



MORAL CRISIS IN THE DIGITAL AGE ON THE USE OF ABUSIVE LANGUAGE IN STREAMING CONTENT @DEANKT : A CASE STUDY ON NETIZENS' PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract

Offensive language has become a routine feature of YouTube live streaming, yet little research examines how audiences in specific cultural contexts actually make sense of it. This study analyzes viewer perceptions of offensive language on @Deankt's channel, drawing on 15 live streaming videos and roughly 1,500 comments collected through observation and document analysis, then coded using thematic qualitative techniques.

Most viewers read the language as humor: 68% of responses framed it as entertainment, 20% as core to the creator's identity, and 12% as objectionable. That distribution points to a functional shift: offensive language operating not as rudeness but as style. Viewer responses also showed cognitive, affective, and behavioral effects — repeated exposure normalized the language, generated positive emotional responses, and prompted imitation. The findings suggest that entertainment value and identity now carry more weight than traditional ethical norms inside this digital community, and that creators and platforms bear real responsibility for where those norms settle.

Keywords: *offensive language; YouTube streaming; netizen perception; digital communication ethics; media effects; moral implications*

INTRODUCTION

Live streaming on YouTube has made it possible for creators to broadcast in real time while building direct relationships with audiences, and the platform has become a primary space for self-expression and community formation [1]. The communication style that has developed around it runs on informality, spontaneity, and emotional directness. Offensive language is part of that shift: once a clear marker of disrespect, it now circulates in YouTube spaces where audiences read it differently depending on context, creator identity, and cultural expectations.

That gap between traditional and digital interpretations is where the interesting questions sit. What offensive language means, and whether it harms, depends heavily on who is watching and what norms govern the community around a given channel. The growing prevalence of such language on YouTube makes those questions harder to ignore.



Public responses to offensive language on YouTube split in a predictable way: some viewers read it as humor, authenticity, or creative expression, while critics argue it erodes communication standards and shapes how younger audiences talk and behave. Creator freedom versus social responsibility — that debate has no resolution yet.

@Deankt sits squarely inside that tension. His live gaming streams, reaction videos, and interactive sessions run on spontaneous, unfiltered language, which has built him a large following skewing young. That same style raises legitimate questions about what his audience absorbs about politeness, ethics, and normal speech.

Previous studies have attempted to address similar issues in different contexts. For instance, found that audience reception of verbal aggression in streaming content varies significantly depending on individual background, knowledge, and social environment. This finding supports the notion that audiences actively interpret media messages based on their own experiences, rather than passively receiving them. Similarly demonstrated that exposure to game streaming content containing inappropriate language can negatively affect the moral development of young audiences, as viewers tend to imitate the behavior and language of content creators they admire. These studies highlight the importance of understanding both perception and behavioral outcomes in analyzing digital communication phenomena.[2]

In addition, research on media effects suggests that repeated exposure to certain types of content can lead to cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes in audiences (Agustina, [3]). Repeated exposure to offensive language shifts how people calibrate what counts as normal speech. When that language also lands as humor, the positive response accelerates the shift. Younger viewers go further and imitate the creators they watch, carrying those patterns into how they talk outside the platform.

Research has examined audience perception and media effects separately, but not how they interact to shape ethical norms inside YouTube communities. The role of creator identity and branding in raising audience tolerance for offensive language has received even less attention. Indonesian YouTube communities in particular remain understudied.

This study addresses that gap by analyzing viewer perceptions of offensive language on @Deankt's channel and tracing the implications for communication norms. It combines perception theory, reception theory, and media effects theory, applied to a single platform and cultural context, with young viewers as the primary group.

METHOD

2.1 Research Design and Approach

The study uses a qualitative netnographic design. Qualitative methods suit this inquiry because the goal is to interpret meaning and social interaction, not measure variables. Solihin [4] describes qualitative research as producing descriptive data from written and spoken words and observable behavior. Netnography adapts ethnographic principles to



online environments [5], following social interaction in virtual spaces rather than physical ones. Applied here, it lets the researcher observe comments and exchanges as they naturally occur without intervening [6], producing unfiltered evidence of how viewers read, feel, and respond to offensive language inside a specific YouTube community.

2.2 Research Object and Context

The study examines content from @Deankt, an Indonesian YouTube creator whose style runs on spontaneity, informality, and frequent offensive language. The corpus covers 15 live streaming videos uploaded between January and March 2025, spanning live sessions, reaction videos, and interactive audience segments. The audience skews young, which matters given the focus on ethical implications. Creator and viewer are connected through parasocial bonds: viewers develop a sense of closeness to @Deankt despite little direct contact.

