

Anonymity Phenomenon in Base FWB (*Friends with Benefits*) On Twitter and Motivation for Freedom of Sexual Expression

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Abstract

Anonymity has become a thing that is often found on social media today. Anonymity refers to an environment that involves secrets, hidden identities, and masks of personality. Anonymity is characterized by the "loss of identity" that results from the removal of certain elements such as names and addresses (Wallace, 1999). It is a topic that is often discussed since communication is carried out by the Internet. HAI magazine once conducted a survey of teenagers. As a result, 46% of the 300 teenagers surveyed apparently had a second account which they referred to as an alter account (Rini & Manalu, 2019). There are several reasons why they create alter accounts, among others, to follow things that are not worthy of being followed by the original account, stalking other people without being caught, and so that they can be more expressive –something they can't do on the original account because of a sense of prestige-. The type base that an alter account fulfills is a base for FWB or friends with benefits. On Twitter, base refers to an account that retweets or uploads posts that match the theme of that account. Therefore, his followers usually also have the same pleasure as what the base uploads. The method used in this study is a qualitative method. Qualitative method is a method that makes the researcher a key instrument in an object with natural conditions (Sugiyono, 2005). Qualitative can also be defined as an analysis to understand the phenomena that occur in the subject under study in a special context, with various methods, and described in the form of words (Moleong, 2005). Behavioral FWB or friends with benefits is a behavior that is considered not in accordance with the norms in Indonesia and is a form of adultery. Zina, in the KBBI, is an act of sexual intercourse between a man and a woman who are not bound by marriage. In the five recognized religions in Indonesia, adultery is a sin and is not allowed at all. In the end, anonymity is a double-edged sword. It can be a way to protect one's identity, but it can also be misused for social deviance. This is in line with differing opinions from experts, such as Brazzier who agrees to anonymity on the pretext of avoiding information piracy and Levmore & Nussbaum who considers anonymity a source of negativity and online hostility.

Keywords

FWB (friends with benefits);
anonymity phenomenon;
freedom of sexual expression;
twitter; motivation



I. Introduction

Anonymity has become a thing that is often found on social media today. Anonymity refers to an environment that involves secrets, hidden identities, and masks of personality. Anonymity is characterized by the "loss of identity" that results from the removal of certain elements such as names and addresses (Wallace, 1999). It is a topic that is often discussed since communication is carried out by the Internet.

Several researchers often have different arguments regarding anonymity. Brazier and colleagues (2004), for example, consider that anonymity is necessary because of the large number of hijacked information on computers. This is in contrast to Levmore & Nussbaum (2010) who say that anonymity is something that can create negative and hostile nuances.

Social media is an example of a relatively recent development of information technology (Marbun *et al*, 2020). Anonymity can be seen on various social media. Each social media itself has its own character and this is closely related to anonymity. Social media Twitter has many accounts with *usernames* that are far different from their real names, profile photos that do not show faces, and fake names.

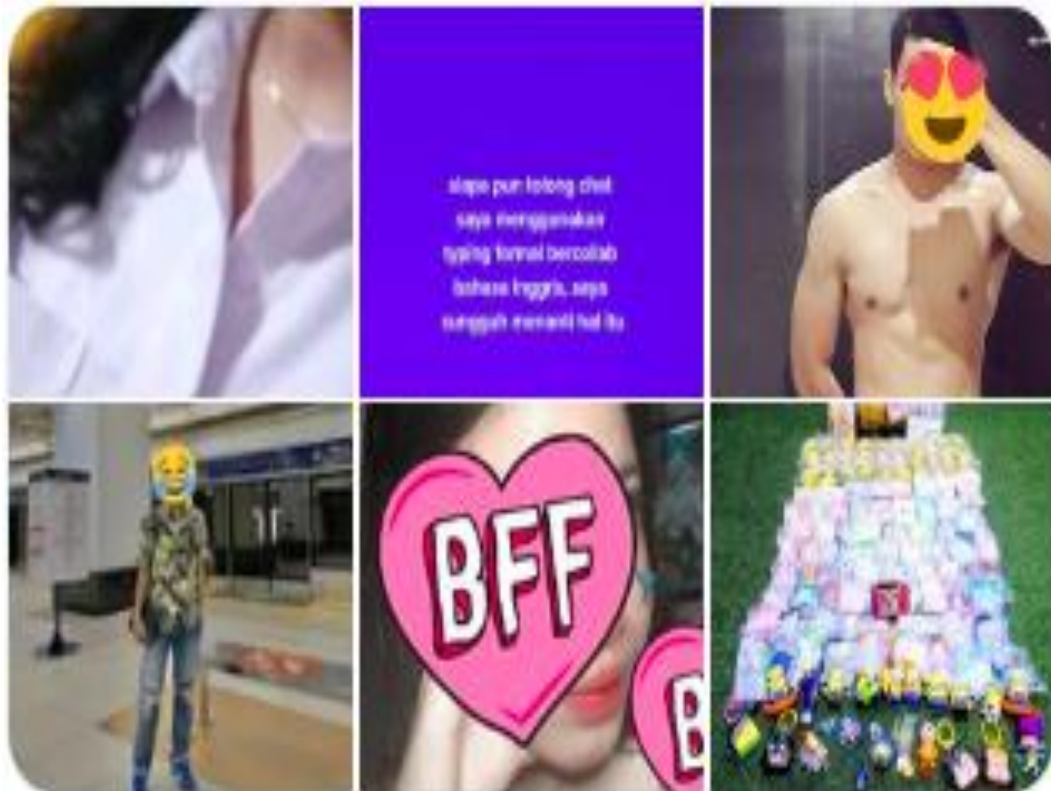
HAI magazine once conducted a survey of teenagers. As a result, 46% of the 300 teenagers surveyed apparently had a second account which they referred to as an alter account (Rini & Manalu, 2019). There are several reasons why they create alter accounts, among others, to follow things that are not worthy of being followed by the original account, *stalking* other people without being caught, and so that they can be more expressive –something they can't do on the original account because of a sense of prestige-

