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The Use of Auto base Accounts on Twitter as a Media for Sharing Opinions: Case Study of @collegemenfess Account

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Abstract

Almost everyone in the world currently uses social media. Social media can make it easier for humans to communicate, interact, discuss, and exchange opinions with its various types and functions. One of the most widely used social media is Twitter. With its features, Twitter makes it easy for users to interact and communicate. Twitter is now not only used by government and celebrity accounts but also auto base accounts. The auto base account has also caught the attention of Twitter users because it allows anonymous messaging. The account can be a medium for Twitter users to channel the same likes in a community and a medium for discussing and sharing opinions. One of the auto base accounts on Twitter that is widely used as a medium for discussing and sharing opinions is the @collegemenfess account. This account is intended for students, and can be used to share opinions with each other. The phenomenon of auto base and its use has attracted researchers to find out how to use an auto base as a medium for sharing opinions. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with content analysis on the @collegemenfess auto base account. The analysis results show that @collegemenfess auto base users use this account as a medium for sharing opinions. The researcher concludes that sharing opinions is done through the menfess sent, as well as through comments related to an issue that is being discussed on the @collegemenfess account.

Keywords: Auto Base, menfess, Social media, Twitter, Opinion.

INTRODUCTION

In this era, social media has become an integral part of society and is used by almost the entire world's population. Statista.com released that in 2019, there were around 2.95 billion social media users worldwide, and social media users are constantly growing every year. In 2020, social media users increased by 49 per cent. Furthermore, in 2023, it is predicted that there will be around 3.43 billion social media users in the world (*Number of social media users worldwide 2010-2021 | Statista, n.d.*). Meanwhile, from Datareportal.com, it is known that in Indonesia, there are around 175.4 million active social media users in 2020 (*Digital 2020: Indonesia — DataReportal – Global Digital Insights, n.d.*).

Social media itself is defined as internet-based media, which can be in the form of applications or websites. This media allows users to connect and interact with anyone, both those who already know each other and those who do not (Obar & Wildman, 2015). Mike and Young expressed another opinion. They argue that social media is a form of merging or integrating personal communication shared with other individuals. This integration is carried out personally with public media. In social media, users can communicate with anyone and share without any special individual. Social media is user-generated content (UGC), meaning that its users generate content. With social media, activities can be carried out in two directions: various exchanges, communication, collaboration through visuals, writings, and even audio-visuals (Agustina, 2018).

Social media is widely used by the community and even becomes a necessity due to the use of the social media function itself. In addition to having a function to interact and communicate, social media also has other functions. Susanto stated that social media has the function of social interaction, changing direction and forms of communication, and motivation for democratising information (Susanto, 2017). Furthermore, Alexis S. Tan opines that social media has other functions besides communication. Alexis explained that social media has information functions, educational functions, persuasion, and entertainment (Nurdin et al., 2013).

Social media exists and develops in various forms. Nasrullah categorises social media based on their form, namely 1) Social networks, such as messaging applications; 2) Blogs, for example, Blogspot sites; 3) Microblog or blog on a small scale, such as Twitter; 4) Content sharing media, for example, YouTube and Instagram; 5) Content bookmarks, e.g. Reddit; 6) Shared media, for example, Wikipedia, where other users can edit and collaborate to create content (Febrina Sukmaningtyas, 2017).

One of the most widely used types of social media is microblogs such as Facebook and Twitter. Twitter is a social media with many users in Indonesia. Based on data from PT Bakrie Telecom quoted by kominfo.go.id, Twitter users in Indonesia in 2019 had reached 19.5 million out of 500 million global users. In addition, Twitter has also become one of the largest social media globally (*Kementerian Komunikasi Dan Informatika*, n.d.). Twitter was first launched on 13 July 2006 (Mostafa, 2013). The primary use of Twitter is to upload short blogs via web pages or applications. Uploads on Twitter are called tweets. Just like other social media, Twitter is used by its users for various things. Because it can be said to be based on SMS (Short Message Service), Twitter is mostly used to share thoughts, views, and opinions in written form called tweets.

