

Analysis of the Reception of Public Views on Gay Couples on TikTok @chiko_ingham Account

Sevia Nur Fadhilah¹, Istiqomah, M. Med. Kom²

^{1,2} Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo, Indonesia



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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to analyze public reception and perceptions of gay couples on TikTok, particularly focusing on how users interpret and respond to inclusive content related to sexual identity expression and LGBT advocacy. **Method:** Using a qualitative descriptive content analysis approach, data were collected through online interviews with followers of the TikTok account @chiko_ingham, allowing for an in-depth understanding of audience interpretations and attitudes. **Results:** The findings reveal that while visibility and acceptance of gay couples on social media have increased, public reactions remain diverse, encompassing supportive, neutral, and rejecting responses. These reactions align with Stuart Hall's reception theory, categorized into three positions: dominant hegemonic (fully supportive), negotiated (partially accepting within personal or cultural constraints), and oppositional (rejecting based on cultural or religious norms). **Novelty:** This research contributes to the growing body of literature on digital media and gender studies by offering a nuanced understanding of how TikTok functions as a site of meaning-making and social negotiation surrounding sexual identity in contemporary society.

INTRODUCTION

Media technology has revolutionized the way we interact and obtain information, while also setting new boundaries. As a driving force for social change, technology has become a central element in shaping the order of modern human life [1]. New media or commonly called new media is a term that refers to any communication technology that is digitized and widely available to personal use as a means of communication. New media emerged as a result of various innovations that changed the old media that was increasingly less relevant to today's technological advancements. Traditional media such as television, movies, magazines, and books do not just disappear, but undergo a process of adaptation and transformation into new forms of media [2].

One of the most popular social media platforms today is TikTok, which allows users to share short videos with a variety of themes including social issues and identity [3]. With the existence of this TikTok digital platform, every individual or group can express their identity. TikTok has become a space for various expressions of identity including LGBTQ or Gay identity, which is often marginalized in these traditional and new media. The emergence of the gay community in Indonesia on the TikTok platform can be traced back to around 2019 to 2020, when TikTok's popularity began to increase significantly in Indonesia. During this period, many users from various backgrounds began to use TikTok to express themselves, including gay individuals and couples [4].

The object of the study was the TikTok account @chiko_ingham, which was owned by a gay man named Chiko who lived with his same-sex partner and a young girl. This account features the content of their daily lives as a family, consisting of two men and a child, in the context of an everyday life full of affection and humor.

In today's advanced era, the life of the Indonesian people, who used to be rich in noble values from religious and cultural teachings, is now beginning to be influenced by ideas that are contrary to positive beliefs in the life of the nation and state. Term LGBTQ is used as a more inclusive designation for various sexual and gender identities. At first, around the 1970s, the commonly used term was Gay Groups to refer to homosexuals. [5]. However, as it develops, it is felt that the designation no longer covers the entire spectrum of identities, so it develops into LGBT and then LGBTQ. In Indonesia, the term began to spread widely in the 1990s, replacing the previous use of the term [6].

TikTok has become a dynamic platform for gay couples to share their experiences, humor, and love stories, as well as build community and visibility. While the specific content of the @chiko_ingham may not just focus on gay couples, TikTok's broader landscape celebrates different types of relationships, fostering acceptance and connectedness among viewers.

LGBTQ itself has four homosexual groups with different meanings [7]. The first group in LGBTQ is lesbians, referring to women who are emotionally and sexually attracted to other women [8]. Both gay groups are commonly used to describe men who are attracted to men, but they can also include women who have similar interests.