The type *base* that an alter account fulfills is a *base* for FWB or *friends with benefits*. On Twitter, *base* refers to an account that retweets or uploads *posts* that match the theme of that account. Therefore, his followers usually also have the same pleasure as what the *base uploads*.

Meanwhile, the term *friends with benefits* refers to friendship activities that are accompanied by *benefits* in the form of sexual relations without continuing into a romantic relationship. Typically, these relationships can occur between people who think of themselves as non-platonic friends without any pressure. This non-committal relationship can be short term, or develop into a serious romantic relationship. (Jovanovic & William, 2017).

Searches for FWB relationships that are often uploaded on *bases* usually come from anonymous accounts. These accounts usually use fake names. They will also upload photos of bodies that are considered attractive by covering or blurring their faces, so that their real identities are difficult to identify.





Uploads that they send to the *base* will be re-uploaded with information in the form of gender, age, domicile, and also an icon code to bring them together with other parties who are interested in them in a friendship *with benefit relationship*. Interested parties will usually be invited to exchange more personal information via DM so that they can meet for real in the real world.

Based on the information above and based on the typical content uploaded by anonymous accounts in the *FWB* Twitter base, this study intends to discuss the phenomenon of accounts in the *FWB* Twitter base that use anonymity in cyberspace to find *FWB partners* who will be met in the real world.

II. Review of Literature

2.1 Computer Mediated Communication

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is human communication that occurs through the use of two or more electronic devices. (McQuail, 2005).

Computer Mediated Communication is generally divided into two forms, namely synchronous and asynchronous (AbuSeileek & Qatawneh. 2013). CMC with synchronous model refers to communication that occurs in *real-time*. All parties engage in communication simultaneously, but they do not have to all be in the same location. The example of CMC that is closest to today's society is *video conferencing* such as Zoom.

Meanwhile, asynchronous CMC model refers to communication that occurs when the parties involved do not communicate simultaneously. That is, the sender does not receive a direct response from the receiver. Some examples are *instant messengers*, emails, or interactions on social media in the form of *posts* and comments.

In asynchronous CMC, there is a pause. That is, once we send a message, we don't know whether the message will arrive immediately or not, depending on whether the recipient is online or if there is signal interference. It adapts the analog communication system in the form of letters.

In addition, different from the form of communication using analog media, communication with CMC, especially the asynchronous one, has a unique character. This uniqueness can be seen in the presence of characters such as GIFs, memes, and emojis (icons). Images in GIFs, memes, and emojis themselves have meanings that can be represented the same according to social conventions or differently depending on cultural background.

2.2 Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis Framework

Van Dijk formulates that there are three dimensions of discourse, including text, social cognition, and social context. Van Dijk then combines them into an analysis that is in a single unit. The following is the structure of Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis (Eriyanto, 2002).

