

The Behaviour of Netiquette in the Virtual Communication Culture of Mataram University Students (Netnographic Study in Facebook Group)

Muhammad Fachry¹, Rangga Alif Faresta², Hamidsyukrie Zm³, & Suud⁴

^{1,3,4}Universitas Mataram, Indonesia

²Monash University, Australia

Abstract

Indonesian netizens were named the most disrespectful netizens in Southeast Asia after the release of the Digital Civility Index (DCI) 2020 by Microsoft. Therefore, it is necessary to read and prepare formulations related to social media among the Indonesian people, especially the younger generation. This study aims to understand netiquette behavior in the virtual communication culture of Mataram University students. This research was conducted using the Netnography method in the Unram New Student Info Facebook group. This research uses a qualitative method. The total membership of the group is 33,700, representing a diverse community in terms of educational background and year of study. Data collection involved depth interviews, observation, documentation, and data triangulation. A sample of 2 informants and 4 subjects was selected for detailed analysis. The data was analyzed in three steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of this study indicate that, firstly, Mataram University netizens have understood netiquette by extrapolation even though they use other terms. Secondly, the attitude of Mataram University netizens tends to prioritize cognitive aspects in responding to all information on social media. Thirdly, in general, netizens from Mataram University have implemented netiquette well; however, when discussing campus politics or policies perceived as unfavorable to students, their responses tend to be varied and often do not prioritize netiquette.

Keywords: Facebook, Netiquette, Mataram University netizen, Netnography, Behavior

Introduction

Netizens in Indonesia have gained a reputation as some of the harshest in the world, with Microsoft's 2020 Digital Civility Index (DCI) confirming that Indonesian netizens are the least polite in Southeast Asia (Kompas, 2021). This issue has been spotlighted by various incidents, such as cyberbullying against individuals like Reemar Martin from the Philippines and Han So Hee from South Korea in April 2020 (Kumparan, 2021). Such deviant behavior, primarily exhibited by young internet users, raises significant concerns about the role of education in fostering digital civility. The rise of social media has transformed how people communicate, making virtual interactions a significant part of daily life. However, this shift has also led to challenges in maintaining respectful communication online. Subjects like Sociology have been criticized for not sufficiently addressing character education in the digital age, leading to a gap in understanding and practicing proper netiquette (Ummatqulovna, 2022). If these issues are not addressed, the consequences can be severe, including psychological harm to victims and potential legal repercussions for perpetrators (detik Health, 2021). Facebook is a widely used platform in Indonesia and provides a fertile ground for studying netiquette behavior. A study of 495 high school students in Yogyakarta revealed that over 80% of those surveyed had encountered cyber victimization (Safaria et al., 2016). This makes it an appropriate platform for examining how netiquette is practiced among users. The Facebook group "Info Mahasiswa

¹ muhammadfachryalhindi@gmail.com

Baru UNRAM" (New Student Info UNRAM) serves as a virtual gathering place for University of Mataram (UNRAM) students and prospective students, making it an ideal setting for this study.

Virtual communication, according to Severin (2001), involves the process of sending and receiving messages through cyberspace, characterized by its interactive nature. It encompasses various forms, including email, mailing lists, chatting, websites, and social media. Each of these forms has its own set of norms and etiquettes, collectively referred to as netiquette. Netiquette, or network etiquette, refers to the rules and guidelines for proper online behavior (Tedre et al., 2006). Adhering to netiquette helps ensure respectful and effective communication in the digital space. Research into netiquette behavior is vital for understanding how individuals interact in virtual environments and for promoting a more respectful online culture. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of communication ethics in social media interactions. For instance, Afriani and Azmi (2020) found that communication ethics were well-practiced in a WhatsApp group for Civic Education students. Similarly, Prajarto (2018) explored the roles of netizens in online communities, emphasizing the diversity of their contributions and interactions. Understanding netiquette behavior involves examining three key aspects: understanding, attitude, and implementation. Understanding refers to the comprehension and evaluation of netiquette principles. Attitude involves the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components that influence how individuals respond to online interactions. Implementation refers to the actual application of netiquette rules in virtual communication. Based on the fact and issues above, the researcher is interested in describing Netiquette Behaviour in the Virtual Communication Culture of UNRAM Students (A Netnography Study in the Facebook Group "Info Maba UNRAM"), therefore, this study aims to understand netiquette behavior in the virtual communication culture of Mataram University students.