This gay group has a category that distinguishes their existence. Gay groups can be divided into four categories. The first category includes individuals who are able to suppress their feelings to the point of in old age and building a family with a woman. The second category of those who for decades struggled against their own feelings, until they got married and had children, but finally could no longer hide their true identity at the end of life, so they chose to reveal their identity in adulthood or commonly called "coming out" [9]. The third category includes individuals who live lives in two worlds; On the one hand, they play the role of a good husband or man, while on the other hand, they still feel an attraction to the same sex to reduce the pressure they face [10]. The last category consists of homosexual individuals who are reluctant to pretend to love women, among whom there are those who dare to have relationships with fellow men and choose to remain single throughout their lives. Bisexual is the term for individuals who have an emotional and sexual attraction to more than one gender. Meanwhile, Bisexual is an individual who has an interest in more than one gender, Transgender is an individual whose gender identity is different from the sex assigned at birth, while Queer is an umbrella term for sexual orientation and gender identity outside of heterosexual and cisgender [11].

Reception theory developed by Stuart Hall explains that the media communication process depends not only on the message produced by the creator, but also on how the audience interprets the message. Stuart Hall also argues that audiences

are not passive recipients, but rather have an active ability to interpret messages based on their experiences, values, and socio-cultural backgrounds [12] [13].

Three audience positions in reception

1. Dominant-hegemonic position, which is when the audience receives a message according to the meaning intended by the content creator. In this study, this position is shown by followers who accept the representation of gay couples on TikTok positively, even supporting their existence in the digital public space.
2. Negotiated position, which is when the audience accepts part of the message, but still interprets it according to their personal values or views. In this study, followers who were able to accept the existence of gay couples as part of social reality, but still held on to their cultural or religious values that they did not fully support.
3. Oppositional position, which is when the audience rejects a media message and interprets it as opposed to the meaning intended by the content creator. In this study, this position was shown by followers who rejected the representation of gay couples on TikTok because it was perceived as contrary to their moral, cultural, or religious beliefs. TikTok social media acts as a space for gay expression to resist people's views [14] [15].

One of the previous studies by Yuni Khoirul Fatimaha and Poppy Febriana [16] with the title "Representation of gay sexual identity on YouTube" which mentions that gay couples on YouTube dare to freely express and accept gay sexual identity as part of themselves without any problem with rejection or negative responses received in the media social. The content created by Max & Yos is like their daily life as a gay couple.

Previous research by Nur Syafira Rahman and Chatia Hastasari [17] with the title "Gay Representation in News on Social Media". which explains that gay couples in online media are rarely accepted by the public, so in some contexts they still hide their identities they.

Previous research by I Putu Harry Suandana Putra [18] "Legal Policy in Dealing with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) as a Behavioral Deviation in Indonesia". which explains that discussing Indonesia's legal policy towards LGBT which is considered a deviation of behavior.

Previous research by Rani Safira Maulidina, Zelfia, Muhammad Idris [19] "The Structure of Gay Communication Networks on Social Media (An Analysis Study of Communication Networks on Tinder Users in Makassar City)". which explains that communication on Tinder is open without hierarchy, with users using a specific code as an identity. These apps are used to search for partners, friends, or just social interactions. The communication structure that is formed follows the "all channels" model, where each user is free to interact without role restrictions.

Previous studies on audience representation and reception of gay couples on social media still show limitations. The study on YouTube emphasized the free expression of gay couples, but did not allude to the audience's reception in depth. Studies

in online media have highlighted stigma and news more without exploring direct public interaction. Legal research focuses on regulation, not on the social dynamics of public reception. The study on Tinder highlighted the gay community's internal communication network, but did not allude to the broader community's response. From these research gaps, there has been no study that specifically examines how audiences on TikTok respond to representations of gay couples, particularly through comments, slang, popular culture symbols, and interactive features such as video duets. This is an important empty space to research, considering that TikTok is a platform with a cross-generational audience base, including the Millennial Generation.

The urgency of this research lies in the increasing visibility of gay couples on TikTok which causes the dynamics of reception in society. TikTok as a media that is easily accessible across ages makes the issue of representation of gay couples not only limited to entertainment, but also social discourse that affects public perception. Therefore, this research is important to understand how Indonesian people with strong cultural and religious backgrounds respond to gay couple content in the digital space.