The explanation of each dimension of Van Dijk's discourse analysis is:

a. The text

Van Dijk's analysis sees that the text has three structures. The first is the macro structure or general meaning of the text that can be seen from the theme. The second, look at the text of the outline. After that, analyze through small parts such as main sentences, subordinate clauses, pictures, words, and so on.

b. Social Cognition

Social cognition is the consciousness of the author of the text. It is an inseparable part of the text itself. The dimension of social cognition comes from the assumption that if a text is neutral, it is the author who gives meaning to the text.

c. Social Context

In the dimension of social context in discourse analysis, what is discussed is the building of discourse in society that affects the cognition of the makers of the text concerned (Musyafa'ah, 2017). This context includes the cultural context as well as the situation when the text was written (Yusar, Sukarelawati, Agustini, 2020).

d. Phenomenology

Phenomenology has several definitions. According to Husserl, the German philosopher who first proposed phenomenology, the meaning of phenomenology is as follows:

1. A subjective phenomenological experience
2. A study that studies the awareness of the basic perspectives of a particular individual
3. Study of an apparent thing

Based on this definition, there are several stages of phenomenology (Kuswarno, 2009)

- a) Epoche: A free and objective attitude. When researching a phenomenon, the researcher must break away from his assumptions and from his past experiences.
- b) Reduction: Explanation of phenomena with structured language.
- c) Variation of imagination: Further explanation using various perspectives, frames of reference, reversal, imagination, in order to obtain a structural description of the phenomenon. This can be done by systemizing the structure of the textual, understanding the main theme and context when a phenomenon is present, and understanding the structure of space, time, and various relationships between phenomena and other things. Then, synthesize meaning to understand the essence.

2.3 Anonymity

The Oxford Dictionary defines anonymity as *the condition of being anonymous* or a condition when someone is unknown. That is, something anonymous has no special individual characteristics, is unknown, not understood, and does not have special features to identify itself.

Anonymity greatly affects user behavior both in the real and virtual worlds (Correa & Mondal, 2015). Humans have a tendency to become aggressive and commit violence in situations in an environment that is not too limited by social norms (Zimbardo, 1969). Humans also show the complexity of disinhibition in anonymous communication (Suler, 2004).

2.4 Disinhibition Effect

Basically, clinically, *disinhibition* or disinhibition refers to a lack of self-control that is manifested in several behaviors, affecting motor, instinct, emotional, cognitive, and perceptual aspects with specific signs and symptoms (Grafman, et al, 2002).

Some examples of disinhibition include:

- a. Impulsive behavior
- b. Ignoring other people and social life and prevailing norms
- c. Aggressive behavior, bad and against many norms, including impulsiveness in taking risks
- d. Hypersexuality (excessive/uncontrolled sex behavior)

Disinhibition is a common symptom that occurs as a result of brain injury, or lesions, especially in the frontal lobe and especially in the orbitofrontal cortex (Starkstein & RG, 1997).

Symptoms that actually originate from a medical malfunction of the brain are then associated with social phenomena. People who are anonymous on social media are more likely to experience online disinhibition (Lapidot-Lefler & Barak, 2012).

Regarding disinhibition, the Internet can also strengthen and spread examples of uncivilized communication (Voggeser, et al, 2018). *Toxic online disinhibition* provides a new perspective that begins with the failure of self-control. There are many examples of toxic online disinhibition.

The first is flaming, which is an aggressive verbal outburst at one or more participants in an online discussion (Alonzo & Aiken, 2004; Johnson et al, 2009). Flaming occurs impulsively and is a defensive reaction to a perceived insult or unacceptable opinion of another person.

The second is the influence of communication behavior from one user to another (Lapidot-Lefler & Barak, 2012). One person's rudeness can be enough to start a conflict. As a result, users group together according to polarized commonalities and attack other groups with violent language (Johnson et al., 2009).

The third phenomenon is *shitstorm*, where a large number of users on the Internet are dissatisfied with one person or organization or party. Then, the dissatisfaction spreads and is expressed in harsh language, attacking the intended entity from the start (Voggeser, et al, 2018). One example is in the phenomenon when Gusti Ayu Dewanti (Dea), with his @gresaid account on Twitter and interviews on various *podcasts*, promotes that he sells pornographic content on OnlyFans. Many users on Twitter spread to other media, criticizing Dea's behavior which was considered shameless, violating social norms, religion, and even the *law*.

Another toxic type of online social disinhibition is *trolling*. Trolling describes the act of deliberately thwarting discourse and inciting those involved in the discussion to be *triggered* or angry because their opinions are often criticized or underestimated (Hardaker, 2010).

Trolling interferes with serious discourse and provokes anger by feeling humiliated. Intentional disrespect directed at certain people can manifest as *cyber-bullying* or *cyber-stalking*, *mobbing*, and even offline stalking (Privitera and Campbell, 2009). This, in Indonesia, has happened in the case of doxxing behavior *by celeb grams* to people who are *trolling* or criticizing, as well as users of forums such as Forum Detik or Kaskus.

