Analysis of Interpersonal Communication Styles on Social Media Platform X
(A Netnographic Study of the MARAH-MARAH Community)

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study examines interpersonal communication styles within the MARAH-MARAH Community on social media platform X, which serves as a collective space for emotional expression. The subjects of this research are X users actively engaged in expressing anger, social criticism, and personal experiences, while the object of study is interpersonal communication style, analyzed through Norton's (1978) framework consisting of dominant, dramatic, friendly, contentious, and relaxed styles. The research employs a qualitative approach using netnography, involving participatory observation, documentation of posts, replies, and screenshots, as well as content analysis to capture interaction patterns and the cultural meaning of online communication within the community. The findings indicate that the most prominent communication styles are dramatic, contentious, and friendly. Communication patterns are characterized by emotional expression, the use of humorous or harsh language, and visual symbols such as emojis. Factors influencing style selection include emotional intensity, group solidarity, and the contextual relevance of ongoing social issues. Harsh language is not always interpreted as aggression but often as a form of solidarity and catharsis. In conclusion, the interpersonal communication styles within the MARAH-MARAH Community construct a collective identity that functions as both a channel for catharsis and a potential source of conflict. The implications of this study contribute to the development of interpersonal communication theory in the digital era and offer practical recommendations for managing online communities to foster healthier and more constructive interactions.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to the communication patterns of modern society. Social media is no longer merely a space for sharing information but has transformed into a platform for self-expression, identity formation, and community building. In Indonesia, the social media penetration rate has reached 66.7% of the total population, with around 185 million active users as of early 2024. This figure demonstrates how social media has become an integral part of everyday life. Among various social media platforms, X (formerly Twitter) holds a

special position. This platform is known for its concise and dense communication style, enabling fast and intense discussions. Moreover, X serves as a space for emotional expression, where users can vent frustrations, disappointments, and even anger in a public format. This is reinforced by features such as retweets, quote tweets, and threads that allow opinions and emotional expressions to spread widely and go viral.

A unique phenomenon that has developed on X is the emergence of the MARAH-MARAH Community, an online community with over one million members. This community serves as a collective space for individuals to express anger, frustration, or disappointment regarding personal or social issues. The community's identity, emphasizing "being angry together," illustrates how emotions can act as social glue in digital spaces. Interactions within this community are not merely emotional outpourings but also create dynamics of interpersonal communication. Members can receive emotional support, validation of experiences, and even face opinion conflicts with other users. The communication styles used vary widely, ranging from aggressive, passive-aggressive, to dramatically expressive. These communication patterns are the focus of this research.

The urgency of this study lies in two aspects. First, from a practical perspective, this research is important to improve digital literacy among the public. By understanding the communication styles that emerge in emotionally charged online spaces, users can interact more wisely and reduce the risks of negative impacts such as cyberbullying or psychological pressure. Second, from an academic perspective, this study enriches the field of communication science, especially interpersonal communication in the digital era. This research shows how the shift from face-to-face to online media affects the dynamics of social relationships in Indonesian society. Based on this background, this study is entitled: "Analysis of Interpersonal Communication Styles on Social Media Platform X (A Netnographic Study of the MARAH-MARAH Community)." The main focus is to identify the interpersonal communication styles used, the factors influencing the choice of these styles, and to understand the interpersonal communication dynamics within the community.

METHOD

This study uses a netnographic approach, a qualitative research method specifically designed to study online cultures and communities. The choice of netnography is based on its intrinsic suitability to the research object, namely the MARAH-MARAH Community on platform X, which is a digital cultural entity with its own norms, language, and interaction practices. This method, pioneered by Robert V. Kozinets, allows researchers to conduct deep and immersive participant observation to understand the social meanings behind every interaction. In this context, netnography is considered superior to general qualitative methods because it analyzes not only the text but also the entire cultural context underlying conversations, including member relationships, communication rituals, and distinctive symbols. The researcher will act as a participant-observer in the community for a certain period. This involvement includes observing tweets, replies, threads, and other interactions that serve as primary data. The data collected are natural, as they represent organic communication activities, not researcher-manipulated. The focus is on how interpersonal communication styles are manifested, responded to, and collectively constructed by community members. Aspects such as diction, slang usage, emojis, punctuation, and mechanisms of support or conflict escalation will be analyzed to identify dominant communication style patterns.