The problem formulation in this study focuses on two main aspects related to gay couple content on TikTok. First, this study will explore the dominant, negotiated, and oppositional responses of followers to the content. Second, this study will identify factors that influence people's views of gay couples on these platforms, including social, cultural, and educational norms. Thus, it is hoped that this research can provide deeper insights into social dynamics and public perception of sexual identity in the digital era.

This study aims to analyze the reception of gay couples on TikTok and explore the public's view of them. By using the content analysis approach of Stuart Hall's reception theory, this research is expected to provide deeper insights into the social and cultural dynamics related to LGBTQ issues in the digital era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a focus on data collection non-participatory observation of TikTok accounts @chiko_ingham to obtain data on the type of content published Through in-depth interviews via direct message (DM) on TikTok with 4 informants and Identify factors that influence society's view of gay couples [20]. This theory of reception is helpful in understanding the diverse reception of audiences to representations of gay couples, whether they accept them fully (dominant-hegemonic), adjusting to their personal views (negotiated), or reject them because they are contrary to their values (oppositional). Random sampling is a random sampling technique in which every individual in the population has an equal chance of being selected as a research informant. In this study, informants were determined using a random sampling method with reference to several clear criteria. First, informants were selected based on the level of activity on TikTok, namely those who consistently use the application, at least open and access content once a day, and have watched videos from @chiko_ingham account in the past month, and do not have their accounts private to allow researchers to conduct direct observations and interviews. Second, the informant

is a user who has followed the @chiko_ingham account so that it can be ensured that they have a direct connection to the content creator [21].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

TikTok @chiko_ingham the number of followers reaches **955.5K** and total **16.8M likes**, this account has considerable traction among TikTok users. Some highlighting their daily life as a family, consisting of a daughter and her partner. Considering that this situation is still considered unusual in Indonesian social and cultural standards, this has attracted the attention of the public [22]. In addition to expressing their identities, Chiko and her partner subtly offer a representation of non-traditional families in the online public realm by uploading their life stories on TikTok.

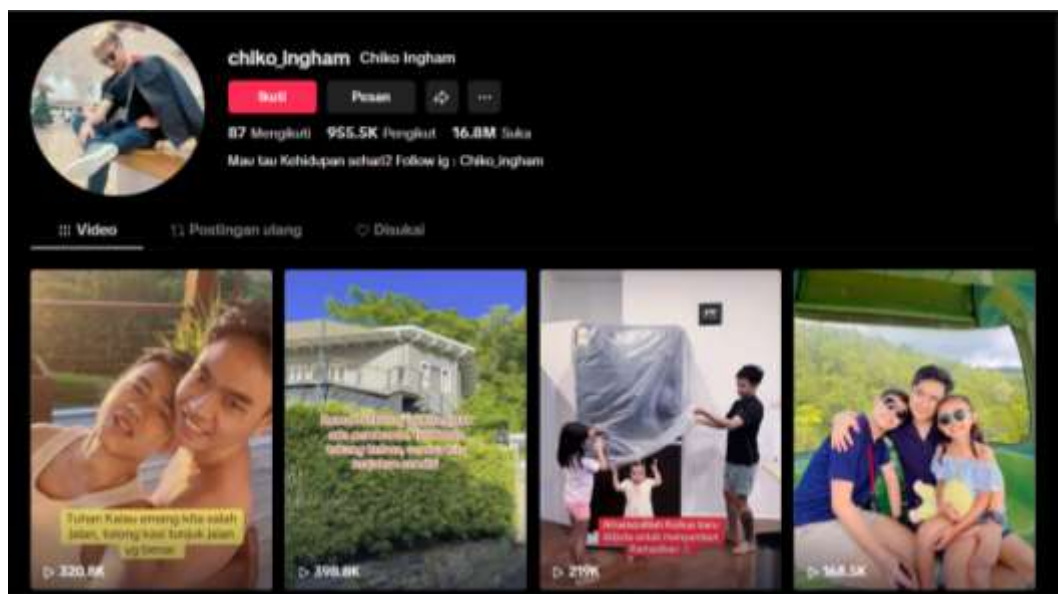


Figure 1.