Twitter is increasingly popular among people today, especially in Indonesia. One of the things that are often found on Twitter Indonesia is an auto base account. An auto base account is an account that uses the auto direct message service feature. This feature allows other Twitter users to send DM (direct messages) to the auto base account, and later the DM will be uploaded automatically into tweets from the auto base account (Syam & Maryani, 2019). Each auto base account has its own focus or theme. For example, the @womenfeeds account is all about women, like make-up and self-care. In addition, there is also the @indomymenfess account which is a forum for the Korean

boyband fan community, BTS. Then, there is also the @collegemenfess account which is dedicated to students. The @collegemenfess account is a medium for students to share information, discuss, or share opinions about their university or college.

The @collegemenfess account is one of the auto bases accounts that has the most followers. This account is the first auto base-based account and is currently the only auto base-based account used and specifically for students at the university level. As of April 2020, the @collegemenfess account had around 472,400 followers. Because it is based on an auto base, the @collegemenfess account is a means for students to send tweets about the university, whether discussing, asking questions, or sharing opinions.

Go et al. (2009) argue that with social media, access to opinions of various people and various issues becomes more likely. Opinion has various meanings from various sources. In Webster's New World College Dictionary, opinion is defined as a view, decision, or estimate formed in mind about the issue at hand. Meanwhile, William Albig defines opinion as to any expression on a topic that is controversial or debated.

On the other hand, Wahyudi in Fatima (2016) defines opinion as an individual opinion that is not based on facts and is more based on the individual's own personal thoughts. Furthermore, William and Cleve argue that opinion has three components: beliefs, values, and expectations (Sugianto, 2017). In addition, opinion has three directions: positive, neutral, and negative (Novantirani et al., 2015). Nowadays, opinions appear to be freely expressed on social media. The right to freedom of expression also underlies the freedom of people to have opinions and share opinions using social media. So, social media can be used as a medium to share opinions.

Followers of @collegemenfess also take advantage of this auto base account as a medium for sharing opinions with other users. Based on the phenomenon of the number of auto bases on Twitter and the use of auto bases for Twitter users, the researcher is interested in examining the use of one auto base on Twitter as a medium for sharing opinions. In addition, the lack of research that discusses auto base in social media is also one of the reasons for researchers to conduct research and contribute to communication science. So, this study aims to determine the use of the @collegemenfess auto base account as a medium for sharing opinions.

Social media is internet-based media that can be in the form of applications or websites. Social media allows users to connect and interact with anyone, both those who already know and those who do not (Obar & Wildman, 2015). According to Meike and Young (in Setiadi, 2016), social media can be defined as a form of merging or integrating personal communication that is shared with other individuals personally with public media. Users can communicate with anyone and share without any special individual. Social media is also user-generated content (UGC), meaning that the users themselves produce content from the media. With social media, activities can be carried out in two directions and with various exchanges, such as communication and collaboration of visual, written, and even audio-visual. Meanwhile, according to Susanto (2017), social media has several functions. Social media can serve to make individual social interactions wider by utilising the

internet and technologies. Social media can also change unidirectional communication from one to many media (one institution to many audiences) to dialogical communication (with many fellow audiences). In addition, social media also functions as a driver of the democratisation of information and knowledge needed by the community. With this social media, people can express their ideas, thoughts and opinions democratically.

Many researchers are interested in studying the increasingly widespread use of social media. One of them (Sarlak et al., 2020) investigated the use of social media for organisations. The study revealed that social media is useful for sharing information, communicating, and discussing in organisations. Yi Liu and Tuba Bakici have also carried out other research on the use of social media to find that social media has developed and adapted in an organisation. Social media has become a medium to improve organisational performance and efficiency in sharing information, communicating, and discussing (Liu & Bakici, 2019). The current use of social media has also been studied by (Allington et al., 2020). They found that during the Covid-19 pandemic, social media was used as a source and information centre. From the results of their research, they also found the negative impact of using social media as a source of information, which could lead to misinformation such as hoaxes. However, the positive impact of using social media remains, namely a source of information that is constantly updated.