2.3 Data Sources

Primary data come directly from @Deankt's channel: 15 videos and roughly 1,500 viewer comments. The comments are the core analytical material, capturing spontaneous audience responses without researcher prompting. Secondary data draw on academic journals, books, and prior studies covering communication theory, media effects, perception, and digital ethics [7].

2.4 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection combines observation and document analysis. Observation involved watching the selected videos, identifying instances of offensive language, categorizing their forms, and noting the context around each use. Document analysis is used to examine written data, particularly audience comments. This technique involves collecting, organizing, and interpreting textual data from the comment sections of the selected videos.[8] document analysis is an effective method for extracting meaningful information from existing records and textual materials.

The combination of these techniques ensures that both the content produced by the creator and the responses from the audience are thoroughly analyzed.

2.5 Sampling Technique

Videos were selected through purposive sampling: those containing significant instances of offensive language and high audience interaction. Comments were chosen based on relevance to the research questions, prioritizing responses that express opinions, evaluations, or emotional reactions to offensive language [9].

2.6 Data Analysis Technique

Analysis follows three stages. Data reduction filters and organizes the material around

key themes, including types of offensive language and audience perception patterns [10]. Data display arranges that material into thematic categories and descriptive narratives. Conclusion drawing interprets patterns against the research questions and theoretical framework, with verification applied to check consistency.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The data are publicly available on YouTube. The study withholds personal identities beyond publicly visible usernames, focuses on collective patterns rather than individual behavior, and uses the data solely for academic purposes.

2.8 Research Limitations

The analysis covers one channel and one cultural context, so the findings do not generalize to broader digital communication trends. Qualitative methods preclude population-level claims. Interpretation carries the researcher's perspective, though the analysis was conducted with attention to consistency and rigor.

3. Results

3.1 Overview of the Research Object

@Deankt's channel centers on live gaming streams, reaction videos, and interactive sessions where viewers participate through comments and donation features. The 15 videos analyzed span January to March 2025. Communication is unscripted, audience feedback is constant, and the language is informal throughout, with frequent offensive or coarse expressions. The audience skews young, and the creator-viewer relationship is parasocial: viewers develop emotional closeness to @Deankt despite the interaction running one way.

3.2 Patterns of Offensive Language Usage in Streaming Content

Offensive language appears across all 15 videos as part of the creator's deliberate style, taking the form of mild swearing, direct insults, sarcasm, and vulgar expressions. These are not confined to moments of anger or frustration — they appear just as often during humor, reactions to viewer-submitted content, and routine audience engagement. Offensive language functions less as emotional release and more as a consistent feature of @Deankt's persona, marking him as authentic, spontaneous, and relatable.

3.3 Netizen Perceptions of Offensive Language

Comments split into three groups: positive perception (68%), offensive language as creator identity (20%), and negative perception (12%).

3.3.1 Positive Perception



Most viewers read the offensive language as humor. Comments describe the creator as funny and engaging, with viewers responding to his exaggerated delivery rather than the words themselves. The language is not evaluated against politeness norms but against entertainment value.

3.3.2 Offensive Language as Creator Identity

For 20% of viewers, offensive language is not a communicative choice but a defining characteristic. Comments in this group emphasize authenticity and uniqueness, reading the consistent coarse language as personal branding — something that makes @Deankt recognizable and builds audience loyalty.

3.3.3 Negative Perception

A smaller segment of netizens (approximately 12%) expresses negative perceptions of offensive language. These responses typically frame such language as inappropriate, impolite, and lacking educational value. Critics argue that the use of offensive language contradicts established norms of respectful communication.

However, these negative comments are often challenged or countered by other users, indicating that they are less dominant within the overall discourse. This dynamic suggests the presence of social negotiation within the comment space, where differing interpretations of language are debated and contested.

3.3.4 Polarization of Perception

The coexistence of positive and negative responses reflects a broader polarization of perception. This polarization indicates that the meaning of offensive language is not fixed but is constructed through individual interpretation and social context.

The diversity of responses demonstrates that digital audiences are not homogeneous. Instead, they actively interpret and evaluate content based on their experiences, expectations, and cultural backgrounds. This finding reinforces the notion that meaning in digital communication is inherently subjective and context-dependent.

3.4 Impact of Offensive Language on Moral and Ethical Dimensions

The findings reveal that the use of offensive language in streaming content has multiple impacts on the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of the audience.

3.4.1 Cognitive Impact

From a cognitive perspective, repeated exposure to offensive language contributes to its normalization. Viewers begin to perceive such language as commonplace and no longer associate it with violations of social norms. This shift indicates a transformation in the audience's conceptual framework regarding acceptable communication.



The normalization process suggests that media exposure plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of language and behavior. As offensive language becomes more familiar, its perceived severity diminishes.