The existence of this account on TikTok then became the object of research because it caused various reactions from the public, ranging from support to rejection. This makes @chiko_ingham a real example of how social media can be an advocacy tool as well as a field of social debate regarding LGBTQ acceptance in Indonesia.

The positive, moderate and negative responses of followers to gay couple content on TikTok as a result of interviews with followers of @chiko_ingham account show that public reactions to gay couple content on TikTok are very diverse. Some followers support it as a form of support and diversity, while others see it as contrary to their cultural and religious values. which can be categorized into three groups based on Stuart Hall's theory of reception [23]:

1. Dominant Hegemonic Position (Users who accept and support the existence of gay couples completely. They believe that every individual has the right to express themselves and that content about gay couples helps promote awareness and acceptance of the LGBTQ community. Düssel

In a conversation via direct message (DM) on the TikTok platform, an interview was conducted with an account named @T to obtain his views regarding the existence of gay couples on social media. In their response, respondents stated that this acceptance was based on a belief in the values of equality and freedom of expression that are part of modern society. Respondents also emphasized the right of every individual to show their identity, and felt that content about gay couples was appropriate to be displayed on platforms that supported diversity and fully agreed with the message conveyed by the content, as it was considered to help promote awareness and acceptance of the LGBTQ community.

2. Negotiated Position (Users who accept the existence of a gay couple but still have a different personal view. They recognize the individual's right to express themselves, but also maintain the cultural and religious values they profess.Düssel

In a conversation via direct message (DM) on the TikTok platform, an interview was conducted with an account named @S to obtain his views regarding the existence of gay couples on social media. In their responses, respondents reflected a moderate attitude towards gay couples on TikTok. Message respondents acknowledge the individual's rights and freedom to express themselves, but still have limitations in their acceptance of the content presented. This attitude shows a balance between the value of inclusivity and the influence of cultural and religious norms that he believes in. Respondents also emphasized that public acceptance of this kind of content is still a debate, due to the differences in values embraced by different social groups. Thus, this message reflects social dynamics in understanding and responding to gender diversity in digital media, which is influenced by cultural, religious, and social norm factors.

3. Oppositional Position (Users who deny the existence of a gay couple because they are considered to be contrary to the values they believe in. They are worried that the content could have a negative impact on the younger generation.Düssel

In direct message (DM) conversations on TikTok with @A and @B accounts, respondents expressed views that rejected the representation of gay couples on social media. They reasoned that this kind of content has the potential to have a negative impact on the younger generation who can emulate this behavior. Although they recognize that every individual has the right to express themselves, both assert that TikTok, as a platform that is widely accessed by children and teenagers, is not the right space to display gay couple content. This attitude reflects a rejection rooted in cultural, religious, and social values that shape their perspective on issues of gender diversity and sexual orientation.

After analyzing the responses from the respondents via direct message (DM), we can see that there are significant differences in the way individuals perceive and respond to the existence of gay couples on TikTok. In the context of social media like TikTok, these platforms provide a space for different groups to express their identities. However, the level of acceptance of content featuring gay couples still varies. Some respondents showed an inclusive attitude by acknowledging the right of gay couples to express themselves, even if they did not fully agree with the content presented. Meanwhile, there are also respondents who reject the existence of the content because it is considered not in accordance with the cultural and religious norms they follow.

People's views of gay couples on TikTok are influenced by various factors that reflect social, cultural, religious, educational, and digital norms. Social and cultural norms are one of the main factors in shaping public perception of gay couples. In Indonesia, social norms that are still heavily influenced by traditional values make acceptance of the LGBTQ community still a debate. For example, many societies still hold to the concept of heteronormative families as the ideal standard of relationships. This is reflected in the negative comments that often appear on TikTok content featuring gay couples, such as the @chiko_ingham account, which often receives criticism from netizens who consider the relationship to be contrary to applicable social norms.