Data analysis is conducted iteratively following netnographic stages. Data collected from observations will be coded to identify major themes such as forms of emotional expression, support-seeking strategies, group norms, and conflicts. These themes are then interpreted to understand their meanings, for example, how harsh language is not always interpreted as aggression but can also be a form of solidarity and catharsis within the community's cultural context. Thus, netnography provides a powerful framework to answer research questions about the formation of communication styles and influencing factors in a contextual and in-depth manner.

Research Approach

The approach used is netnography, focusing on subjects on the internet. Kozinets emphasizes that netnographic studies can utilize large datasets manifested through data shared on the Internet. Unlike ethnography, which emphasizes full participatory involvement as a community member, netnography aligns more closely with traditional ethnographic standards of participatory observation, prolonged engagement, and deep immersion.

According to Kozinets, netnography provides guidelines for using participatory observation procedures in online communities and cultures realized through computer-mediated communication. In other words, netnographic procedures apply ethnographic methods, i.e., participatory observation using internet media such as computers, smartphones, social media, etc. Participation is challenging because, in netnography, data generally exist before the researcher conducts the study. Engagement is a type of data requiring the researcher to deeply and emotionally immerse in the data studied. The following are levels of engagement in netnography. Kozinets explains that netnography and ethnography have different data sources. Netnographic data are obtained from computer-mediated communication or interaction processes created through the use of information and communication technology. He emphasizes that this data is collected via online interviews, online observations, or downloading all interaction and conversation data occurring in online communities. This differs from ethnography, which prioritizes data obtained from field observations, face-to-face interactions, and field notes.

Research Subjects and Objects

The subjects of this study are active users of social media platform X within the MARAH-MARAH Community, identified as accounts frequently expressing dissatisfaction, anger, or criticism regarding social, political, or personal issues. Subjects are purposively selected based on participation intensity, consistency of communication style, and involvement in community conversations. The object of this research is the interpersonal communication styles displayed by users in the MARAH-MARAH Community on platform X. Communication styles are analyzed based on Norton's (1978) communication style theory, including dominant, dramatic, friendly, contentious (debate), and relaxed styles. This object is studied in the context of digital interaction and emotional dynamics within the community.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection is conducted through two main methods:

Active observation – the researcher participates as a participant-observer in the community, observing tweets, replies, threads, and member interactions. This observation includes language use, emoji usage, distinctive symbols, and discussion dynamics. Digital documentation – data in the form of screenshots of relevant tweets and comments are stored as research archives. The data collected reflect natural interactions within the community without researcher intervention, thus authentically representing communication styles.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data reduction – sorting tweets, comments, or interactions relevant to interpersonal
Data presentation – organizing findings into tables, categories, or narrative descriptions according to Norton's five communication styles.
Drawing conclusions – interpreting dominant communication style patterns, triggering factors, and their impact on community dynamics.
This analysis is iterative, meaning the researcher continuously interprets data alongside the collection process until a deep understanding is achieved.

Data Validity Techniques

To maintain data validity, the study uses:
Source triangulation – comparing data from various interaction forms (tweets, replies, retweets with comments) to avoid bias.

Prolonged observation – extending the researcher's involvement duration in the community to better understand cultural context and internal group norms.

Consistent recording – every digital data is stored with time documentation to facilitate verification and analysis.

With this method, the study is expected to authentically and deeply describe how interpersonal communication styles are formed, practiced, and maintained in the MARAH-MARAH Community.

Research Location and Time

This research is conducted in the digital space, specifically on social media platform X, focusing on communication activities within the MARAH-MARAH Community interacting through posts, replies, quotes, and comments. This community is not geographically based but is a collection of users connected through distinctive communication practices in the context of public anger or emotional venting.

RESULTS

This research examines tweet posts from four members of the MARAH-MARAH Community, uploaded during the month of May, specifically on the dates of May 10, 14, 16, and 22, 2025. The MARAH-MARAH Community was created by the user account @gulalism on August 24, 2022. It is described that the MARAH-MARAH Community is a space for venting anger, where uploaded tweets carry the risk of spreading outside the community.

Figure 1. Info on the MARAH-MARAH Community

Only community members can post tweets, so if someone wants to vent frustration or share their experiences, they must become a member of the MARAH-MARAH Community. The MARAH-MARAH Community has specific rules for every member who wants to upload tweets, namely prohibiting the posting of items for sale, inappropriate content such as those containing racism, violence, or gambling. It is also prohibited to sell sad stories just for the sake of gaining profit.

Data Presentation

The following are 4 X accounts that the researcher has selected for this study.

1. Tweet from username @nservingcunt

   The tweet shared by this user account is quite dramatic and traumatic, due to the unpleasant experience that befell them. However, the researcher chooses to summarize the incident because the uploaded tweet is very long, detailed, and can even be called a thread.