3.4.2 Affective Impact

In terms of affective impact, the use of offensive language is associated with positive emotional responses. Viewers often report feelings of amusement, enjoyment, and excitement when engaging with such content. These emotional responses reinforce the acceptance of offensive language as a legitimate form of entertainment.

The positive affective response further contributes to the normalization process, as emotional gratification strengthens the audience's tolerance and preference for such content.

3.4.3 Behavioral Impact

Behaviorally, the findings indicate the potential for imitation. Some viewers adopt similar language patterns in their own communication, both online and offline. This suggests that exposure to offensive language in media can influence linguistic behavior, particularly among younger audiences.

The imitation effect highlights the role of content creators as informal role models within digital environments. Their communication styles can shape audience behavior, especially when perceived as relatable or influential.

3.4.4 Shift in Ethical Norms

The combined cognitive, affective, and behavioral impacts contribute to a broader shift in ethical norms. The distinction between polite and impolite language becomes increasingly blurred, and tolerance for offensive expressions increases.

This shift reflects changes in the standards of communication within digital communities, where traditional norms are reinterpreted or relaxed.

3.4.5 Indications of Moral Decline

The continuous exposure to and acceptance of offensive language may indicate a broader moral concern. The decreasing sensitivity to ethical considerations suggests the possibility of a moral decline, particularly in relation to communication practices.

While this interpretation requires careful consideration, the findings point to the need for further examination of how digital media influences moral development and ethical awareness.

3.5 Synthesis of Findings



The results of this study demonstrate several key patterns. First, offensive language has undergone a shift in meaning, from a marker of impoliteness to a tool of entertainment and identity construction. Second, netizen perception is predominantly characterized by acceptance, with positive interpretations outweighing negative ones. Third, the creator's identity plays a significant role in shaping audience tolerance.

Additionally, the findings reveal a tension between traditional moral values and emerging digital norms. While some viewers maintain conventional standards of politeness, others adapt to the evolving communication practices of online communities.

Finally, the study highlights the potential influence of offensive language on the moral and behavioral development of younger audiences. This influence underscores the importance of understanding digital communication not only as a cultural phenomenon but also as a factor in social and ethical change.

Overall, the results provide a comprehensive understanding of how offensive language is produced, interpreted, and internalized within YouTube streaming environments. These insights contribute to the broader discussion of communication ethics and media effects in the digital age.

4. Discussion

4.1 Interpretation of Netizen Perception through Perception Theory

The findings indicate that netizen perceptions of offensive language in YouTube streaming are shaped by prior experiences, expectations, and exposure to digital culture. This aligns with the concept of top-down processing in perception theory, which posits that individuals interpret stimuli based on pre-existing knowledge and cognitive frameworks ([11]) In the context of this study, audiences who are accustomed to informal and expressive online communication are more likely to interpret offensive language as acceptable or even entertaining.

The predominance of positive perception (68%) suggests that repeated exposure to such content has reconditioned audience expectations. Rather than evaluating language based on conventional standards of politeness, viewers interpret it within the norms of digital entertainment. This supports the argument that perception is not a passive reception of stimuli but an active interpretive process influenced by context and prior experience.

Moreover, the divergence in perception among netizens highlights the role of subjective interpretation. While some audiences perceive offensive language as humor, others view it as inappropriate. This variation confirms that perception is inherently selective and constructed, reflecting individual differences in values, socialization, and media literacy.

4.2 Reception Theory and Audience Meaning-Making

The diversity of responses observed in the comment sections reflects the core principles

of reception theory, which emphasizes the active role of audiences in constructing meaning [12]. According to this perspective, media messages are not fixed in meaning but are interpreted differently by individuals based on their socio-cultural backgrounds.

The findings reveal three primary audience positions. The majority of viewers demonstrate a dominant reading, accepting offensive language as a legitimate form of humor and entertainment. A smaller group adopts a negotiated reading, acknowledging the entertainment value while recognizing potential ethical concerns. Finally, a minority exhibits an oppositional reading, rejecting the use of offensive language as inappropriate and harmful.

This pattern aligns with the notion that media texts are polysemic, allowing for multiple interpretations. The interactive nature of YouTube further amplifies this dynamic, as audiences engage in discussions and debates within comment sections. These interactions serve as sites of meaning negotiation, where users collectively shape the interpretation of content.

Additionally, the perception of offensive language as part of the creator's identity highlights the importance of cultural context in reception processes. The creator's established persona influences how audiences interpret and evaluate language use, reinforcing the idea that meaning is co-constructed between content producers and consumers.

4.3 Communication Ethics in Digital Contexts

From the perspective of communication ethics, the findings reveal a significant shift in normative standards. Traditionally, the use of offensive language is considered a violation of politeness principles and ethical communication practices. Ethical communication emphasizes respect, empathy, and appropriateness in language use, which are essential for maintaining harmonious social interactions.

