



Analysis of Defamation on the X Account of Gibran Rakabuming Raka

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Abstract:

This study examines the practice of defamation in the comment section of Gibran Rakabuming Raka's social media account on X during the period from December 2023 to February 2024. A qualitative method was employed using reading and note-taking techniques, alongside theoretical triangulation combining Defamation Theory and Syntax Theory to ensure data validity. Data analysis was conducted using equivalence (padan) and distribution (agih) methods. The findings reveal that the linguistic forms of defamation consist of words (57 instances), phrases (82 instances), clauses (56 instances), and sentences (8 instances), with phrases and words dominating as concise yet sharply meaningful expressions. In terms of defamation types, insults (142 instances), defamation of character (38 instances), slander (22 instances), and blasphemy (1 instance) were identified, with insults being the most prevalent form. These findings indicate that defamation on social media tends to be direct, brief, and targets both the personal image and public reputation of the subject.

Keywords: Defamation; Linguistic Forms of Defamation; Types of Defamation

I. Introduction

Language inherently contains values and norms that are conveyed through both formal and informal forums. Therefore, language users need to select words appropriately according to the situation, condition, and context of communication to avoid conflicting with the values and norms prevailing in society. In practice, the use of positive language can create a good impression while preventing the speaker from potential violations of linguistic ethics.

The rapid advancement of technology has transformed the way humans communicate. While written communication via letters used to take a long time, messages can now be sent and received instantly through the internet. This convenience has given rise to various social media platforms that serve as public communication spaces. Social media enables broad participation, network formation, and user-generated content production, creating more dynamic and inclusive patterns of public communication. Social media has become a key tool in political communication due to its ability to accelerate information dissemination and facilitate direct interaction with the public at low cost (Coelho et al., 2017).

Social media is also utilized by public institutions to enhance visibility, build trust, and facilitate dialogue with stakeholders. Urse & Tănase (2023) state that social media supports transparency, public participation, and more effective interactions between governments and citizens. On the other hand, social media serves as a communication medium that allows message exchange, collaboration, and visual or audio interaction (Sholihatin, 2019). One of the most widely used platforms in Indonesia is X (formerly Twitter), which features tweets, retweets, direct messages, favorites, and follows (Fauziah, 2020).

However, written communication on social media is often not accompanied by social control related to ethics and politeness. This condition opens opportunities for linguistic crimes. Sholihatin (2019) notes that both spoken and written utterances can become criminal acts if they violate the law and harm others, such as by damaging reputation, attacking honor, humiliating, or causing public unrest. Common forms of linguistic crimes include hate speech, hoaxes, incitement, threats, bribery, and defamation (Solan & Tiersma, 2005).

In this context, Shuy (2010) highlights defamation as a form of linguistic crime carried out through false or damaging communication, either orally or in writing, with the aim of tarnishing a person's good name. Defamation on social media is increasingly easy to occur due to the rapid spread of information and the high intensity of interaction among users.

One public figure frequently targeted by defamation on social media is Gibran Rakabuming Raka. As a young politician actively using the X platform, Gibran often receives disparaging comments. For instance, the comment "empty-headed" from the account @wahyudiiken contains an insult to his intellectual capacity. According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), insult is an act of humiliating, offending, or degrading others. In this case, such utterances have the potential to tarnish Gibran's reputation as a public figure.

Nonetheless, defamation is a complaint-based offense and can only be legally processed if the aggrieved party files a report. Provisions regarding defamation are regulated under Chapter XVI of the Indonesian Criminal Code concerning insults.

Based on this background, this study focuses on analyzing the defamation found in the comment section of Gibran Rakabuming Raka's X account. The analysis covers both the linguistic forms of defamation and its types, with the expectation of contributing to the study of linguistic crimes in digital communication in Indonesia.

II. Review of Literatures

Defamation has recently become increasingly prevalent on social media, which has even become fertile ground for such practices. Social media enables individuals to communicate anytime and anywhere with the aid of the internet. Defamation via the internet is defined as the act of attacking someone online by leaving comments that tarnish their reputation on articles or blogs (Monangga D et al., 2023). This practice can be far more severe in the virtual world because the content has the potential to reach a large audience. Moreover, the anonymity and impersonal nature of the online environment encourage individuals to write hurtful, excessive, or defamatory statements about others (Sakolciová, 2021).