Research Methods

The approach used in this study is a qualitative approach with the netnography method. Netnography is a participant-observation research method that collects data through online field research, drawing from ethnographic methods to explore virtual communities and interactions. This study was conducted in the Facebook group "Info Mahasiswa Baru UNRAM" (UNRAM New Student Info) from November to December 2021.

A. Research Variables and Concepts

The key variables and concepts measured in this study include:

1. Understanding of Netiquette: This involves assessing students' knowledge and awareness of netiquette principles.
2. Use and Access of Social Media: This looks at how students engage with and utilize social media platforms, particularly Facebook.
3. Characteristics of Students in Social Media Interactions: This examines the demographics (such as community affiliation, educational background, and year of study) and behavioral patterns of students during social media interactions.

B. Data Collection Methods

Data collection was carried out using three primary methods:

1. In-Depth Interviews: Conducted with selected informants through Facebook (via their

Facebook accounts). These interviews aimed to gather detailed insights into their understanding and application of netiquette.

2. Observation: Monitoring conversations among students in the group, including posts and comments, to observe their behavior and interaction patterns.
3. Documentation: Recording events in the form of written notes and images (screenshots of posts), which provided concrete examples of netiquette behavior and interactions.

C. Sample and Sampling Technique

The study utilized purposive sampling to select informants and subjects from the Facebook group, which has 33,700 members. The sampling aimed to ensure representation across various communities, educational backgrounds, and years of study.

1. Informants: A total of six informants were selected for in-depth interviews. These informants were chosen based on their active participation in the group and their ability to provide rich, detailed information about netiquette practices.
2. Subjects: Four subjects were identified for detailed observation. These subjects were selected based on their prominence and activity levels within the group discussions, which allowed for comprehensive observation of their online behavior.

D. Selection Criteria for Informants and Subjects

1. Activity Level: Members who actively participate in discussions and frequently post or comment.
2. Diversity: Ensuring a mix of informants and subjects from different academic years and educational backgrounds to capture a wide range of perspectives.
3. Relevance: Individuals whose contributions were pertinent to the research questions, particularly those demonstrating clear examples of netiquette behavior.

E. Data Triangulation

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, triangulation was conducted through:

1. Interviews: Both online and offline interviews were conducted with each subject and informant to cross-check information and gather diverse perspectives.
2. Documentation: Systematic collection of screenshots and written notes to document observed behaviors and interactions.
3. Source Triangulation: Cross-verifying information by interviewing each subject and informant using the same set of questions and techniques.

F. Data Analysis

The data analysis process involved three stages:

1. Data Reduction: Simplifying and condensing the data related to netiquette behavior, focusing on relevant information and discarding the extraneous.
2. Data Analysis: Organizing the data into coherent patterns and relationships, allowing for a clear presentation of findings.
3. Drawing Conclusions: Interpreting the data to extract meaningful insights and summarizing the results obtained from the data reduction and analysis phases

Results and Discussion

The background of this research is the Facebook group “Info Mahasiswa Baru Unram”. This group was created on May 23, 2014, by Abdul Ghafur, an alumnus of Mataram University (Unram), and it remains active to date. By the end of 2021, the Facebook group had

accumulated 34,355 members, including current and prospective students, Unram faculty members, administrative staff, alumni, and even individuals who are not directly affiliated with Unram. The communication within the group is diverse. Based on observations conducted from April to November 2021, there were 214 posts:

- 108 posts from members asking questions and sharing information related to academic matters,
- 45 posts sharing information about student affairs or events,
- 44 posts sharing various content such as personal opinions, YouTube videos, blogs, and other media,
- 18 posts promoting student-related businesses or services.