In addition, education and social understanding also play a role in shaping society's perspective on gay couples. Individuals with higher educational backgrounds tend to be more open to issues of gender diversity and sexuality because they have wider access to information and academic studies on human rights.

Other factors that affect public perception are religion and belief. In Indonesia, many individuals consider same-sex relationships to be contrary to the religious teachings they follow. As in several videos of gay couples on TikTok, it is not uncommon for comments to appear that their relationship is "not in accordance with human nature" or "violates religious law."

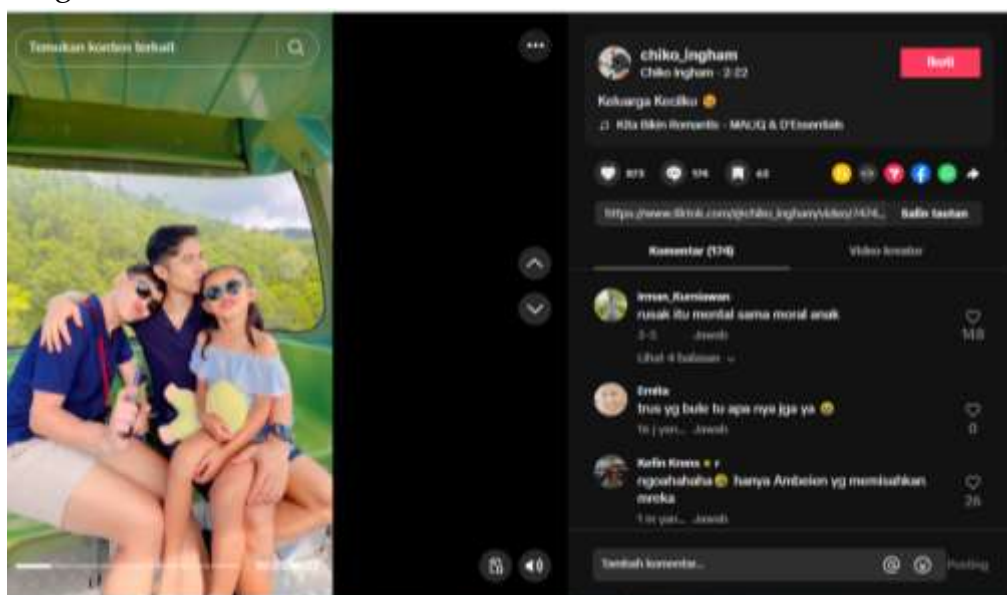


Figure 2.

A video titled "My Little Family" uploaded on February 22, 2025 shows two men with a small child in a gondola. The video received 873 likes, 174 comments, 170.1K views and 63 shares. From the various comments that have emerged, the public's response to this video has various views. One of the comments with the highest number of likes stated that the video was considered "moral and mentally damaging to children," reflecting the rejection of same-sex couples in a family context. While other comments are neutral which is more in the form of curiosity about the video content.