According to the *Black's Law Dictionary* (1968), defamation is the act of damaging a person's character, good name, or reputation through false statements with malicious intent. Defamation consists of two main forms: libel, which is written, and slander, which is spoken. Shuy (2010) emphasizes that defamation is false communication deliberately made, whether through publication or speech, with the aim of harming, tarnishing, or damaging a person's reputation. Defamation is not merely rude remarks or emotional insults but the dissemination of false information presented as facts, causing the audience to tend to believe it.

Carroil (2021) adds that defamation is an act that damages the reputation of individuals or institutions through written statements (libel) or direct speech (slander). The written form can

be found in print media, newspapers, websites, and videos, while the spoken form often appears as gossip or direct conversation.

Based on Shuy's definition, the criteria for defamation include: false communication (incorrect information), intent, publication (dissemination to third parties), and effects that harm, defame, or injure a person's reputation. Defamation lawsuits typically revolve around the meaning of the disputed words, as the meaning is crucial in determining whether a statement qualifies as defamatory or not (Schwartz, 2023). Cox & McCullough (2019) state that the three main elements of a defamation claim are publication, defamatory statement, and identification of the aggrieved party, whether an individual or institution, which can occur through social media or print media.

Defamation is an antisocial speech act because it violates the law and can take various forms, such as libel, spreading false information, insults, blasphemy, threats, incitement, and hate speech (Arnawa, 2024). The impacts of such utterances are psychosocial, including character assassination, damaging credibility, humiliation, incitement, and threats, all aiming to harm a person's reputation or good name.

Overall, these various definitions and perspectives affirm that defamation is a form of linguistic crime that requires serious attention, especially in the context of social media, which has a wide reach and rapid information dissemination. Therefore, a deep understanding of the characteristics, types, and impacts of defamation is crucial in digital communication and media law studies.

III. Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach within the post-positivist paradigm, aiming to interpret the subject matter in its natural context. The data used are descriptive, consisting of words, images, or numbers without statistical processing, obtained from various sources such as interviews, observations, photographs, videos, and relevant documents (Muhammad, 2014).

The research location is the comment section on the social media platform X account of Gibran Rakabuming Raka, selected due to the high potential for defamatory utterances, especially following the Constitutional Court ruling that opened political opportunities for Gibran. Data collection was conducted through initial observations of comments starting from July 2024. The data sources consist of posts on the X account, focusing on the period from December 2023 to February 2024, covering 146 posts. From all comments that appeared, selections were made based on defamation criteria, resulting in 203 comments for analysis.

Data collection techniques are divided into two: 1) Reading technique: a continuation of the documentation method involving intensive reading of written materials such as books, magazines, minutes, or other documentary sources in an academic manner, selecting and reviewing relevant data (Arikunto, 2014); 2) Note-taking technique: recording, categorizing, and storing the obtained data to facilitate more focused and systematic analysis (Sugiyono, 2017). This step includes marking, identifying, and noting data according to the research problem.

Concrete steps for data collection involved carefully reading comments, selecting data according to defamation indicators, and recording and grouping data based on the research questions. The research instrument is the researcher as the human instrument, responsible for determining the focus, selecting sources, collecting, assessing quality, analyzing, interpreting, and drawing conclusions (Sugiyono, 2017).

Data validity was tested through triangulation, particularly theory triangulation combining syntactic theory and defamation theory. Observation rigor was ensured by carefully observing, sorting, and grouping data according to indicators. Discussions with peers were conducted to strengthen the analysis, including collaboration with Muhammad Farik Soumena, a Master's student in Indonesian Language and Literature Education at Yogyakarta State University (Sugiyono, 2017).

Data analysis employed two methods from Sudaryanto (2015):1) Equivalence method (external) with pragmatic interlocutors as determining tools, consisting of basic techniques (selecting determining elements) and advanced techniques such as comparative relation techniques (HBS) to categorize and ensure data consistency; 2) Distribution method (internal) with basic techniques for direct elements (BUL), which involves dividing linguistic units into parts that form the whole. Advanced techniques include omission, substitution, expansion, insertion, inversion, transformation, and repetition

IV. Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

The research findings indicate that out of 203 comments containing elements of defamation directed at Gibran Rakabuming Raka on the social media platform X, the majority were expressed in the form of linguistic phrases, totaling 82 instances. Furthermore, the most dominant type of defamation identified was insult, with 142 instances.

Out of the total data, phrases ranked highest with 82 instances, followed by single words with 57 instances. Both clauses and sentences each accounted for 56 instances. These findings indicate that the majority of defamatory utterances on social media tend to be expressed in the form of short phrases, which are concise yet sufficiently sharp to convey derogatory intent.