For the purpose of this study, a selection of participants was made to explore netiquette behavior in the virtual communication culture of Unram students. Specifically, four informants and eight subjects were chosen based on their active participation and relevance to the study objectives. Informants are defined as individuals who provide detailed insights and background information about the group's dynamics and communication norms. In contrast, **subjects** are those whose specific posts and interactions are analyzed to understand their netiquette behavior. For this article, we present detailed results from 2 out of the 4 selected informants and 4 out of the 8 selected subjects. This subset was chosen to highlight representative examples of the broader trends observed in the group. The selection criteria and detailed profiles of all informants and subjects will be discussed in the methodology section.

Informant 1

Informant 1 is a current student at University of Mataram and an active member of the "Info Mahasiswa Baru Unram" Facebook group. Informant 1 has been a member of the group since its early days and has actively participated in various discussions and interactions within the group. As an informant, the insights and experiences provide valuable information regarding netiquette behavior among Unram students in the virtual communication context. Informant 1 has observed and engaged in conversations, shared information, and expressed his opinions while adhering to netiquette principles. Informant 1 input helps in understanding the dynamics and practices of netiquette within the online community of Unram students.



Figure 1. Informant 1 asking in the Group

Informant 1 observes that the most frequent posts in Facebook group are related to campus information, ranging from the registration process to course-related discussions. However, commercial advertisements are often rejected by the group members, sometimes leading to negative comments. Particularly, posts expressing support for certain candidates in the student council elections tend to generate controversy when they are shared by opposing parties. Additionally, there are discussions related to campus policies that can provoke anger among the students. Comparisons between the buildings of Mataram University and other universities also generate a significant number of comments. On the other hand, posts related to organizational advertisements often receive fewer comments.

Based on the triangulation of data, it can be concluded that Informant 1 perceives that the netiquette behaviour of Unram students is relatively safe, although with some caveats.

Informant 2

Informant 2 is an admin of the "Info Mahasiswa Baru Unram" Facebook group who is actively involved in managing the group, making posts, and responding to information needs. When asked about His/Her perspective on managing the group, Informant 2 provided some important insights.



Figure 2. Academic matters post

The majority of posts in the group are related to academic matters, such as inquiries about classes and university policies. The most frequently rejected posts are those that advertise sales, such as clothing or room rentals, as well as campus political discussions that have the potential to create disturbances and confusion among new students. Political discussions on campus tend to generate competition and debate. Informant 2 usually reads the posts and if there is any inaccurate or incomplete information, they assist in providing clarification or additional details.

Based on the triangulation of data, it can be concluded that Unram (Mataram University) students are disciplined netizens who understand the appropriate boundaries and guidelines of online behaviour.

Subject 1

Subject 1, named Anggun, is a member of the "Info Mahasiswa Baru Unram" Facebook group who actively participates in managing the group, making posts, and providing responses.

When asked about her experience interacting in the group, Subject 1 shared some important information. She emphasizes the importance of practicing proper netiquette, especially in the current era where social media is widely used.



Figure 3. Interview with Subject 1

Subject 1 believes that posts do not always have to be positive; it is also acceptable to provide constructive criticism or offer suggestions, if it is done respectfully and without offensive language. Subject 1 mentioned that he personally takes the time to review his posts multiple times before submitting them to ensure the content is appropriate. He understands the importance of being cautious and responsible in online interactions. From the information provided by Subject 1, it can be inferred that he values maintaining a respectful and mindful online environment within the Info Mahasiswa Baru Unram Facebook group.

Subject 2

Subject 2 is also a member of the "Info Mahasiswa Baru Unram" Facebook group who actively and reactively engages during student council elections or similar discussions. When asked about his experience interacting in the group, Subject 2 provided some important information.

According to Subject 2, as long as they do not violate social media ethics, they believe they are free to do anything with their own account. He mentioned that if they come across content that they disagree with, it doesn't necessarily mean it is negative, and they see no harm in responding to it. He acknowledged that in the world of campus politics, there is often teasing and provoking each other, especially between campaign teams.



Figure 4. Subject 2 activity in the group

Subject 2 mentioned that when he wants to comment, he chooses words that do not personally offend others, and he believes that through these comments, the public can discern what is good. Additionally, as long as he doesn't target someone's family, there's no reason to be afraid. He considers arguments and disagreements as something common among students. However, if he feels that a post is undermining his own team, he prefers to ignore it to prevent it from trending and gaining more attention.