Figure 2. Tweet from Username @nservingcut

In the tweet or post shared by @nservingcut, they recount their experience of having their phone stolen by two individuals shown in the photo. The user explains that their phone fell without them noticing, then someone took it and tried to sell it to a phone shop without intending to find the original owner first. This incident made the user @nservingcut feel emotional, leading them to upload their experience in the MARAH-MARAH Community as an emotional outlet. The tweet uploaded on May 22, 2025, by @nservingcut can be identified as a highly dramatic communication style. Based on the analysis of the tweet and responses from @nservingcut within the MARAH-MARAH Community, the dominant interpersonal communication style is identified as dramatic combined with contentious (confrontational) elements. The user @nservingcut conveys their experience with highly expressive, hyperbolic, and emotional language, such as the use of words like "SHIT", as well as repetitions of exclamation marks and periods that strengthen the intensity of anger. The narrative is constructed like a drama story with a detailed chronological flow, supplemented by visual evidence (photos of the perpetrators and the phone's condition), thus successfully attracting massive attention (8.5 million views). This style not only aims to vent emotions but also builds empathy and collective solidarity through the dramatization of personal experience. However, this dramatic style also triggers diverse responses, showing contentious dynamics in netizen replies. Most interpersonal interactions in the reply column are marked by fierce debates between those supporting the victim (@nionaq, @Qquokka) and those blaming the victim or defending the perpetrators (@looocyana, @jjsengui2). The language used in these responses tends to be aggressive and provocative, such as comments calling "mental tempe lembek" or "koar-koar di internet", indicating a tendency for confrontational argumentation without seeking solutions. This pattern reflects community norms that allow open expression of negative emotions, even if it leads to conflict. Additionally, there is an open style where @nservingcut shares very personal details such as location, type, apps, and phone damage transparently to strengthen the story's validity. This triggers friendly responses from some who provide emotional support and empathy, although these are often overshadowed by confrontational responses.

Overall, interactions in this community show how interpersonal communication styles are influenced not only by individual cathartic goals but also by community norms supporting extreme emotional expression, as well as the design of platform X that facilitates virality through retweet and reply features. The combination of dramatic, contentious, and open styles creates an effective

collective catharsis space for venting emotions but often sacrifices depth of empathy and constructive conflict resolution.

2. Tweet from username @onyourm_aro
The user made a tweet recounting their anger toward someone who belittles or looks down on people continuing their studies by going to college. They are known to be an active student, feeling upset and regretting the notion that college is unimportant. However, in reality, the decision to attend college is each person's right. It can be identified that the communication style conveyed is contentious with a dominant tendency.

Figure 3. Tweet from Username @onyourm_aro
Source: Social Media X

Because this style is full of confrontation, it contains sharp criticism toward the group mocking students, using emotional and harsh words. There is a dominant element because it implies a firm tone, questioning harshly, as if wanting to lead opinions or conversations. In addition, this communication also reveals an open style where @onyourm_aro and many other netizens transparently share personal experiences related to social pressures and stigma about education. The combination of contentious, dominant, and open styles creates dynamics that trigger high engagement (1.4 million views, 450 comments), but also clarifies the boundaries between solidarity support and unresolved interpersonal conflicts.

3. Tweet from username @damndont09
The user shares their complaints regarding the minimum wage (UMR), which they consider very disproportionate to the workload. UMR or Upah Minimum Regional refers to the standard wage set by local governments for a region (province or regency/city). They mention that the already low wage is still subject to attempts to cut it below the UMR.

Figure 4. Complaint Tweet from @damndont09 Regarding UMR

This makes the user of that account feel furious with their work world. The expression of complaints uploaded by the user @damndont09 certainly has a varied communication style. The tweet has elements of a communication style that tends to be dramatic and contentious. Dramatic because of the very prominent expressions regarding complaints that refer to emotions, using quite sarcastic language, making it appear bold and attention-grabbing. There is also contentious, because the tweet strongly provokes arguments, is critical, and can trigger debates on the discussed topic.

4. Tweet from username @yotogurt

    @yotogurt shares a bad experience with a street beggar. Initially, when @yotogurt saw a beggar in front of a minimarket, as they happened to be in that area, out of pity, the user @yotogurt gave a little of their earnings amounting to twenty thousand to the beggar.

