

Analysis of Self-Disclosure and Hyperreality of Virtual Boyfriend Rent Service Providers and Users on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

Advances in technology and the internet have made social media often used by K-Poppers, one of which is Twitter. Now, on the Twitter channel, there are many accounts of rent boyfriends playing roleplay. The purpose of this study is to determine self-disclosure and hyperreality of providers and users of virtual boyfriend rental services during sessions. The method used is Robert Stake's case study which aims to find deeper serene self-disclosure and hyperreality during the session. Data obtained through interviews with two providers and two service users who rent virtual boyfriends on social media.

Keywords: *hyperreality, rental boyfriend virtual, self-disclosure*

INTRODUCTION

Social media is a means of communication, entertainment, information and creativity. This makes it easy to get news from abroad or just communicate remotely (Carr & Hayes, 2015; Lim et al., 2017; Nations, 2017; Thurlow et al., 2004). Social media is a mobile channel and tool connected to the internet to build a community, network, approach and participation. Some types of social media such as Facebook, Line, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Telegram to Instagram (Susilo & Hui Chen, 2023; Susilo & K. Santos, 2023). In previous studies, many of them conducted research on

Instagram social media. So the researcher conducted research from Twitter social media.

Twitter was founded by Biz Stone, Evan Williams, Jack Dorsey and Noah Glass on March 21, 2006. Then based on data from dataindonesia.id, Indonesia became the fifth largest user country in the world, which was around 18.45 million in January 2022. Not only that, Twitter users in 2022 rose to 31.3% and daily active users recorded as many as 237.8 million in the second quarter of 2022.

Twitter is one of the social media that K-Poppers often use. K-Poppers are people who love everything related to South Korean culture, songs and artists. This is what finally made roleplay incarnate on Twitter. Not only that, K-Pop topics always dominate Twitter, where there were 7.5 billion tweets from June 1 to July 30, 2021, and Indonesia became the first country with the most tweets on #KpopTwitter.

The influx of K-Pop culture and the Hallyu Wave has created a new culture called roleplay. They do this to show their love for the idols they like. They do roleplay by creating a new account using the identity of the idol they want. Then they can create a plot or imagine.

The number of K-Poppers who roleplay on social media and Twitter makes them start thinking about making money from this. This is what makes rental boyfriends on

Twitter become widespread. Usually, Twitter they have a base that the admin controls, and the followers have the same hobby. Increasingly, there are more and more followers on the base due to the many enthusiasts looking for these services.

During the session, they will roleplay like an idol couple, and what distinguishes them from other virtual dating is that they do not reveal their real selves to the public and social media. Nevertheless, they still use face claims or faces that they claim from the idols they play.

The reason they do this, some feel that they want to have a girlfriend, but it is not accessible if they have to go through the introduction stage to finally become a girlfriend. Then there are also those who feel lonely and those around them who do rentals. This makes them do the rental. Not only that but there are also those who feel they have trust issues or don't trust other people and feel tired of commitment but still want affection.

This research was conducted by the researcher because the virtual boyfriend rental was growing and eventually triggered virtual self-disclosure during the session. Researchers wanted to take the topic to see the self-disclosure and hyperreality of service providers and users when conducting sessions.

METHODOLOGY

The approach taken by researchers in the form of constructivism aims to understand social events (Creswell, 2014). So the researcher will analyze and discuss the events experienced by each interviewee when conducting interviews. For this type of research, the author uses qualitative by collecting as much data as possible and as detailed as possible to get an understanding and description when conducting interviews with each individual. At the same time, the nature of the research uses descriptive to be more detailed in the situation that occurs in the form of questions and tries to describe it through certain stages (Susilo, 2022; Triary Hardy & Susilo, 2022).

The research method taken is the case study method to learn more about holistic, ethnographic, biographical, and natural phenomenon. Stake said that this case study itself has the aim of explaining complex cases and single cases (Stake, 2006). Researchers use purposive sampling techniques where in determining the sample, consideration must be made based on predetermined criteria.