Based on the triangulated data, it can be concluded that Subject 2 is a netizen who is confident and outspoken, similar to how he would behave in the real world. Moreover, Subject 2 engages in activities according to his own interests and responds when his interests are affected.

Subject 3

Subject 3 is a member of the "Info Mahasiswa Baru Unram" Facebook group who actively shares information about his organization. When asked about his experience interacting in the group, Subject 4 provided some important information.



Figure 5. Interview with Subject 3

According to Subject 3, the most important value in netiquette is not easily spreading hoaxes and sharing information without filtering it first. He emphasized the need for ethics, even when interacting with unfamiliar people. He mentioned that he does not like engaging in debates on social media because they tend to prolong and become fueled by personal egos. Instead, he prefers to remain silent. However, he mentioned that he sometimes participates in commenting, such as when someone asks about exam schedules, and he provides the information. He expressed fear of commenting outside his expertise or being attacked by the original poster, so his comments are carefully worded. He also mentioned feeling annoyed by differences in perception, particularly in political discussions. He reported such comments to Facebook to have them removed.

Based on the triangulated data, it can be concluded that Subject 3 is a rational and cautious netizen. He prioritizes ethical behaviour, avoids engaging in debates, and carefully considers his comments to avoid potential conflicts.

Subject 4

Subject 4 is a member of the "Info Mahasiswa Baru Unram" Facebook group and is a new student who actively asks questions and comments on the group's posts, particularly those related to new student academic information. When asked about her experience interacting in the group, Subject 4 provided some important information.



Figure 6. Subject 4 activity in the Group

According to subject 4, the most important value in netiquette is to use polite language to avoid misunderstandings. She agreed that it is important to be wise in their interactions. She mentioned that she has never really encouraged anyone in the group because when she posts questions, she rarely receives responses, which frustrates her. She also mentioned considering her words carefully when making status updates. She recalled a situation where she answered a question about offline orientation for new students and later someone commented with a question about their friend's online orientation, which she perceived as offensive. When asked if she has ever intentionally posted something, she explained that she has not done so intentionally since she is still a new student. However, she admitted to feeling afraid of being scolded by senior students.

Based on the triangulated data, it can be concluded that subject 4 is a cautious user of Facebook who considers netiquette in her communication activities. She prioritize using polite language, express frustrations when her questions go unanswered, and carefully consider her words when making posts or responding to others.

Discussion

The netiquette behavior consists of the understanding, attitudes, and implementation of Mataram University's students when using social media. The following is an explanation of the data processing results related to netiquette behavior:

Students' Understanding of Netiquette

The findings show that Unram students' understanding of the term "netiquette" is still lacking, but they do understand the substance of netiquette when it is explained using other terms such as internet ethics or social media ethics. In general, they understand that the most important value of netiquette is to use correct and polite language. By "correct and polite language," they mean language that does not convey biased meanings or offend others based on race, ethnicity, or religion. They agree that on social media, users should prioritize netiquette and cannot do whatever they want even with their own accounts. They believe that if activities without netiquette are allowed on Facebook, it will lead to many negative impacts, especially chaos on social media. This aligns with Jean Piaget's statement that individuals over the age of 12 are capable of understanding something abstract conveyed in a concrete form, which, according to Daryanto (2012), is referred to as extrapolation-level understanding.

Students' Attitudes towards Netiquette

The findings indicate that students' attitudes towards netiquette are mainly influenced by the cognitive aspect. Unram students who are members of the Facebook group "Info Mahasiswa Baru Unram" always agree with what they consider rational. They make decisions or adopt attitudes based on their thinking process and previous experiences, such as stating that online ethics and real-life ethics are the same, not everything needs to be posted or commented on, and so on. Theoretically, this is supported by Tapscott's (2009) view that the millennial generation is an investigative generation that always seeks to discover the truth and rational reasons for what they do. Having a good understanding of netiquette contributes to the students' positive attitudes towards netiquette at Unram.

