

Public Perception of "Online Begging" Action on Tiktok Social Media

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Mengemis Online, TikTok, Media Sosial, Persepsi Masyarakat, New Media, Cyber Begging	This study discusses the phenomenon of rampant online begging on social media, especially the TikTok platform. This phenomenon has emerged along with advances in information technology and ease of digital access that encourage individuals to take advantage of the live streaming feature to ask for gifts or donations from viewers. This study aims to analyze the causes, impacts, and public perceptions of this phenomenon. The method used is qualitative with data collection techniques in the form of observation, interviews, documentation, and data validation. The results of the study show that there are three main factors causing the rise of this phenomenon, namely advances in information technology, poverty problems, and the urge to seek sensation and popularity on social media. As a result, there has been a shift in social values in society that are more inclined towards instant ways of earning money, reduced social media ethics, and the emergence of inequality in perception in society towards this phenomenon. Public perceptions also vary, ranging from those who feel concerned, disturbed, to those who support as long as they do not harm other parties. These findings show the importance of a holistic approach through digital education, strengthening platform regulations, and attention to socio-economic factors that encourage online begging.

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INTRODUCTION

Begging, derived from the root word *emis*, has two meanings. The first is to ask for alms, and the second refers to asking with diminished self-esteem, accompanied by the expectation of receiving something from the person being asked. This study focuses on the phenomenon of online begging observed on the social media platform TikTok. This phenomenon is rampant in the community due to live broadcasts by TikTok account users. In these broadcasts, users engage in online begging by asking for gifts while dancing and shouting their typical slogan: *"Rice runs out, live solutions."* It is evident that the primary focus of these live sessions is to request gifts from viewers of the TikTok broadcasts (Daipon & Saputra, 2024; Habibullah et al., 2025; Hamdan, 2024; Shejuti, 2023).

According to Government Regulation Number 31 of 1980 concerning the Prevention of Homelessness and Begging, a beggar is defined as an individual who earns income by begging in public places through various means and motives to elicit compassion from others. Similarly, the Regulation of the National Police Chief No. 14 of 2007 on the Handling of Homeless and Beggars explains that beggars are individuals who attempt to earn money by asking in public spaces using different methods and reasons to gain sympathy from others (El Morabit, 2023). This phenomenon has raised concern in

society, as technology, ideally used for positive purposes, is instead being exploited. Individuals facing economic hardship often turn to online platforms to "beg" due to the perceived practicality and lucrative potential. This allure motivates more individuals to participate in this activity as an easier means of income compared to conventional jobs (Isnawan, 2023).

Another term for online begging is *cyber begging*, an activity that can be carried out in various ways such as creating websites, using social media, or through crowdfunding. *Cyber begging* serves as an effective avenue for individuals who genuinely need financial assistance (Nugroho & Adawiyah, 2023).

The phenomenon of online begging has become an element of popular culture that is rapidly growing among the public. With just a mobile phone and internet access, anyone can engage in such activities from various locations. Individuals known for their benevolence often make digital donations as a form of support (Calvo & Peters, 2014; Ellul, 2021; Haff, 2014; Rey, 2012; Yudha et al., 2023). This trend continues to grow in parallel with technological advancements, whereby beggars in cyberspace are no longer passive but strategically use technology to attract public attention. Although regarded by some as a form of innovation, this phenomenon can significantly impact society, including potentially tarnishing Indonesia's image on the international stage. At the same time, the ongoing debate between proponents and critics persists, especially as the potential income from online begging which can reach millions of *rupiah* continues to rise (Yudha et al., 2023).

The presence of online beggars on social media platforms, particularly TikTok, is an intriguing phenomenon that reflects societal shifts within the digital economy. This development raises critical ethical, integrity, and social responsibility questions in relation to supporting individuals soliciting donations online (Nugroho & Adawiyah, 2023; Putri & Simatupang, 2023; Romdona et al., 2025). Consequently, regulation has become increasingly important in the digital sphere. Social media platforms must take responsibility to prevent misuse. They need to collaborate with authorities and implement policies that address the unethical exploitation of digital spaces. The aim is to ensure that societal changes in the digital age, especially those tied to economic behavior, remain well-regulated and properly directed (Mukaromah et al., 2023).