Hypersexuality can also be a toxic social disinhibition. An example is when someone on the Internet impulsively comments on pornographic posts or posts that they find sexy. Online prostitution can also be considered as a toxic social disinhibition.

III. Research Method

The method used in this study is a qualitative method. Qualitative method is a method that makes the researcher a key instrument in an object with natural conditions (Sugiyono, 2005). Qualitative can also be defined as an analysis to understand the phenomena that occur in the subject under study in a special context, with various methods, and described in the form of words (Moleong, 2005).

The difference between qualitative and quantitative methods refers to the following basic points according to Stanback & Stanback (1988)

Qualitative	Quantitative
Multiple	Reality Single reality
Research process that is participatory and inseparable between the researcher and the researched	Interaction with the research object is independent
Bound context and time	No bound by context and time
Cause cannot be separated from effect, let alone simultaneously	Separated before finally finding cause and effect
Can be subjective	Value free

Kriyantono (2006) asserts that qualitative research aims to dig deeply into a matter by collecting in-depth data. So, the assumptions become plural and can change (Sudjana & Ibrahim, 2001).

a. The characteristics of this method are (Moleong, 2005):

1. Using an inductive mindset
2. Theory comes from data instead of hypotheses
3. Prioritizing the perspective of participants
4. Research design can develop
5. Looking for meaning from existing
6. data Collecting data based on phenomenology

7. Researchers are not separated from what is being studied
 8. The results are interpretations and descriptions that are bound by context and time.
- b. The procedures of qualitative research are:
1. Formulation of problems
 2. Data collection
 3. Analysis
 4. Formulation
 5. recommendations
- c. The types of qualitative research include (Johnson, 2005):
1. Phenomenology
 2. Ethnography
 3. Case study research
 4. *Grounded theory*
 5. Historical research

IV. Results and Discussion

BehavioralFWB or *friends with benefits* is a behavior that is considered not in accordance with the norms in Indonesia and is a form of adultery. Zina, in the KBBI, is an act of sexual intercourse between a man and a woman who are not bound by marriage. In the five recognized religions in Indonesia, adultery is a sin and is not allowed at all.

Having sex with someone outside of marriage is against the norm, but in the Indonesian legal system, there are only a few sexual relationships that can be prosecuted legally, including:

- a. Sexual intercourse with a child under the age of 18
- b. Sexual intercourse between two people where one one or all of them are bound in marriage and the legal partner reports it
- c. Adultery with threats of rape or other forms of violence
- d. Adultery in which one of them is in an unconscious condition so that he cannot give consensus
- e. Prostitution. Prostitution is an exchange of sexual relations using gifts or money in a trade transaction.

In various *bases* on Twitter, such as @FWBess, @maleplusplus, @fwb_id, @eastjavaalter, users will send DM (*direct messages*) to the *base* concerned in order to find partners to become *friends with benefits*. They sent the DM by including a photo, gender in the M/F code (*male/female*), age (with numbers), and a description of what they are looking for in this FWB process. In addition, they will provide clues as to where their account is via icons or emojis like those in the CMC system. Emoji is one of the things that is commonly used as a form of expression or symbol in the process of *computer mediated communication* (Bai, et al, 2019).



MALEM++ @MALEMPUSPLUS · Mar 31

...

siang plus+, M skinny nyari partner staycation ni, F makassar rep aja ya ntar di dm. m2+



Base will not directly *mention* accounts that are looking for FWB relationships, but these accounts will be found via the icon hints in the *like* upload. After that, other users who are interested in the person in question will search for traces through the icon, then DM or *mention* so they can get in touch. Through DMs or *mentions*, mutually interested accounts can continue their meeting in the real world according to their previous goal, which is to get FWB relationships.

Accounts that actively volunteered to the *base* were never found using real identities. They hide behind anonymity through the use of *usernames* that are not related to their real names, Twitter account naming which is usually an artificial name, certain sentences, or certain names, locations that are not specific (only limited to cities/regions), and photos that are not show faces clearly, including photos sent to FWB accounts via DM to be promoted in *base* the relevant.

The photos are varied. However, many FWB relationship seeking accounts use photos that focus on intimate parts. For example, focus on the breasts, the lower abdomen above the genitals, or being bare-chested and even completely naked with intimate parts covered with icons/emojis.