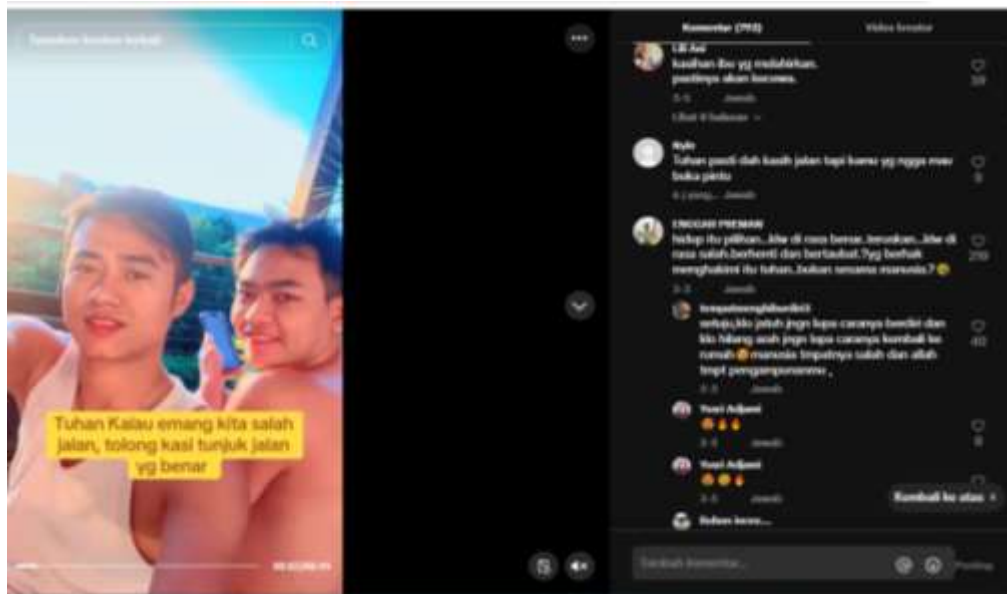


Figure 3.

The video titled "God If We Really Have the Wrong Path, Please Give Us the Right Way" uploaded on March 3, 2025 shows two shirtless men in a relaxed atmosphere with a natural scenery background. This video has received 3016 likes, 792 comments, 323K views and 140 shares. From the various comments that have emerged, the public's response to this video has various views. One of the comments with the highest number of likes stated that only God has the right to judge, not fellow humans, reflecting a more moderate perspective. While other comments affirm that the path that is considered "wrong" should be abandoned and the neutral comment is more of a suggestion for introspection and a return to the path that is considered right according to social and religious norms.

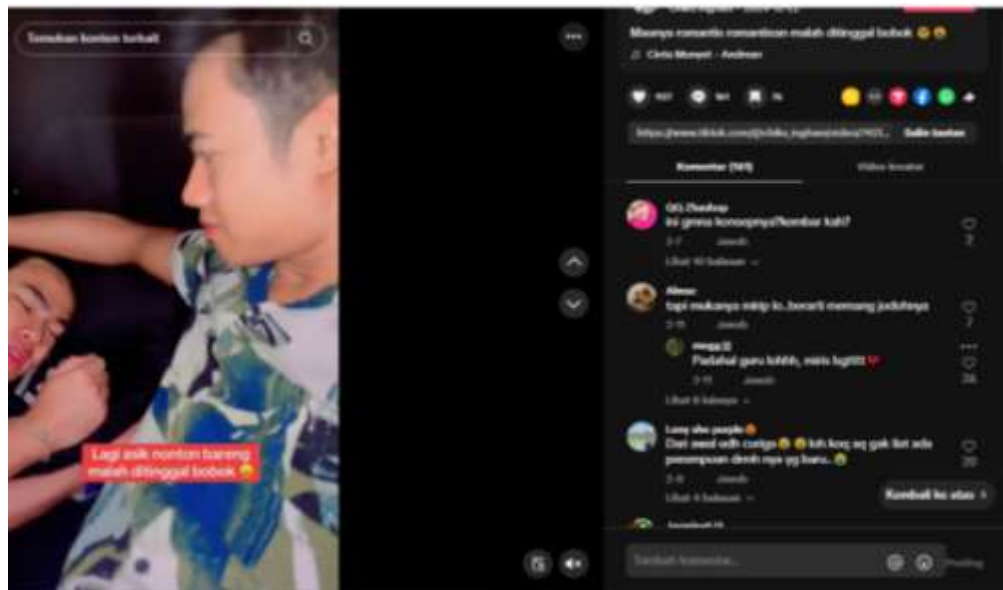


Figure 4.

The video titled "It's Fun to Watch Together Even Left Bobok" uploaded on December 22, 2024 shows two men watching a movie in the cinema. This video has received 927 likes, 161 comments, 235.8K views and 30 shares. A number of comments expressed curiosity about the relationship between the two men in the video, such as the question of whether they were twins or had a special relationship. There have also been comments highlighting the similarity of their faces, with speculation that it is a sign of a match. Humorous comments are also widely found, such as users feeling suspicious from the start and attributing it to personal experiences or relationship stereotypes. Meanwhile, there are also comments with an empathetic tone that express concern for the profession of one of the individuals in the video, stating "Even though the teacher loh, miris bgtttt" — which indicates the assumption that certain social status or professions should have different moral standards in the eyes of society.