Previous research conducted by Wijayanti from Gadjah Mada University (UGM, 2023) found that donations in *cyber begging* activities on TikTok are primarily driven by empathy the viewers' emotional desire to support individuals perceived to be in distress. However, the study did not explore ethical concerns such as the potential exploitation of digital platforms or the manipulation of algorithmic visibility for financial gain. Meanwhile, Acharya et al. (2024), in their study "*Pirates of Charity*", used large-scale social media analysis (including Instagram and Telegram) to uncover fraudulent donation campaigns, exposing significant weaknesses in platform moderation systems. While their study provided valuable insights into digital charity scams, it lacked a focused examination of the real-time, performative nature of TikTok live-streamed begging,

particularly its emotional and algorithmic dimensions (Afrianus & Sugiono, 2022; Mauliansyah & Umar, 2021; Mukaromah et al., 2023).

This research addresses two significant gaps: first, the lack of in-depth analysis linking viewers' empathetic responses to the ethical implications and algorithmic mechanics of online begging; and second, the scarcity of empirical studies assessing how platform policies regulate—or fail to regulate—live-streamed *cyber begging*, especially on TikTok. By employing a qualitative-deductive approach—combining interviews with content creators, live stream content analysis, and platform policy observation—this study aims to uncover not only the motivations of participants and viewers but also the effectiveness of moderation practices and the role of algorithmic amplification in sustaining the phenomenon.

The objective of this study is to examine the emotional, ethical, and technological dimensions of *cyber begging* on TikTok and to evaluate the effectiveness of current regulatory frameworks. Its significance lies in its potential to contribute to theoretical discourse on digital ethics and algorithmic influence, while also offering practical insights for policymakers, social media platforms, and advocacy organizations. These insights are expected to support the development of more responsive regulations, enhance public digital literacy, and ensure a balanced approach between economic opportunities and the protection of user welfare in the digital era.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design to investigate the phenomenon of online begging on TikTok, particularly through the account *@sadbtor_joged*. The qualitative method was chosen to explore in depth the social dynamics, motivations, and perceptions related to online begging, which cannot be adequately quantified through numerical data alone. The study is grounded in *new media theory* and *digital ethics*, aiming to uncover the interplay between individual actions and platform affordances (Nafisatur, 2024).

The research population includes online viewers, community members, and TikTok content creators in Sukabumi, while the sample consists of 10 purposively selected informants: three content creators (including the owner of the *@sadbtor_joged* account), three audience donors, two digital policy experts, and two residents from surrounding villages. The *purposive sampling* technique was employed to ensure that each selected informant holds relevance and insight into the online begging phenomenon.

The main research instrument is a semi-structured interview guide designed to explore the motivations, social responses, and ethical considerations of online begging activities. To test the validity of the instrument, expert judgment from two media and communication scholars was used, followed by pilot interviews to enhance clarity and relevance. Reliability was ensured through *triangulation* of data sources—interview responses, TikTok live stream content analysis, and document analysis, including government regulations and news reports.

Data collection involved in-depth interviews conducted both online and offline, direct observation of TikTok live sessions, and the collection of screenshots and video documentation from relevant online sources. *Ethical clearance* was obtained to ensure the protection of participants' identities and data throughout the study.

The research procedure was carried out in three main stages: (1) preliminary observation and content mapping of TikTok live sessions; (2) data collection through interviews and documentation; and (3) data analysis using *NVivo 14* software. *Thematic analysis* was applied to identify and interpret recurring patterns, categories, and emerging themes across the dataset. NVivo was used to code the data systematically and manage complex qualitative findings. Analytical steps followed Miles and Huberman's model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This methodological approach enables the researcher to construct a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and provides grounded insights into how online begging behavior emerges, spreads, and is perceived in the digital era.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the research we found, there are 3 main points that cause online begging to occur, including the following:

Information technology

Today, we have entered a period that is strongly linked to innovation in the field of communication and information. Developments in this technology have provided very wide access to information and communication. Although there is a lot of misuse of information and communication, the need for it is still very crucial in our daily lives. Therefore, advances in communication and information technology are an inseparable trend from the basic human need for clothing and food. The existence of this technology is the foundation for society. However, without an adequate understanding of how to use these communication technologies, we can experience a lack of knowledge and ethics. This definition is the trigger that started the phenomenon of online begging, considering that the communication and information technology that we have today is very accessible to all circles. Many of them do not think far enough about the use of this technology and thus ignore the ethics that should be, when committing acts that are condescending in front of hundreds or thousands of people, without paying attention to the wise use of communication and information technology.