At this time, social media continues to grow and is used more and more. One of the most widely used social media is Twitter. Based on data from PT Bakrie Telecom quoted by Kominfo, Twitter users in Indonesia in 2019 had reached 19.5 million out of 500 million global users. In addition, Twitter has also become one of the largest social media in the world (*Kementerian Komunikasi Dan Informatika*, n.d.). Twitter is a social media that is categorised as a social media microblog. Twitter was first launched on 13 July 2006 (Mostafa, 2013). The main use of Twitter is to upload short posts through the site or application. Content uploaded to Twitter is called a tweet. On the official Twitter page, developer.twitter.com, it is explained that the maximum length of a tweet when Twitter was first released was 140 characters. However, in November 2017, the official character limit was changed to 280 characters for each tweet. This change makes Twitter a social media writing based on SMS (short message service) (*Counting Characters — Twitter Developers*, n.d.).

Just like other social media, Twitter is also used by its users for various things. Because it can be said as an SMS-based service, Twitter is mainly used to share thoughts, views, and opinions in writing or tweets. One Twitter user can interact or respond to another user's tweet by commenting, liking the tweet, or sharing the tweet. Currently, Twitter is one of the social media that has the most significant number of active users. A large number of Twitter social media users also expands its use.

Many researchers are interested in investigating the use of social media Twitter, one of which is Sidharth Muralidharan (Muralidharan et al., 2011), who found that Twitter provides education and information about the earthquake occurred in Haiti. Research on the use of Twitter was also conducted by (Rufai & Bunce, 2020), who found that accounts on Twitter have a variety of purposes, such as politics, communication, information

sharing, as well as 'moral boosting.' Similar research on the use of Twitter is now also conducted by (Windasari et al., 2017). Windasari analyses and researches Twitter as a medium for expressing and sharing opinions. They analysed opinions on Twitter about Gojek. This study, it was found that there were negative and positive opinions about Gojek expressed through Twitter. From previous studies, it can be seen that Twitter as a social media can actually be used as a means of information, education, politics, or sharing opinions.

Twitter is increasingly popular among people today, especially in Indonesia. One of the things that are often found on Twitter in Indonesia is an auto base account. An auto base account is an account that has an auto direct message service feature that allows Twitter users to send DM (Direct Message) to the auto base account. Then later, the DM sent will be uploaded automatically into a tweet on the auto base account (Syam & Maryani, 2019). Other Twitter users cannot know the identity or username of the sender of the message, except for the owner of the auto base account and the sender of the message itself. Messages sent to the auto base account are called *menfess*. Users who send *menfess* are called senders, while those who have auto base accounts are called admins.

The auto base can be regarded as a unique phenomenon in the world of social media. Several researchers have previously discussed auto base, one of which is a research team from UPVN Jakarta investigating the form of communication that occurred in one of the auto base accounts, namely @NCTCONFESS. The study results indicate that the @NCTCONFESS auto base account is used as a communication medium for NCT boyband fans. From this account, the researcher also found a strong communication relationship among NCT fans in Indonesia (Sari et al., 2020). A research team has also researched auto base accounts from Singaperbangsa University on the @18autobase account. This study found that users used the @18autobase account as a medium for telling stories and pouring their hearts out anonymously (Celvin Moniaga Sipahutar, Ana Fitriana Poerana, 2017). Lisa Mardiana has also studied this auto base account. Mardiana studied self-disclosure through the auto base account @subtanyarl. This study found that the @subtanyarl account became a medium of communication, self-disclosure such as emotions, sadness, anxiety and became a medium for expressing opinions (Mardiana & Zi'ni, 2020).

Each auto base account has its own focus or theme. For example, the @womenfeeds account is devoted to discussing all things related to women, such as make-up and self-care. In addition, the @indomymenfess account is a forum for the fan community for the Korean boyband BTS group. Meanwhile, the @collegemenfess account is dedicated to students. This account is a media for students to share information, discuss, and share opinions about the university.

According to Go et al. (2009), opinion has a variety of meanings from a variety of different sources. In Webster's New World College Dictionary, opinion is defined as a view, decision, or estimate formed in mind about the issue at hand. Meanwhile, William Albig defines opinion as to any expression on a topic that is controversial or debated. This

opinion is different from Wahyudi (in Fatima, 2016), which defines opinion as an individual opinion that is not based on facts and is more based on the individual's own personal thoughts. In addition, Sunarjo defines opinion as an honest answer (overt) regarding a problem or an answer is given orally or in writing. From the various definitions presented, it can be summarised that opinion can be interpreted as a personal human statement that comes from personal thoughts and is expressed through writing or verbally (Indahsari, 2018). Opinions can be made through informal discussions, mass media, demonstrations, or social media.