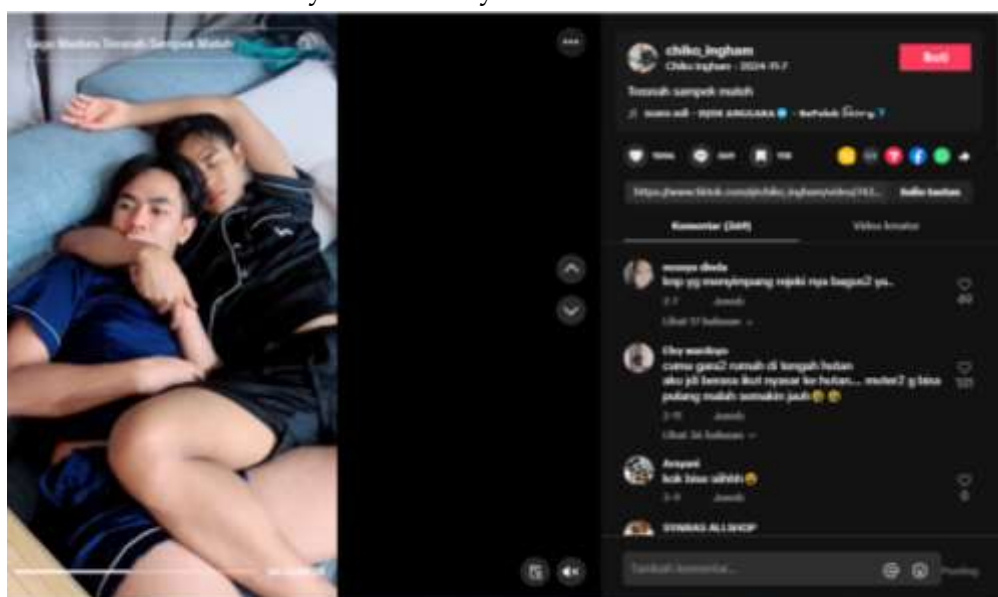


Figure 5.

The video titled "Tresnah Sampe Match" uploaded on November 7, 2024 features two men in an intimate and affectionate pose, in which one hugs the other from behind while lying down. This video has received 1009 likes, 369 comments, 260.4K views and 113 shares. Some comments expressed curiosity and surprise, such as "How come it can be siihhh..", while others responded with humor, such as "It's just because of the house in the middle of the forest that I feel like I've strayed into the forest... I can't go home and go farther away..". However, there are also comments that contain stigma, for example "Why do those who deviate from their sustenance be good", which reflects the still negative perception of same-sex relationships in society.

The data collection process uses non-participatory observation [24] was done by observing the content uploaded by the TikTok account @chiko_ingham. The formulation of this problem was obtained by observing non-participatory data collection on the type of content, the way the gay couple represented themselves, and the interaction between the couple and their followers [25]. In addition to observation, in-depth interviews were also conducted via direct message (DM) on TikTok with four informants who were selected by random sampling based on the level of activity on TikTok and their involvement in interaction with @chiko_ingham content. The data obtained from observations and interviews were then analyzed using a content analysis approach relevant to Stuart Hall's reception theory to understand how respondents interpreted and responded to gay couples' content on TikTok.

Public acceptance of gay couples on TikTok can be seen through four content in the form of screenshots that have been described. The first content features the daily lives of gay couples, which are accepted by the dominant hegemonic audience as a normalization of LGBTQ identity, while the negotiated audience accepts it with restrictions, and the oppositional audience rejects it because it goes against their values. A second content that uses humor to interact with audiences may appeal to a hegemonic dominant audience that supports LGBTQ acceptance, but an oppositional audience may find it manipulative. Third content that promotes equality and diversity is supported by a hegemonic dominant audience, but a negotiated audience may partially agree and an oppositional audience rejects it. Fourth content that shows interaction with followers can be seen as openness by the dominant hegemonic audience, while the oppositional audience may perceive it as an attempt to force acceptance.

