated collective emotions and amplified narratives with high affective intensity. The dominance of retweets over replies indicates a propagative rather than deliberative communication pattern. When algorithms prioritize emotional engagement, majority narratives become hegemonic and erode balanced clarification. The interaction between platform architecture, collective emotion, and discursive practices thus generates a new configuration of power: netizens act simultaneously as producers of public morality and executors of economic sanctions.

This study extends three major strands in the cancel culture literature. First, it confirms research that conceptualizes cancel culture as a mechanism of digital social control (Altamira & Movementi, 2022; Mardeson & Mardesci, 2022; Velasco, 2020). However, it moves beyond symbolic analysis by demonstrating that digital social control can culminate in concrete economic intervention. Through Foucault's framework, this study shows that digital discipline not only produces stigma but also redistributes power within the creative industry. Second, it supports findings that emphasize the psychological and material impacts of cancel culture on targets (Adeyemi, 2025; Bromwich, 2018; Lee & Abidin, 2023). This study strengthens that perspective with empirical evidence of declining cinema screens and IMDb ratings, while contributing novelty through a systematic mapping of the operational mechanism that connects digital hate discourse to measurable commercial failure. Third, it reinforces scholarship that highlights the role of algorithms in amplifying conflict (Bastian et al., 2019; Brady et al., 2023; Cobbe, 2021; Shin, 2024). Massive interaction data demonstrating the dominance of retweets and likes confirm the consolidation of opinion through algorithmic amplification. In line with Couldry (2012), platforms function as non-neutral mediators of social reality that actively shape meaning and public legitimacy. The novelty of this study lies in integrating Foucault's theory of power relations with Couldry's concept of social mediation to explain how discursive participation transforms into economic execution within Indonesia's creative industry.

Historically, this research demonstrates a shift in the production of truth from formal institutions—film critics, producers, and mainstream media—toward networked publics, defined as digitally mediated collectives that deliberate on shared concerns through online infrastructures (Beers, 2025; Ojala, 2021). Whereas professional legitimacy previously derived from industrial authorities and mass communication structures, legitimacy now emerges through polyvocal and contested negotiation within horizontal digital spaces, marked by the transformation from mass communication to networked communication (Popović & Zdravec, 2024). Digital publics no longer function as unified and centralized audiences; rather, they operate as affective and antagonistic formations shaped by algorithmic dynamics that amplify majority voices (Lünenborg & Röttger-Rössler, 2023). The dominance of professionalism criticism (53.67%), the

reach of 57.5 million views, and the mobilization of anonymous and fandom actors as amplification centers demonstrate that symbolic legitimacy now emerges within a networked public arena capable of intervening in the economic structures of the entertainment industry. Cancel culture thus represents a new phase in the evolution of Indonesia's digital public sphere, in which authority no longer resides exclusively in formal institutions but becomes negotiated and enforced through horizontal power relations in networked society.

Socially, this phenomenon reflects the emergence of netizens as collective moral actors who perform surveillance, evaluation, and punishment through participatory mechanisms. Netizens no longer merely comment; they actively define standards of public conduct through practices that scholars describe as digital vigilantism, namely platform-based surveillance and sanctioning enacted in the name of justice or social norms (Loveluck, 2020; Trottier, 2017). These practices include naming and shaming, amateur investigation, and coordinated boycott mobilization, often driven by perceptions of institutional failure in enforcing ethical standards (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022; Dunsby & Howes, 2019). Functions of oversight that formal institutions previously monopolized now disperse across networked publics, generating capillary and horizontal mechanisms of social control. As Trottier (2017, 2020) argues, digital vigilantism operates as a weaponization of visibility that produces asymmetric power relations: targeted individuals struggle to counter algorithmically amplified consensus, while majority publics accumulate symbolic legitimacy to discipline and stigmatize without formal accountability procedures.

Ideologically, cancel culture reflects the transformation of morality into a performative practice of symbolic power. Morality no longer operates solely as a normative value system; it becomes an instrument of legitimation and delegitimation produced through language, symbols, and digital discourse circulation. Bourdieu conceptualizes symbolic power as the capacity to impose meaning and legitimize social order through symbolic forms (Houtsonen & Antikainen, 2008; Villa, 2011). Symbolic capital—such as professional reputation, artistic credibility, and public recognition—becomes contested and vulnerable to collective destruction through algorithmically orchestrated participation. In this case, 53.67% of narratives centered on professionalism criticism, supported by 523,274 likes and 95,028 retweets, which collectively functioned as accumulations of symbolic legitimacy for the digital majority to redefine ethical standards. This process exemplifies symbolic violence, whereby majority consensus subtly yet effectively imposes moral norms (Villa, 2011). Consistent with García-Jiménez et al. (2014), digital discourse representation can construct collective symbolic power capable of mobilizing tangible social action. In digital space, symbolic capital no longer remains monopolized by industry institutions; rather, it undergoes reconstruction through networked interaction and affective resonance, as also observed in contemporary transformations of symbolic capital in digital communication practices (Öztay & Yurdakul, 2025). The ideology of professional meritocracy shifts toward an ideology of digital legitimacy grounded in visibility, collective affect, and discursive dominance.