Figure 5. Tweet from User Account @yotogurt

The tweet uploaded by @yotogurt on May 10, 2025, received quite a lot of attention. From 27 thousand likes, 948 thousand views, to 564 comments. Most comments greatly regret that this happened and consider the user @yotogurt too kind, naive, and innocent. Based on the analysis of the tweet and responses from the account @damndont09 within the MARAH-MARAH Community, the dominant interpersonal communication style is identified as dramatic combined with contentious (confrontational) style. The user @damndont09 conveys complaints about the injustice of the Regional Minimum Wage (UMR) with hyperbolic, sarcastic, and emotional language, such as the statement "UMR is not minimum wage but maximum wage" which implies sharp criticism of the wage system in Indonesia. The narrative is built with excessive expressions to highlight the contrast between heavy workloads and inadequate rewards, thus creating a dramatic effect that easily attracts empathy and mass attention. This style not only aims to vent personal disappointment but also to spotlight structural injustices collectively.

Overall, interactions in this community show how interpersonal communication styles are dominated by a combination of problem dramatization and direct confrontation with parties considered responsible (government, companies). This style not only triggers high engagement through emotional responses but also creates a space where social criticism is conveyed raw without efforts for constructive resolution. The dramatic element plays a role in building a collective narrative about suffering, while the contentious element clarifies oppositional attitudes toward the status quo. These dynamics reinforce the function of the MARAH-MARAH Community as a digital catharsis space but also reveal its limitations in transforming anger into productive discussions.

Analysis of Communication Styles

1. Contentious (confrontational) style with dramatic as the main interaction pattern. The contentious style is reflected in the systematic tendency of community members to use provocative, argumentative, and challenging language, both in the main tweets and existing responses. In the tweet from @nservingcunt, this style appears through direct confrontation against the theft perpetrators with harsh words ("KONTOL ANAK MONYET"), while in the tweet from @damndont09.
2. Dramatic style: According to Norton, this style is defined as the use of lively stories and language to create emotional impact, seen from the long narrative of @nservingcunt supplemented by detailed chronology and visual evidence. This dramatic style not only strengthens the intensity of complaints but also functions as a strategy to attract attention and empathy in the social media attention economy, where dramatic content tends to be more viral.
3. Open style: Marked by openness in sharing vulnerable personal experiences such as @onyourm_aro admitting the desire to go to college or @damndont09 revealing honorary salary, in line with Norton's characteristics of transparent and honest communication.
4. Friendly style: This pattern shows the complexity of communication dynamics in the community, where emotional catharsis is not only manifested through anger but also through solidarity and openness.

Identification of Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication remains important in online communities like MARAH-MARAH. Although not face-to-face, social media platform X facilitates expressive interactions, builds solidarity, and creates emotional connections among community members.

Based on Joseph A. DeVito's theory, there are several main aspects of interpersonal communication that are clearly evident in this community:

1. Openness
   Community members tend to share personal experiences openly, especially those laden with negative emotions like loss, frustration, or disappointment. Examples: @nservingcunt expresses disappointment over a lost phone. @onyourm_aro shares the experience of being criticized for continuing education. @damndont09 vents anger about the UMR considered unfair. @yotogurt expresses disappointment because the given money was used for cigarettes, not food.
2. Empathy and Support
   Netizen responses often take the form of emotional support and validation of experiences, although sometimes mixed with cynical comments. This shows the community's function as a space to seek recognition and solidarity.
3. Positivity and Equality
   Some interactions show mutual encouragement and sharing of similar experiences, thus fostering a sense of togetherness. However, this openness is not always balanced with readiness to accept other perspectives, thus sometimes triggering conflicts or over-disclosure.

In general, interpersonal communication in the MARAH-MARAH Community creates an illusion of emotional closeness, where candor functions more as individual catharsis than an effort to build healthy and constructive relationships.

DISCUSSION

The research results show that the interpersonal communication formed in the MARAH-MARAH Community on social media platform X has unique characteristics. The interactions that occur are not merely message exchanges but are laden with emotional expressions, seeking support, and even confrontations. In this context, interpersonal communication cannot be understood only from the side of information exchange but also from the psychological and social functions it performs.

1. Online Community as a Catharsis Space: The MARAH-MARAH Community functions as a digital catharsis space, where individuals can express emotional pressures without directly facing real-world social consequences. This aligns with the online disinhibition theory (Suler, 2004), which states that anonymity in digital spaces makes individuals more open in expressing emotions, including anger and disappointment. In the cases of accounts @nservingcunt and @damndont09, the candor in revealing personal problems shows that social media has become a means to release psychological burdens.