Implementation of Student Netiquette

The findings indicate that the implementation of netiquette in the Facebook group "Info Mahasiswa Baru Unram" consists of several patterns, including the following:

- a. The flow of information in the group is dominated by four types of posts. The first and most dominant type is posts or information related to academics, totaling 108 posts. Examples of this type of post include questions about the timeline for new student registration, new student documentation, information about tuition fees, and so on. The second type is events, with 46 posts. Examples of this type of post include information about student organization activities, student organization events, and similar topics. The third type is content, with 45 posts. This type includes YouTube content, blog content,

public opinions, statements of stance, and similar topics. The last type is sales, with 18 posts. Sales posts include promotions of services, product promotions, and similar topics (Primary data from the researcher's record of posts from April to November 2021). The emergence of these four types is an actualization of the values of millennial social media users who enjoy collaboration and speed. If we look at their characteristics, these four types are derived from three types of netizens: information providers, information complements, and information challengers.

- b. In general, Unram students have implemented netiquette in their communication activities on Facebook. The following are the results of data analysis on Unram student netiquette behavior based on the classification of netiquette values:
- Be Constructive: In this aspect, members of the "Info Mahasiswa Baru Unram" Facebook group often provide suggestions and support (such as likes and emoticons) to fellow students who make posts, although some may not be very appreciative due to considering the type of post.
 - Be Safe: In this aspect, members of the group generally communicate correctly and politely. However, they have also unintentionally offended others, especially when posting or commenting on campus political issues.
 - Remember, we're all human: In this aspect, members of the group do not hesitate to make posts or comments as long as they believe they are not violating any rules and can be held accountable for their accuracy. However, they are afraid of making comments that attack someone personally or go beyond their own experience or knowledge.
 - Avoid flame: In this aspect, members of the group have intentionally made posts to respond to other posts, but they do not directly attack individuals and instead focus on clarification or enlightenment. They are not afraid to engage in commenting and debating in the comment section, and they will stop the debate when it is no longer interesting or leads to endless arguments.
 - Choose your words carefully: In this aspect, members of the group always consider their words when making posts or comments to avoid biased meanings or misunderstandings.
 - Avoid "death by emoticons": In this aspect, members of the group often use emoticons, although they are mostly limited to general expressions such as smiles, laughter, fire (for encouragement), and so on. While using emoticons, few students get offended, and if there are any, it usually leans towards not understanding the intended meaning of the emoticon.
 - Accept the views of others: In this aspect, members of the group may feel annoyed by other people's posts that they consider impolite, misunderstandings, repetitive, or irrelevant content. Their response is usually more passive, such as using negative emoticons or ignoring the post. Additionally, they often scroll past posts without reading or providing any response, especially if they deem the post unimportant or not aligned with the group's principles, such as advertisements or events unrelated to their organization.

- Freedom of speech may not exist: In this aspect, members of the "Info Mahasiswa Baru Unram" group have deleted comments they deemed to have misconceptions or that were already represented by previous comments. However, they have never deleted posts as they carefully consider both the wording and substance of what they post.
- c. Although generally, Unram students have implemented netiquette, the fact remains that some have not fully applied it, especially regarding specific issues or topics such as campus politics or critical arguments against campus policies. This is evidenced by the accounts of informants and sources who mentioned that Facebook groups become lively and filled with less polite remarks when discussing politics or campus policy issues. This is because students feel that the function of Facebook as a platform for information and entertainment is disrupted. Similar to what happened at the University of Muhammadiyah at East Java, Unram students also tend to react strongly to campus political topics on Facebook due to several factors. Firstly, the lack of modernization (not perceiving any innovation in thinking), changes in the social structure of students (perceiving the student council (BEM) as less beneficial to them), and conflicts among campus leaders (student figures with vested interests participating in political events).
- d. Generally, Unram students who are members of the Facebook group can be considered as netizens who know their place. This is evidenced by their tendency to give more attention (in the form of likes or comments) to posts related to information about new Unram students. Information other than about academics (such as events and sales) receives less attention. However, interestingly, posts about campus politics and campus policies also receive a lot of attention, but the responses vary and tend to provoke arguments. This fact further emphasizes that the value of integrity among millennials, as stated by Tapscott (2010), has been applied.