Discussion

The study found that despite increased visibility and acceptance of gay couples, public reactions varied from full support to strong rejection. From the results of the analysis carried out, it was found that the public's response to gay couples on TikTok can be categorized into three main groups based on Stuart Hall's reception theory. **The first group is the Dominant Hegemonic Position** which is a group of users who fully accept and support the existence of gay couples. They see the representation of gay couples on TikTok as a positive step in the fight for human rights and freedom of expression. Some supporters even consider the presence of gay couples on social media as a form of education to raise awareness of diversity and normalize their existence in public spaces.

The second group is the Negotiated Position, which is a group that has moderate views. They may recognize the individual's right to express their identity, but still retain the cultural and religious values they profess. While they don't outright deny the presence of gay couples on TikTok, they also don't fully agree with their existence in the vast public space. This group often tries to balance an inclusive attitude with their personal beliefs. **The third group is the Oppositional Position** which rejects the presence of gay couples on TikTok because it is considered contrary to the social norms and religious teachings they believe in. They tend to criticize content featuring gay couples and consider it a threat to morality, especially for the younger generation who have a lot of access to the platform.

In addition to TikTok, other platforms such as **YouTube, online media, and dating apps like Tinder** also have different dynamics in displaying and accepting gay couples. In a study conducted by *Yuni Khoirul Fatimaha & Poppy Febriana*, it was found that on YouTube, gay couples are more free to express themselves without worrying too much about criticism. Unlike TikTok, where users can easily leave negative comments or even report content they don't agree with, YouTube allows content creators to have more control over their interactions with their audience. This makes gay couples on YouTube more daring to share their private lives in the form of vlogs without worrying about social stigma.

Meanwhile, in a study conducted by *Nur Syafira Rahman & Chatia Hastasari*, it was found that gay couples who appear in online media news are often not accepted by society. In the context of the mainstream media, the representation of gay couples is still fraught with stigma, so many of them choose to hide their identities to avoid the social consequences that may arise. In contrast to social media such as TikTok and YouTube, where individuals have control over how they represent themselves, online media often portrays gay couples in a controversial context that further reinforces negative perceptions of them.

On the other hand, dating apps like **Tinder** show more open dynamics in interactions between gay individuals. Based on research by *Rani Safira Maulidina, Zelfia, & Muhammad Idris*, it was found that communication on Tinder is freer and has no hierarchy. Gay users can find a partner, friends, or simply interact socially without fear of direct discrimination. However, while Tinder offers a more inclusive space for the LGBTQ community, interactions within it are still limited to the scope of individuals who have similar interests and do not directly influence public discourse as is the case on TikTok or YouTube.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : The study concludes that public perception of gay couples on TikTok, particularly on the @chiko_ingham account, is highly diverse, ranging from supportive and moderate to oppositional attitudes. These variations are shaped by cultural, religious, educational, and social environmental factors that significantly influence how individuals interpret and respond to LGBTQ content online. **Implication**

: The findings highlight the importance of social media platforms as arenas for identity negotiation and dialogue on gender diversity, suggesting that content creators should balance inclusivity with cultural sensitivity to foster constructive public discourse.

Limitation : This study is limited by its focus on a single TikTok account and a specific audience segment, which may not fully represent broader societal attitudes toward LGBTQ issues across different demographics or cultural contexts. **Future Research :** Further studies are recommended to explore comparative analyses across various social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram, to deepen understanding of audience reception patterns and the dynamics of digital inclusivity in diverse sociocultural settings.

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Sevia Nur Fadhilah

Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo, Indonesia

Email: seviafadillah@gmail.com

*** Istiqomah, M. Med. Kom (Corresponding Author)**

Muhammadiyah University of Sidoarjo, Indonesia

Email: istiqomah@umsida.ac.id