Cancel culture functions as a mechanism of horizontal accountability that enables publics to correct public figures rapidly and effectively. This mechanism may encourage higher standards of professionalism and social sensitivity. However, dysfunction emerges when processes neglect clarification and proportionality. Majority narrative dominance produces a spiral of silence that eliminates rational deliberative space, marginalizing minority voices and contextual explanations. Algorithms do not operate neutrally; they function through algorithmic amplification, a process in which platform systems increase the reach and impact of content based on emotional engagement intensity (Glotfelter, 2019). The accumulation of 523,274 likes and 95,028 retweets demonstrates how algorithmic preferences for high-engagement content accelerate the circulation of collective anger. Research on algorithmic bias shows that

digital systems can reinforce inequality and disproportionate perceptions, thereby magnifying social and economic consequences (Shin & Shin, 2023). Furthermore, the concept of algorithmic imprint suggests that algorithm-driven decisions leave long-term infrastructural and reputational effects even after the initial event subsides (Ehsan et al., 2022). In such contexts, digital punishment may exceed the severity of the original offense, producing disproportionate economic consequences and narrowing opportunities for meaning negotiation. Cancel culture within algorithmic ecosystems thus constitutes not merely moral expression but a technologically reinforced process that systematically generates power asymmetries.

In light of these identified dysfunctions—particularly the erosion of clarification space, majority dominance, and algorithmically intensified emotional bias—structural and operational interventions become necessary. First, digital platforms should develop more accountable moderation policies that respond proactively to viral escalation, including time-based contextualization mechanisms that provide clarification windows or temporarily delay automated amplification when extreme interaction spikes occur. Such measures can prevent premature digital sanctioning before proportional verification occurs. Second, the creative industry should establish early crisis communication systems grounded in algorithmic literacy, enabling production houses and public figures to implement rapid response protocols that account for content distribution logic, trending mechanisms, and digital momentum. Third, policymakers and educators should strengthen critical digital literacy programs by emphasizing algorithmic amplification dynamics, the risks of digital mob mentality, and the long-term consequences of reputational harm, thereby cultivating reflective rather than purely emotional participation. Fourth, platforms should enhance deliberative digital mechanisms by implementing features that facilitate contextual dialogue—such as official clarification tagging, alternative perspective pinning, or automated reduction of extreme polarizing content visibility—so that digital public space functions not solely as an arena of emotional resonance but also as a more balanced and proportionate site of meaning negotiation.

## **CONCLUSION**

Cancel culture in the Abidzar Al Ghifari case did not emerge as a spontaneous emotional outburst; rather, it functioned as a structured, layered, and algorithmically mediated practice of digital power. The research demonstrates that netizen participation on the X platform formed a systematic operational mechanism that unfolded through sequential phases: triggering, narrative diffusion, opinion consolidation, collective action, and discursive normalization. The accumulation of interactions reaching 57.5 million views, the dominance of professionalism criticism (53.67%), and the minimal level of support (2.67%) indicate the formation of digital public opinion hegemony. Within this configuration, netizens operated as collective moral actors who produced and distributed legitimacy and delegitimation through symbolic capital. Cancel culture generated tangible material consequences, including the reduction of cinema screens from 1,270 to 551 and the collapse of the IMDb rating to 1/10, thereby demonstrating the conversion of symbolic power into concrete economic impact within the creative industry.

This study makes three primary contributions. First, it enriches digital communication scholarship by systematically mapping the operational cycle of cancel culture within the context of Indonesia's creative industry, a dimension that previous studies had not clearly defined. Second, it integrates Foucault's theory of power relations, Couldry's concept of social mediation, and Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital to explain how digital participation transforms the public sphere into a contested arena of legitimacy structured by emotional resonance. Third, it provides empirical evidence linking digital hate discourse to measurable commercial failure in cultural products, thereby expanding the understanding of cancel

culture beyond psychological or cultural interpretations and framing it as a structural mechanism of power distribution.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, the restriction of observation to the X platform limits cross-platform generalization to environments such as TikTok or Instagram, which operate under different algorithmic logics. Second, the qualitative approach based on 300 primary posts emphasizes analytical depth but does not include comprehensive quantitative network mapping through Social Network Analysis. Third, the study focuses on a single case and therefore does not capture variations of cancel culture patterns in political, religious, or other social contexts. Future research should adopt mixed-method approaches, expand cross-case comparisons, and explore algorithmic design interventions and platform governance policies in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of power dynamics within Indonesia's digital public sphere.

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