Courage to express opinions is still dominated by seniors or older students. Meanwhile, new students tend to use fake accounts and are more passive. This is evidenced by observations that recorded 13 accounts as the most frequent posters, of which 9 were older students and the other 4 were new students. Upon further investigation, it was found that 2 out of the 4 new student accounts were fake accounts. The factor of adaptation causes new students to not play a significant role in shaping the information in the group. They use fake accounts to communicate to feel more freedom in asking questions or expressing their opinions.

Conclusion

Based on the various discussions above, this research concludes that, In general, Unram students have an understanding of the definition of netiquette (although assisted by other terms), as evidenced by their understanding that has reached the extrapolation stage. The netiquette attitude of Unram students is rational. They always consider logical reasons and their previous experiences when making decisions. Overall, the implementation of netiquette in the Facebook group "Info Mahasiswa Baru Unram" is quite good. However, they do not apply netiquette in certain cases, such as campus politics. Additionally, Unram students who are members of the Facebook group "Info Mahasiswa Baru Unram" are netizens who know their

place and are disciplined. However, due to adaptation factors, the posts or information in the group are still dominated by older students.

References

- Afriani, F., & Azmi, A. (2020). Penerapan Etika Komunikasi di Media Sosial [The Application of Communication Ethics in Social Media]. *Journal of Civic Education*, 3(3), 331-338. <https://doi.org/10.24036/jce.v3i3.372>
- Daryanto. (2012). *Evaluasi Pendidikan*. PT. Rineka Cipta.
- detik Health. (2021, February 21). *Psikolog: Suka Nyinyir di Medsos Biasanya Insecure dan Rendah Diri*. Psychologist: People Who Like to Be Snarky on Social Media Are Usually Insecure and Have Low Self-Esteem]. <https://health.detik.com/berita-detikhealth/psikolog-suka-nyinyir-di-medsos-biasanya-insecure-dan-rendah-diri>
- Kumparan. (2021, February 20). *4 Perempuan dari Luar Negeri yang Sempat Jadi Korban Bullying Netizen Indonesia*[4 Foreign Women Who Were Previously Victims of Bullying by Indonesian Netizens]. <https://kumparan.com/miss-kepo/4-perempuan-dari-luar-negeri-yang-sempat-jadi-korban-bullying-netizen-indonesia>
- Kompas Tekno. (2021, February 21). *Jumlah Pengguna Facebook Tembus 2,7 Miliar*[The Number of Facebook Users Reaches 2.7 Billion]. <https://tekno.kompas.com/read/jumlah-pengguna-facebook-tembus-2-7-miliar>
- Prajarto, N. (2018). *Netizen dan Infotainment*: Studi Etnografi Virtual pada Akun Instagram @lambe_turah. *Jurnal ILMU KOMUNIKASI*, 15(1), 33–46. <https://doi.org/10.24002/jik.v15i1.1367>
- Safaria, T., Tentama, F., & Suyono, H. (2016). Cyberbully, Cybervictim, and Forgiveness among Indonesian High School Students. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology-TOJET*, 15(3), 40-48.
- Severin, W. J. (2001). *Communication Theory: History, Methods, and Applications in Mass Media*. Kencana
- Tapscott, D. (2009). *Grown up Digital: How the Net Generation Is Changing the World*. McGraw Hill.
- Tapscott, D. and Williams, A. (2010) Innovating the 21st century university: It's Time. *EducauseReview*, 45(1),17-29
- Tedre, M., Kamppuri, M., & Kommers, P. (2006). An Approach To Global Netiquette Research. *IADIS International Conference on Web Based Communication*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238180077_AN_APPROACH_TO_GLOBAL_NETIQUETTE_RESEARCH#:~:text=...,peaceful%20shared%20space.%20
- Ummatqulovna, T. M. (2022). The Role of Sociology in Economic and Social Development. *International Journal of Culture and Modernity*, 16, 44–47. Retrieved from <https://ijcm.academicjournal.io/index.php/ijcm/article/view/262>