Stake (Stake, 2006) said that the main use of case studies is to get interpretations and descriptions from others, and one of them is through interviews. For the service provider criteria, the first has been a virtual boyfriend rental service provider for three months and is aged 18-23 years. As for the criteria for service users, the first has used virtual boyfriend rental services for more than three months and is at least 18-23 years old in individuals who are service users who are of legal age. In this study, data collection techniques were carried out with primary and secondary data, namely interviews and documentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the research that has been conducted will be tested by comparing the results of previous research. This research topic is about self-disclosure and hyper reality in virtual boyfriend rental service providers and users. The discussion chapter will discuss further using (DeVito, 2019) concept of self-disclosure and (Baudrillard, 2015) hyperreality.

Data has been obtained from interviews with four interviewees who made self-disclosure during virtual boyfriend rental sessions on social media. This is influenced by self-disclosure (DeVito, 2019).

It is one's personality that greatly influences self-disclosure to others. Those who have many friends or relationships will be more open and often make self-disclosures to others.

All four interviewees are introverts who find it difficult to communicate with their real-life friends. This is supported by their easier self-disclosure to strangers on social media

and their more comfortable disclosure by communicating using chat. As said by (Anggraeni & Zulfiana, 2018), the loneliness felt by these individuals is considered to increase self-disclosure on social media. Even their disclosure can be in the form of information that exceeds other people who do not feel lonely. This can be said that the choice and decision of the informant in making self-disclosure.

According to (Diko Mahardika, 2019), the purpose for which the individual discloses himself on Instagram is because he wants to connect with his friends and as a place to tell stories with each other. Usually, those who do not like communicating face-to-face will communicate through social media with strangers. Then three out of four interviewees said their real-life friends were not open or rarely told stories. This is supported by their not disclosing themselves to their friends because they follow other friends who do not often tell stories. So the culture around users and service providers greatly influences self-disclosure.

In addition to the culture that occurs in friends who do not often tell stories, the decisions of providers and service users are also considered in making decisions. Providers feel that they must be professional about their work, like their friends. Their culture is that other service providers rarely tell stories or do self-disclosure during sessions with service users. This was eventually carried over by providers when conducting sessions by rarely telling stories and preferring to give the best affection to service users. Meanwhile, service users feel comfortable and safe when they self-disclose to their real-life friends (Irnando, 2021; Kusumastuti & Priliantini, 2017; Prabowo & Irwansyah, 2018). This is supported by the culture in the virtual boyfriend realm of sharing and respecting each other's opinions.

This virtual boyfriend rental is a paid service to get affection. Usually, the service provider does not talk too much and is just a listener to the service user. Therefore, Arion did not do much self-disclosure during the

session. The professionalism of a service provider supports this. According to (DeVito, 2019), individuals disclose themselves to people who support their opinions. The three interviewees, Abel, Dhea and Klara, felt they could self-disclose. Nevertheless, Abel can do it when he feels comfortable with his audience. This is following what DeVito said. Meanwhile, Dhea and Klara do feel comfortable when talking with strangers because they feel comfortable and safe. They also feel that the secrets they give are unlikely to be disseminated because they do not know each other in real life.

This case is in line with the research of (Li et al., 2022), which is that a person's trust is the key to self-disclosure to others. This is due to privacy issues upheld by both parties, and there are already regulations that must be adhered to when conducting sessions. This regulation says to respect each other's lives, not even being allowed to provide facial photos or personal data of the person. The photos themselves that are allowed are usually in the form of activity photos, food photos and body parts such as hands or feet. (DeVito, 2019) has also said that someone who discloses themselves will usually reveal themselves to friends of the same age. In this study, they need to follow the theory mentioned. This is supported by their not telling about their problems or difficulties to their friends who have the same age in real life. Nevertheless, they do self-disclose by saying that they are a service provider or user to their closest friend. In accordance with what they said that there were two or even three friends who did not use the service but knew the source did the service.

But Arion also expressed the courage to reveal himself to his friends who had entered the roleplay world first. Even his roleplay friends first invited him to do this service. Finally, Arion tried it and found it interesting by just playing cellphones but getting pocket money too. Meanwhile, Abel also dared to reveal himself to his friends who had used the service first. At first, his

friends did self-disclosure through Instagram stories on close friends. Then Abel said he used the service, and finally, until now, they exchanged messages and topics about this service. This is in accordance with what (DeVito, 2019) says; people will dare to open up about themselves when others reveal themselves first.