Regarding the types of defamation, the category of insult dominated with 142 instances across all cases. This suggests that most comments directly attacked the personal character or traits of Gibran Rakabuming Raka. Defamation of character ranked second with 38 instances, followed by slander with 22 instances, and blasphemy with only 1 instance. This distribution implies that verbal attacks on social media more frequently take the form of overt insults rather than indirect accusations that potentially damage reputation.

4.2 Discussion

a. Linguistic Forms

This section discusses the linguistic forms of defamatory utterances found on the social media account X owned by Gibran Rakabuming Raka, referring to Shuy's defamation theory and other linguistic concepts. The study identifies various linguistic forms used in defamatory speech, ranging from words, phrases, clauses, to sentences

b. Word Form

In this category, defamatory utterances take the form of single words that carry pejorative and derogatory meanings. For example, the word *plonga-plongo* is used to describe Gibran as an incompetent person or someone unable to think clearly. Although lexically it only means an expressionless face, in the context of political communication it functions as a negative label implying intellectual incapacity without clear factual basis. This aligns with Shuy's (2010) definition of defamation, which emphasizes false communication that generates negative perceptions and harms reputation.

Furthermore, the word *bangsat*, which semantically means a wicked or evil person, is used as a harsh insult directed at Gibran. This utterance not only contains insult but also creates the perception that Gibran possesses a reprehensible character. Although not based on facts, this word is capable of producing social stigma that weakens his political image. The use of such words on social media reflects a pattern of emotional and destructive communication.

Another example is the word *goblok*, which implies intellectual incapacity with a mocking tone. This word lowers an individual's dignity both emotionally and socially, creating a false impression that the target is unintelligent. This underscores how a single simple word can become an effective verbal weapon in damaging someone's reputation in the public sphere.

c. Phrase Form

Phrases in defamatory speech demonstrate how two or more words are combined to convey a more complex pejorative meaning. For example, the phrase *wali kota dungu* (stupid mayor), which consists of the nominal core “wali kota” (mayor) and the adjectival attribute “dungu” (stupid), creates the impression that Gibran is not only considered individually unintelligent but also incapable of properly performing governmental duties. This phrase targets both political legitimacy and personal character, thus having a dual effect in damaging his image.

Another phrase found is *kayak maling* (like a thief), an exocentric prepositional phrase that labels someone a criminal without evidence. This utterance emotionally attaches a negative image that is difficult to counter because it is not based on facts but rather functions as a social stigma that strongly influences public perception. Therefore, this phrase serves as a rhetorical tool that triggers negative responses toward the target.

Additionally, the phrase *cawapres letoi* (weak vice-presidential candidate), combining the abbreviation “cawapres” (vice-presidential candidate) with the pejorative adjective “letoi” (weak), reinforces the impression that Gibran is physically and mentally powerless. Although subjective and lacking factual basis, this phrase effectively generates a negative image that could undermine public trust in the political candidate.

d. Clause Form

Clauses, as larger units containing subjects and predicates, are used to convey more complete and contextual messages. For instance, the clause *otak lu cuma buat main aja* (your brain is only for playing) diminishes Gibran's intellectual credibility by directly claiming that his thinking ability is neither serious nor productive. This clause is not merely an insult but also creates a misleading negative perception among the public regarding the capabilities of the vice-presidential candidate.

The clause *mirip penghuni kebun binatang* (like a zoo inhabitant) is also a strong form of defamatory communication, as it compares Gibran to an uncivilized creature. This not only degrades personal dignity but also generates social stigma that can emotionally and subjectively affect public judgment without empirical evidence.

e. Sentence Form

Sentences, composed of multiple clauses, function as more complex expressions loaded with emotional content. For example, the sentence *bocil tengil nir adab, semoga negeri ini dijaubkan dari segala kutukan amin* (naughty and rude kid, may this country be kept away from all curses, amen) contains moral insult as well as a negative social-political curse. This sentence not only judges Gibran's character negatively but also implies that his presence poses a danger to the country. Such expressions are highly dangerous as they can broadly influence public opinion with strong sentiments.