Poverty

Poverty continues to be an issue that has attracted the government's attention to this day. According to information from the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, the poverty rate in September 2024 will reach 8.57% or around 24.06 million individuals living in poverty. This figure is still relatively high, showing that poverty in a country can have a positive or negative impact on people's lives. One of the positive impacts that can arise from poverty is the creation of empathy and generosity from people who have more, so that they can share and create employment opportunities for the less

fortunate. On the other hand, the negative impact can be in the form of an increase in crime rates, as well as the emergence of vagrants and beggars.

Sensation and Stage

Quoting from *kompas.com* because online begging content carried out on this social platform presents extreme and strange performances. In our study, the sensation felt by the public attracted the public's attention, because this is what makes netizens tend to give gifts with joy. Supposedly, if they are not just chasing sensations or getting attention, they should focus more on creating innovative content and not just asking for rewards. They have realized from the beginning that attracting attention is the main goal. With a sensation that was able to attract many netizens, they were quickly provoked. Therefore, they will automatically get attention, so that the opportunity to get money will be greater. To achieve this attention-grabbing goal, many content creators are begging online which is becoming increasingly absurd and lacking in empathy.

From some of the factors that cause the above to result in many Tiktok users using the live streaming feature as a means to get instant profits. Here is an example of a Tiktok user who takes advantage of the Tiktok live platform feature and the quick response from the audience in the form of gifts or donations to online beggars encourages perpetrators to continue to take similar actions, because they feel that this way is faster and easier to make money than working conventionally. This risks shaping the mindset of the community, especially the younger generation, to prefer instant methods over long-term efforts based on skills and creativity.

Account informant tiktok@sadbtor_joged



Figure 1. Sadbor's profile on the Tiktok application

"Gunawan" is the real name of the owner of the @sadbor_joged account who managed to steal the public's attention on social media platforms with a total of 30.8 thousand followers. Each upload he makes can attract up to 136.4 thousand likes. The majority of the content he displays is in the form of dance performances combined with unique music selections. Another uniqueness of this account is the collaborative concept applied. He didn't just perform on his own; These users also engage family members of different ages, from young to old, to participate in the dance. The combination of inter-generational collaborations and distinctive music choices makes the content even more interesting and can attract many regular fans. Before engaging in begging activities, sadbor stated in an interview with Trans TV that his job was as a mobile tailor. Sadbor tried to do a live broadcast while working as a mobile tailor, and unexpectedly many TikTok users gave gifts during the broadcast. After the pandemic, he decided to continue live broadcasting to date. In our study, this sample was particularly appropriate because we saw those users' live broadcasts focused only on asking for rewards by featuring dancing and rolling actions, which greatly captured the public's attention and allowed them to easily give gifts voluntarily to watch a TikTok user in action. Here are examples of the consequences of online begging that impact others:



Figure 2. Tiktok platform comments

Based on the field data shown through the photo in Figure 2, the TikTok account with the username Sadbor was referred to by several other users in the comment column as a figure who had a great influence on certain dance trends on the platform. This can be seen from the statement of one of the users who said that many people follow the dance style popularized by the Sadbor account. This fact shows that the existence of popular

figures on social media has a significant influence on the behavior and activities of other users.

This phenomenon is evident in the photo shown in Figure 2, where TikTok users in the comment column mention Sadbor's account as the trigger for a certain dance trend. Comments such as "really have a real impact, so he follows everyone" is proof that the account has a strong influence in shaping trends on the platform. In addition, other comments confirmed that similar dance styles were widely followed by other users after being popularized by the account.

This incident is a real example of new media theory, where social media provides space for anyone to become an opinion leader without going through conventional media. This phenomenon also shows the existence of Collective Intelligence, where digital communities collectively disseminate and reproduce trends that were initially popularized by a single individual or account. The interaction that occurred in the comment column shows how users influence each other and form digital culture collectively in the new media space.

Public Prejudice

a. The Social Service

Based on the results of interviews with the Social Service, they expressed concern about the rampant phenomenon of online begging on social media, especially on the TikTok platform. According to the social office, these activities not only degrade the dignity of the individual concerned, but also create a negative perception in the community about poverty and social assistance.