This study was conducted to answer the research questions: "How is the use of an auto base account on Twitter as a medium for students to share opinions?"

METHOD

This study used a qualitative method. In the qualitative method, the researcher interprets an event based on the view of the researcher to better understand the object under study (Kasiram, 2010). The researcher also used the content analysis method, namely the content analysis of the Twitter auto base account, @collegemenfess. Content analysis is a method used to study, analyse, and describe the characteristics of the content that is the object of research (Shelley & Krippendorff, 1984). The approach used in this research was qualitative with descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis is carried out to describe an object and the aspects and characteristics that exist in a message (Eriyanto, 2017). The primary data in this study were tweets and comments on the Twitter account @collegemenfess. Meanwhile, secondary data from this research were related literature. The data collection technique was carried out by observing and analysing documents in tweets from the @collegemenfess account and related comments.

RESULT

This study examines an auto base account on Twitter, namely the @collegemenfess account. @collegemenfess was created in September 2018 and started being active as an auto base account on 30 September 2018. @collegemenfess is an auto base account created specifically for students. The latest data in April 2020 showed that this account had 472,400 followers and followed 40,400 Twitter users. Meanwhile, the number of tweets on the @collegemenfess account in April 2020 was 340,000 tweets.

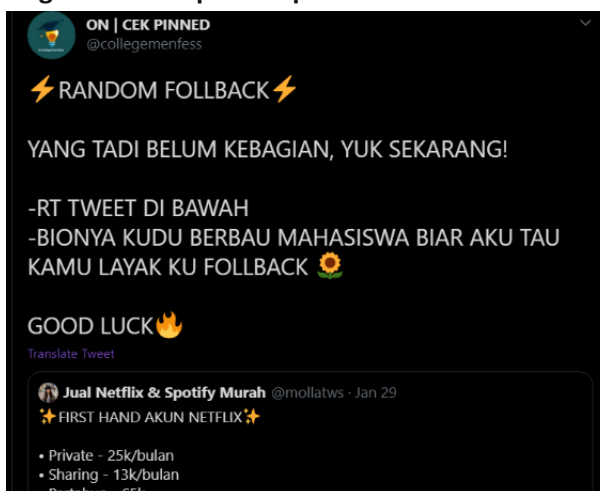
Figure 1. @collegemenfess Profile



Source: twitter.com/collegemenfess

Twitter users who can use the auto base service or send messages to the @collegemenfess account are only those who have followed and been followed back by the @collegemenfess account. To be able to be followed by the @collegemenfess account, users must meet several conditions. The conditions may vary for each open follow back session. However, the main requirement for each open follow back session is to show identity as a student by writing the major in the user's profile bio or replying to the tweet of the open follow back session by mentioning the major and university.

Figure 2. Example of Open follow back sessions



Source: Twitter.com/collegemenfess

The @collegemenfess account has several rules that followers and account users must adhere to. One of the rules is that users may not send messages or menfess that are not following the concept of the @collegemenfess account. Because the @collegemenfess account is only for students and discusses universities, users who discuss other than that will be blocked and can no longer see tweets from the @collegemenfess account.