The FWB search process is often associated with anonymity freedom of self-expression. *Anonymity* is related to a person's freedom to identify himself, keep secrets, and stay away from differences. (Scot & Orlikowski, 2012). In an anonymous environment, people are more likely to let go of doubts and fears and reveal more personal information in their communications (Thurlow, et al, 2004)

In CMC, anonymity is a major or significant issue and according to Adam Joinson people perceive that anonymity rendering them unidentifiable (Thurlow, et al, 2004). Being anonymous also makes a person less constrained by certain social norms and conventions (Thurlow, et al, 2004). Even shy people can open up more comfortably online (Roberts, 2000).

The fear that is often experienced in the FWB search process in Indonesia is the fear of being seen as violating existing norms and also the fear of social disinhibition. For example, such as fear of *flaming*, attack, to *shitstorm*. In the case of free sex that is *blown up* openly, people tend to use insults and ridicule because it is considered not in accordance with social and religious norms, prone to prostitution, and can become a medium for transmitting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). On the one hand, there are many defenders of Dea who say that it is better to arrest and condemn the corrupt, not someone who expresses himself through OnlyFans. This is what causes a *shitstorm* or uncontrollable commotion due to a major controversy.

In order to keep their original identity from being tarnished as a person deemed to have violated social and religious norms, this anonymous system was then used. With anonymity, they can keep their true identity only to certain people (fellow FWB adherents who agreed to meet in the real world).

Even so, that anonymity always has a degree (Thurlow, et al, 2004). That is, the identity of the participants in the *base* can not always be anonymous, even though they show signs of anonymity as mentioned above. They can still be identified, depending on whether their true identities could be leaked via email or otherwise (Thurlow, et al, 2004).

In some cases, even FWB perpetrators who meet at the *base* can experience *doxxing*. *Doxxing* itself is one of the CMC phenomena where someone releases personal information to humiliate, harass, or punish certain individuals (Chenoweth, 2021). *Doxxing* is often carried out on individual FWB perpetrators who are found to be married, cheat, commit sexual violence, or transmit sexually transmitted diseases. In the end, the identity that was originally anonymous becomes visible and is no longer anonymous.



Meledak
@namasayalaut

...

Senior cerita dapat pria umur 25 tahun positif HIV.

Faktor resiko : sex tanpa kondom karena fwban sama cewek cantik selebtwit alter.

Cowo ini mau ngajak tes ceweknya malah diblok. Yang jadi masalah sekarang cowoknya takut bilang dan nularin ke istrinya yg lagi hamil muda :(

[Translate Tweet](#)

This FWB-seeking behavior, although it boils down to the desire to freely express sexuality, can be a toxic social disinhibition. For example, uncontrollable sexual behavior, sexual behavior without the consensus of both parties which leads to complaints of sexual harassment, sexual violence, to rape, and also the spread of STDs (sexually transmitted diseases), especially to individual perpetrators who already have legal partners.

V. Conclusion

The phenomenon of finding FWB partners on FWB *bases* on Twitter using anonymity shows that through anonymity, many users can express their sexuality more boldly. In the search process, users also use CMC elements that are better understood by *digital natives*, especially those who are accustomed to using Twitter and interacting on *bases* FWB

Even so, this behavior is prone to toxic social disinhibition. FWB interactions with people who have not known before can cause many problems such as infidelity, sexually transmitted diseases, rape, sexual harassment, and also *doxxing* to *shitstorms*.



Anonymity that was originally used to cover personal identity, use photos that are not clear (*blur*) or covered, and also use emoji codes to interact, in the end is not always anonymous. Anonymity is not absolute, because FWB colleagues who meet in the real world can have the potential to spread personal identities. Other users can also find the identity of anonymous accounts in various ways such as *cyber-stalking* (Slonje et al., 2013). There are many ways to do *cyberstalking*, for example by looking at interaction traces, checking email addresses, or looking at *followers* and *following*.

In the end, anonymity is a double-edged sword. It can be a way to protect one's identity, but it can also be misused for social deviance. This is in line with differing opinions from experts, such as Brazzier who agrees to anonymity on the pretext of avoiding information piracy and Levmore & Nussbaum who considers anonymity a source of *negativity* and online hostility.

This article only refers to activities on the *base* on Twitter which refer to the search for uncommitted sexual relations and even *one-night stands*. Actually, *anonymity* can be used in other scopes, even with positive nuances, such as a *base* for practicing SBMPTN questions, a *base* for venting about mental problems, and so on. Although using an anonymous account, users tend to use it for constructive purposes.

Even so, this article can be a recommendation to learn more about the phenomenon of anonymity in various social media, not only limited to Twitter, and to find benefits or other more renewable phenomena along with the development of the Internet and CMC.

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