The Social Service considers that this phenomenon needs serious attention, because it can affect people's mindset to prefer instant ways to get money without considering ethical aspects and social norms. They also emphasized that social media should be used for positive, educational, and creative things, not to beg or exploit oneself for personal sensations and gains.

b. From the age difference

Mother Devi (42 years old), a housewife, admitted that she often encounters such content on her homepage. "At first I felt sorry for her, especially if I brought a small child. But after seeing it several times, it seems like it's made up. Some use the crying effect, some act very weakly. So now I think twice before giving saweran," he said. For him, empathy needs to be accompanied by vigilance.

Unlike Amatul (21 years old), a student has a more tolerant view. He sees that difficult economic conditions make many people look for alternative ways to survive. "They also need food, maybe they don't have access to work. As long as it is not deceptive or exploitative, I think it is their choice. But indeed, there must be clear rules from the platform so that it is not abused," said Budi.

Pak Tomo (55 years old), a trader, was actually disturbed by this trend. According to him, the culture of hard work that was once upheld is now beginning to be eroded by the desire to make money instantly. "In the past, people were difficult, yes they worked hard. Now he is begging in front of the camera. Kids are

misunderstood, they think it's easy to make money. I'm worried that this will be a bad example," he said in a concerned tone.

(29 years old), Muhammad Hamdan, a social media worker, agrees with the online begging act of trying to see from a deeper social perspective. According to him, many online beggars come from vulnerable groups who do not have many choices. "We can't simply blame them. It's about an unfair social system. But I agree, education is important so that they can earn income in a healthier and safer way," he said.

As this phenomenon increases, there is a debate about the boundaries between creative content and the abuse of public sympathy. Some content creators actually raised this theme to educate the public, making videos on how to recognize emotional manipulation on social media (Isnawan, 2023; Sugiyono, 2019; Universitas et al., 2024). This is a signal that some people are starting to be critical and do not want to be victims of misplaced empathy. However, it is undeniable that some people are still "passive spectators" who unconsciously contribute to strengthening this trend through likes, comments, or *saweran*. Platforms such as TikTok are also considered slow in responding to this phenomenon firmly. This phenomenon shows that the boundary between the real world and the virtual world is getting thinner. If in the past begging was done on the street, now it can be done from the bedroom with only a camera. These changes have had far-reaching social impacts, from ethical values to people's perceptions of poverty and work. From the results of these interviews, it is clear that people have diverse views about online begging. Some sympathize, some criticize, and some try to understand objectively. To be sure, this phenomenon shows the need for a holistic approach—from digital education, platform rule enforcement, to attention to the root causes of social problems that drive people to do so

c. Negative and positive perceptions on the Tiktok platform

1. Negative comments

Some netizens commented on Sadbor's attitude of returning content to get a gift with the slogan "rice runs out live solo", many comments were furious with the slogan and made negative comments. In addition, the *sadbtor_joged* account user became a suspect in the promotion of online gambling sites and was detained at the Sukabumi Police in November. That *@sadbtor_joged* user does not use this social media platform well, he uses tik tok media to look for the profits he gets and does not know what the danger of digital footprint is to his finances. so that it has a bad impact on the surrounding environment, the community and other Tiktok account users.

2. Positive comments

In the image, you can see the comment column from the TikTok account *@sadbtor56* when doing a live broadcast. There were various positive comments from the audience who gave support and enthusiasm to the action displayed by the account owner. Comments such as "towards a golden Indonesia," "keep moving forward," and "always be healthy, keep your spirits up" became a form of appreciation that showed a good response from netizens. Through this comment

column, it can be seen that interaction on social media can be a space to share enthusiasm and motivation between users. The presence of @sadbtor_joged account is one example of a content creator who is able to attract attention and get a positive response from the audience.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research conducted on the phenomenon of online begging on the social media platform *TikTok*, it can be concluded that the rise of this practice is driven by three main factors: the rapid development of information technology, the persistently high levels of poverty in Indonesia, and the desire for sensation and visibility in the digital space. This phenomenon reflects a shift in how people use social media—from a platform for information and entertainment to a medium for seeking instant profit, often at the expense of social ethics. The impact of this activity extends beyond the individuals involved and affects the wider community. The emergence of online begging influences public mindsets, particularly among the younger generation, encouraging a preference for instant income while sparking ethical debates in the digital realm. Public perceptions of this phenomenon are also varied: some view it with regret, others with sympathy, and still others through a broader social lens.

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