Another example is the sentence *lihat gaya loe lebih parah dari hewan yang lapar* (look at your style, worse than a hungry animal), which metaphorically insults Gibran's attitude and behavior by comparing him to a wild animal. This statement cannot be verified for truthfulness and functions more as a personal attack that undermines reputation. This sentence illustrates how defamatory speech is not only literal but also employs figurative language to amplify its negative impact.

f. Types of Defamation

This study conducts an in-depth examination of various types of defamation found on the social media account X belonging to Gibran Rakabuming Raka, employing a linguistic analysis approach alongside defamation theory to understand the meanings, patterns, and social implications of the utterances expressed. The main findings are categorized into four types of defamation: insult, defamation (libel/slander), slander, and blasphemy, each possessing distinct characteristics as well as differing legal and social impacts.

g. Insult

The category of insults is found in various expressions that directly demean Gibran Rakabuming Raka's intellectual capacity and personal dignity, such as phrases like "orang bego" (stupid person), "anjing lo" (you dog), "otak kosong" (empty brain), and "tolol" (idiot). According to definitions in the literature (Tis'ah, 2022; Chazawi, 2016), these expressions are considered mild insults deliberately made in public spaces—in this case, the social media platform X. Such insults attack a person's honor and reputation without accusing specific actions but rather constitute verbal abuse intended to emotionally and socially hurt and belittle. Shuy's (2010) defamation theory explains that such statements are a form of false communication because they contain unfounded claims that cannot be verified as true, resulting in negative effects such as a decline in the social reputation of the targeted individual. Therefore, these insults are not mere criticism but personal attacks that can impact the public image and perception of Gibran as a public official.

h. Defamation (Libel/Slander)

Defamation is identified through accusations that harm a reputation by attributing certain negative acts. Examples include terms such as "gimik bungkok-bungkok" (cunning gimmick), "pengkhianat demokrasi" (traitor to democracy), "pengacau" (troublemaker), "cuma topeng" (just a mask), and "songong" (arrogant). According to the defamation elements outlined by Tis'ah (2022) and Chazawi (2016), these phrases not only attack honor but also contain accusations deliberately published to create a negative image in the public eye. The use of pejorative and metaphorical terms indicates an underlying intent to discredit by associating Gibran with behaviors considered dishonest, manipulative, or harmful to public interests, despite

lacking strong factual evidence. From Shuy's (2010) perspective, such communication is false because it presents subjective claims as facts without verifiable truth. Consequently, this type of defamation has the potential to significantly alter public perception, damage trust, and create a social stigma attached to the target.

i. Slander

Slander is a more serious form of defamation because the perpetrator not only makes false accusations but is also aware that these accusations are baseless and cannot be proven. Examples of slander found on Gibran's X account include phrases such as "SDM rendah" (low-quality human resources), "sarang persembunyian koruptor" (a nest hiding corruptors), "banyak kecurangannya" (many frauds), "surveinya difotokopi" (survey was photocopied), and "jangan-jangan susu babi" (perhaps pig milk). Based on the definitions by Tis'ah (2022) and Chazawi (2016), slander involves knowingly making false accusations in public with the intent to shame or damage the victim's reputation. Shuy (2010) categorizes slander as false communication presented as facts that must be believed, though lacking valid data or empirical evidence. In this context, accusations such as "nest hiding corruptors" and "survey was photocopied" carry serious and damaging claims, with negative implications that can significantly undermine Gibran's political credibility and personal integrity in the eyes of the public.

j. Blasphemy

Blasphemy is identified through the use of phrases that insult certain groups, such as the example "Anies Imam Mahdi." This term contains sensitive religious connotations and implicitly targets groups or individuals associated with the title. According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) and Article 156 of the Criminal Code (KUHP), blasphemy is an insult that degrades a particular community group and can result in legal sanctions. In the analysis based on defamation theory, such phrases constitute false communication because they contain unfounded accusations or associations aimed at manipulating religious perceptions to indirectly degrade someone's reputation. This type of blasphemy has the potential to provoke social conflict and intensify polarization in the public sphere.

V. Conclusion

Overall, the findings indicate that Gibran Rakabuming Raka's social media account on X serves as a vulnerable medium for various forms of verbal and communicative defamation, where language is used as a tool to attack personal and political honor, reputation, and image. The use of pejorative terms, unfounded accusations, and false claims reveals a communication pattern that blurs the line between legitimate criticism and damaging speech. This analysis underscores the importance of understanding defamation theory within the digital context, as well as the urgent need for legal protection and ethical communication on social media to prevent harm to others socially and legally. Furthermore, the study highlights how hate speech and slander on social media can have wide-ranging impacts on social and political stability, thus necessitating

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