When they do sessions, there will be interesting topics to talk about. These topics are very helpful in self-disclosure during the session. At first, light topics will be discussed during the session. But when they feel safe and comfortable with each other, they will start to self-disclose with heavier topics. (Utomo & Laksmiwati, 2019) says that self-disclosure is due to having a topic of discussion about information that is hidden. The interviewees also said that they usually started to reveal themselves when the other person discussed the topic first. This is in accordance with what (DeVito, 2019). These topics themselves are not only about movies and songs. But many of them do self-disclosure about the severity of school and college life and tell complaints about the problems they are experiencing. For the response obtained, they will strengthen each other and also encourage each other for the future. This is what makes them prefer to do self-disclosure with strangers than with friends in their real life.

All four interviewees said they were more comfortable chatting through their gadgets. This dramatically affects the media or communication channels between users and service providers. Even this service can be used or done when you have a gadget connected to social media. According to (Diko Mahardika, 2019), people will feel comfortable and satisfied if their needs are met when they self-disclose. Therefore, when the four informants do self-disclosure, their secrets cannot be revealed or told to their friends or family. This relieves them because they have expressed this rather than kept it to themselves.

When making self-disclosure to the interlocutor, there is a response that is

obtained and there is certainly a rejection or acceptance. A response obtained will make us see from the point of view of other people who have different backgrounds. This is very helpful in providing a new perspective for them when doing self-disclosure. Perspective is one of the rewards of self-disclosure according to (DeVito, 2019) Arion also said that this new perspective is obtained because there is a different background for each individual that makes us get a variety of new perspectives, and there are conversations that exchange ideas that help each other in self-acceptance which is difficult to do when we don't do self-disclosure. This self-acceptance is a self-acceptance that certainly increases knowledge about ourselves which helps us when we are confused about what is happening or with ourselves. The other person will help us and make us understand ourselves as Dhea said. Then for personal risks, namely getting rejection for themselves by interlocutors when doing self-disclosure (DeVito, 2019). This rejection can be in the form of rejection from the closest relatives. Abel said his friends did not give signs of rejection when they found out; not only that, they even felt like trying and wondering about the services performed by Abel when disclosing himself as a service provider to his friend who did not know the service. This could have been supported by Abel's courage when revealing himself because of his friend who has the same age. But during the session, all four interviewees said they never got a response of rejection when they did self-disclosure. This is supported by Abel's that they respect each other, even if they can get a word of encouragement to calm themselves down. Then Klara also said that because this service provider is paid, they will provide excellent and appropriate service by providing affection to service users. Nevertheless, all three interviewees had experienced relationship-threatening rejection during sessions. The bad things they got were unreturned messages, differences in behaviour during the session,

and a lack of affection they got. This can happen because the other person feels uncomfortable and makes them not reply to messages. Although it is just an act of not replying to messages, it is critical because a relationship has the main role of communication. Arion said that he should not have done self-disclosure because, after the session, they did not feel comfortable with each other. Dhea never felt this way at all during the session with the service provider.

All four interviewees did not experience professional risk. Professional risk is in the form of isolation or even being expelled when self-disclosing by the institute. This does not happen because virtual boyfriend rental does not harm the institute, such as the lecture or work environment. This rental boyfriend service itself is in the form of a person's personal life in the virtual realm, and these problems cannot be brought into real life. This is because the regulation does not allow bringing the secret into a different realm. The four informants continue to work and study as usual and do not affect or harm the lecture or work environment.

Hyperreality is a state where a person cannot distinguish reality and simulated reality because they do not have this basic ability (Musa et al., 2020; Vermesan et al., n.d.). Usually, this can happen because of the mixing of real and fictional life. Initially, fictional life can be distinguished, but when they have been in fictional life too often, it will usually be mixed and difficult to distinguish. Then the four informants who have been doing sessions for more than six months said they realised when they treated their rental boyfriends as real boyfriends. This is because they know and uphold professionalism and do not bring these things into their lives.

CONCLUSION

The results showed that those who self-disclose through chat media are due to the surrounding culture, which makes it difficult for them to tell their real-life friends. This makes them comfortable when doing self-

disclosure with strangers. Then on average, service providers do not disclose too much because they are professional about their work, namely by providing affection to service users. At the same time, service users do self-disclosure, such as telling stories about family problems, lectures and others. Not only that, they consciously know that during the session, they only roleplay or treat them like their own girlfriends. After the session, they will act like friends or even strangers.

Declaration by Authors

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