2. Identification of Interpersonal Communication Elements: Referring to Joseph A. DeVito's concept, interactions in this community reflect the main elements of interpersonal communication:
   - Openness: Members boldly reveal personal experiences that are usually considered sensitive in offline spaces. For example, rants about losing valuable items or dissatisfaction with work conditions.
   - Empathy and Support: Netizen replies often consist of validation, signs of solidarity, and emotional empathy. Although not all responses are positive, the presence of supportive comments shows that digital interpersonal communication can build a sense of togetherness.
   - Positivity and Equality: Relationships within the community are built through similar experiences, thus creating a sense of "one voice." However, the presence of confrontational comments shows that this equality is dynamic and can turn into conflict when values or viewpoints differ.

3. Dominant Communication Styles: Based on Norton's theory (1978), the communication styles emerging in the MARAH-MARAH Community are varied but tend to be dominated by:
   - Dramatic: Evident from excessive punctuation use, capital letters, hyperbole, and even memes as means to strengthen emotional messages.
   - Contentious: Many members use argumentative, challenging, or critical styles toward others' opinions.
   - Friendly: Though less common, this style appears in comments containing empathy, support, or simple encouragement.
   - Dominant: Some accounts try to direct conversations with firm and authoritative opinions.

   These communication styles show that although the goal is the same to vent emotions the way each member conveys it can differ, depending on personality and social context.

4. Dynamics of Solidarity and Conflict: Communication in the MARAH-MARAH Community shows a paradox. On one hand, this community builds solidarity by creating a safe space for emotional expression. Members feel their experiences are validated by others, thus forming a kind of emotion-based social cohesion. On the other hand, aggressive and contentious communication styles often trigger conflicts. Fierce debates, cynical comments, and sharp criticisms become evidence that interpersonal communication on social media does not always lead to support but can also give birth to polarization.

5. Transformation of Interpersonal Communication in the Digital Era: The findings of this research affirm that interpersonal communication in the digital era is no longer limited to face-to-face interactions. Platforms like X enable emotional relationships that are equally intense, sometimes even more open than direct interactions. This supports the Social Information Processing Theory (Walther, 1996), which states that computer-based communication can still achieve relational depth as long as interactions are consistent. In the context of the MARAH-MARAH Community, this relational depth is evident in how members share traumatic experiences, provide validation, or even debate important issues. However, this depth also comes with risks,

such as over-disclosure, conflicts, and negative psychological impacts when emotional expressions do not receive the expected responses.

6. Social and Academic Implications: Socially, the results of this research highlight the importance of digital literacy, especially in understanding the impact of aggressive communication styles in public spaces. Uncontrolled anger expressions can worsen conflicts, while empathetic communication styles can strengthen social support. For academics, this research adds perspectives on how interpersonal communication styles transform on social media, as well as how online communities shape new communication patterns that are not entirely aligned with face-to-face interactions.

CONCLUSION

Based on an in-depth analysis of interactions in the MARAH-MARAH Community on platform X, members' choice of communication styles is shaped by several interconnected factors. The platform's design is the most dominant influence, promoting spontaneous and expressive posts limited to 280 characters, which prioritizes emotional intensity over nuance and politeness; features like retweets amplify provocative, dramatic content to gain attention and social validation, while semi-anonymity allows unfiltered expression of negative emotions without real-life consequences. Community norms and culture further reinforce this, as anger is established as a legitimate and expected form of communication—new members quickly conform through observation to dramatic and confrontational styles that elicit responses and support, using harsh language, hyperbole, and personal sharing as social currency to strengthen group bonds and a shared "angry together" identity. Individual psychological motivations play a key role too, with many joining for catharsis to vent unexpressed anger, frustration, or disappointment; contentious and dramatic styles effectively provide emotional release and validation, while feelings of powerlessness against larger systems (like wage injustices) enable symbolic reclamation of agency through collective expression. The inherent emotional nature of discussed topics such as injustices, traumatic experiences, or daily frustrations naturally triggers strong affective responses, making neutral styles rare; for instance, accounts like @nservingcunt sharing crime victimhood or @damndont09 addressing wage issues demand dramatic conveyance in this catharsis-focused space. Finally, members' social and cultural backgrounds, primarily young Indonesians aged 18-34 accustomed to informal digital communication, contribute significantly indonesia's culture tolerates harsh, flamboyant emotions, and shared generational challenges create common ground for collective, expressive styles. Overall, these communication styles emerge not in isolation but from the complex interplay of platform design, community norms, individual psychology, topic characteristics, and broader socio-cultural contexts.

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