However, in digital environments such as YouTube, these norms appear to be more flexible and context-dependent. The acceptance of offensive language by a majority of viewers suggests that ethical standards are being renegotiated within online communities. This shift reflects the influence of digital culture, which often prioritizes authenticity, spontaneity, and entertainment over formality and restraint.

The normalization of offensive language raises concerns about the erosion of ethical communication standards. While some degree of informality is expected in digital spaces, the widespread acceptance of coarse language may contribute to a decline in sensitivity toward respectful communication. This is particularly relevant for younger audiences, who may adopt these norms as part of their everyday interactions.

Nevertheless, the presence of critical voices within the audience indicates that ethical considerations have not been entirely abandoned. Instead, they coexist with more permissive attitudes, resulting in a dynamic and contested ethical landscape.



4.4 Media Effects and Audience Impact

The observed impacts of offensive language on audiences can be effectively explained through media effects theory. According to this framework, media exposure can influence cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of individuals [13]Cognitively, the findings demonstrate a process of normalization, where repeated exposure to offensive language leads viewers to perceive it as acceptable. This aligns with the concept that media can shape knowledge structures and influence perceptions of social reality.

Affectively, the association of offensive language with humor generates positive emotional responses, such as amusement and enjoyment. These emotional reactions reinforce audience engagement and contribute to the sustained popularity of such content.

Behaviorally, the study identifies indications of imitation, particularly among younger viewers. The adoption of similar language patterns suggests that content creators function as influential role models in digital environments. This supports previous findings that exposure to inappropriate language in streaming content can influence audience behavior [14]

Furthermore, the variability in audience responses aligns with the findings of who emphasize that media effects are mediated by individual factors such as background, knowledge, and social environment[15]. This highlights the complexity of media influence, which is not uniform but contingent on audience characteristics.

4.5 Moral Implications in the Digital Era

The integration of perception, reception, and media effects perspectives reveals broader moral implications associated with the use of offensive language in digital communication. The findings suggest that the normalization of such language contributes to a gradual shift in moral values, particularly regarding standards of politeness and respect.

This shift can be understood within the broader context of digital globalization, where diverse cultural influences converge and reshape social norms. The increased tolerance for offensive language reflects a more permissive communication culture, where boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable expressions become blurred.

The potential for moral decline is indicated by the decreasing sensitivity to ethical considerations. When offensive language is consistently framed as humorous or entertaining, its negative connotations may diminish, reducing the perceived importance of respectful communication.

However, it is important to approach this conclusion with nuance. Rather than a complete erosion of moral values, the findings suggest a transformation in how these values are interpreted and applied. Digital environments introduce new norms that coexist with traditional ethical frameworks, creating a hybrid moral landscape.

4.6 Synthesis and Theoretical Integration

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that the phenomenon of offensive language in YouTube streaming content is best understood through an integrative theoretical framework. Perception theory explains how individuals interpret language based on prior experience, reception theory highlights the active role of audiences in constructing meaning, and media effects theory accounts for the influence of content on cognition, emotion, and behavior.

The convergence of these perspectives provides a comprehensive understanding of the findings. Offensive language is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a complex social practice shaped by cultural, psychological, and technological factors.

The study also underscores the importance of considering the role of content creators in shaping communication norms. As influential figures within digital communities, creators have the capacity to redefine acceptable language practices and influence audience behavior.

Finally, the findings highlight the need for a balanced approach to digital communication. While creativity and authenticity are essential components of online content, they must be accompanied by an awareness of ethical responsibility. This balance is crucial for fostering a digital environment that is both engaging and respectful.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the use of offensive language in YouTube streaming content, particularly in the case of @Deankt, has undergone a significant shift in meaning within digital culture. Rather than being perceived solely as impolite or unethical, offensive language is largely interpreted by audiences as a form of humor, entertainment, and creator identity, as evidenced by the predominance of positive netizen responses. The findings further reveal that audience perceptions are shaped by prior experiences and digital cultural exposure, reinforcing the relevance of perception and reception theories. At the same time, media effects are evident in the cognitive normalization, affective acceptance, and behavioral imitation of such language, particularly among younger viewers. These patterns indicate a broader transformation in communication ethics, where traditional standards of politeness are increasingly negotiated within online communities. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by integrating perception theory, reception theory, and media effects theory to explain how offensive language is produced, interpreted, and internalized in YouTube-based communication. The implications highlight the need for greater awareness among content creators, platforms, and audiences regarding ethical communication practices in digital spaces. Future research should expand the scope to multiple platforms, employ mixed-method approaches, and explore long-term impacts on moral development to provide a more comprehensive understanding of digital communication dynamics.



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