Figure 3. Rules of the @collegemenfess account

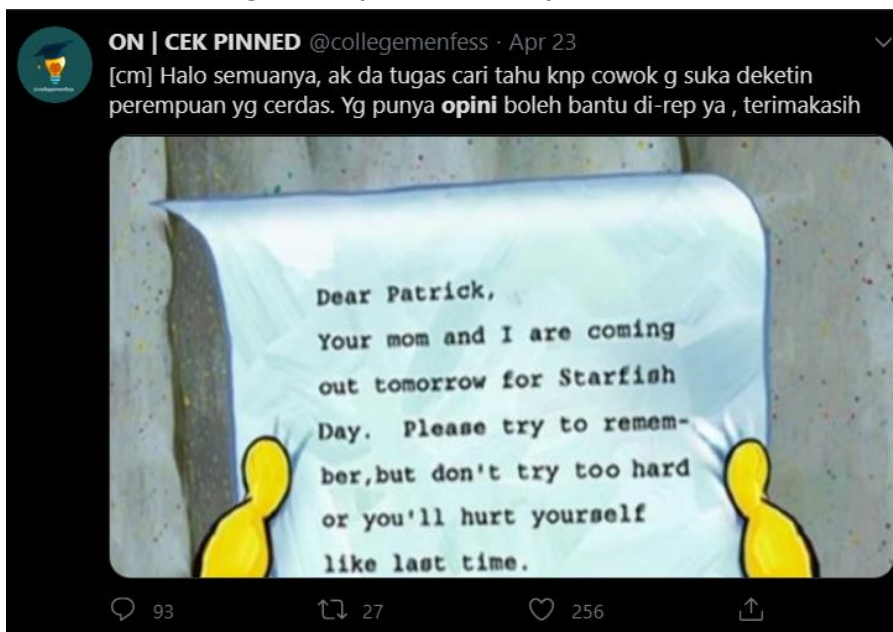


Source: Twitter.com/collegemenfess

The @collegemenfess account does not allow discussion of topics other than the university world. However, the account still allows discussion and opinion on social, economic, political, cultural issues, in addition to issues that lead to knowledge about universities. Based on observations of the use of the @collegemenfess auto base account, the researcher found several menfess sent by users as well as comments on the menfess. Researchers wanted to investigate how the @collegemenfess auto base account is used as a medium to share opinions. menfess, tweets, and comments that are studied were those that ask for opinions on an issue, which contain opinions or have opinions from other users in the comment's column. So, the researcher chose several menfess that contained an opinion element or asked other users' opinions. This selection was narrowed down to tweets containing the words 'opinion' or 'discussion' and had many

responses (reply, like, and retweet). Comments on menfess are selected based on the highest number of responses (can be in the form of retweets, replies, and likes)—some of the menfess and comments that became the research object are presented in the following sections.

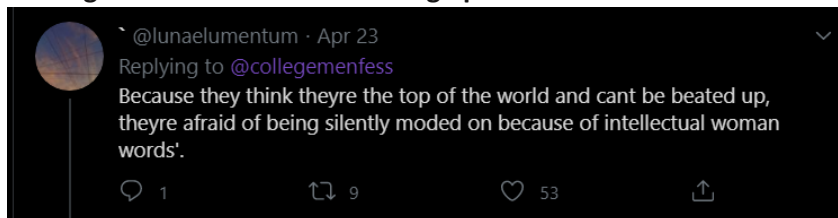
Figure 4. menfess asking users' opinions on "why men do not like smart women."



Source: Twitter.com/collegemenfess

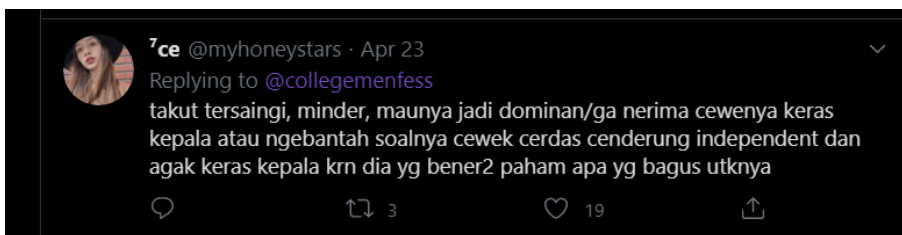
The menfess was sent on 23 April 2020 at 22:57 WIB and was about a sender who asked why men do not like smart women. The menfess received many responses, namely 93 comments, 27 Retweets, and 256 likes. In the comments, other Twitter users also shared their opinions. Some opinions are as follows:

Figure 5. Comments containing opinions about the menfess



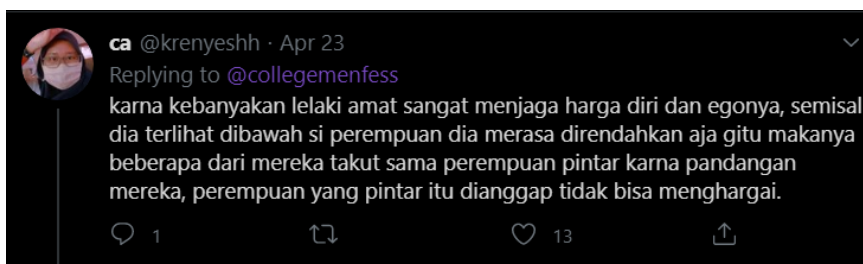
Source: Twitter/lunaelumentum

Figure 6. Comments containing opinions on the menfess



Source: Twitter/myhoneystars

Figure 7. Comments containing opinions on the menfess



Source: Twitter/Krenyeshh

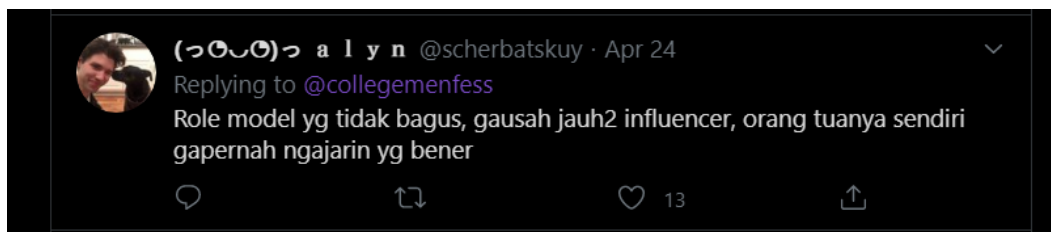
Figure 8. Opinions about the causes of low morals and ethics in today's youth



Source: Twitter/Collegemenfes

Menfess contains a sender who invites discussion and opinions about the causes of low morals and ethics in today's youth to those who read the menfess. The menfess received 39 comments, 5 Retweets and 41 likes. In the comments, other Twitter users share their opinions. Some opinions are:

Figure 9. Comments containing opinions on the menfess



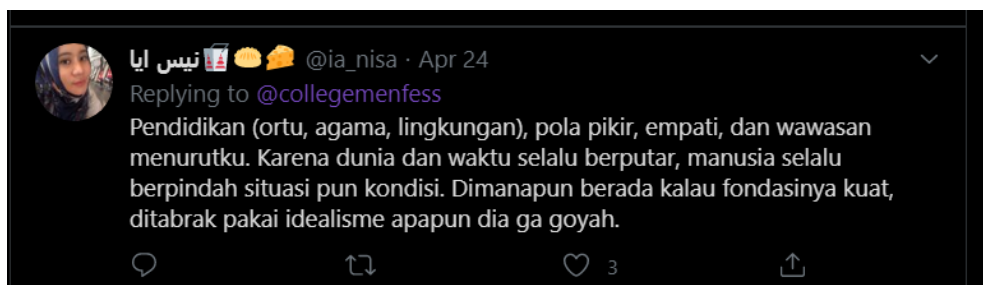
Source:Twitter/scherbatskuy

Figure 10. Comments containing opinions on the menfess



Source: Twitter/IrawatiFebbyP

Figure 11. Comments containing opinions on the menfess



Source: Twitter/ia_nisa

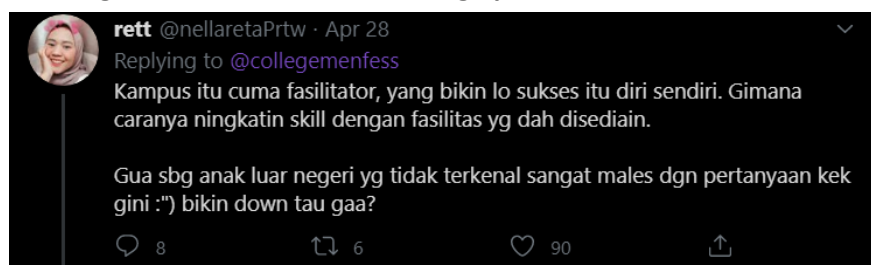
Figure 12. Menfess that invites Twitter users to discuss and give opinions about graduates from universities that are not too well known will have difficulty getting a job



Source:Twitter/collegemenfess

The menfess was sent on 28 April 2020 at 05:42 WIB. menfess contains a sender who invites discussion and asks opinions about "the truth that graduates from not too famous universities will find it difficult to get a job" to people who read the menfess. The menfess received 222 comments, 74 Retweets and 1000 likes. In the comments, other Twitter users share their opinions. Some opinions are as follows:

Figure 13. Comments containing opinions about the menfess



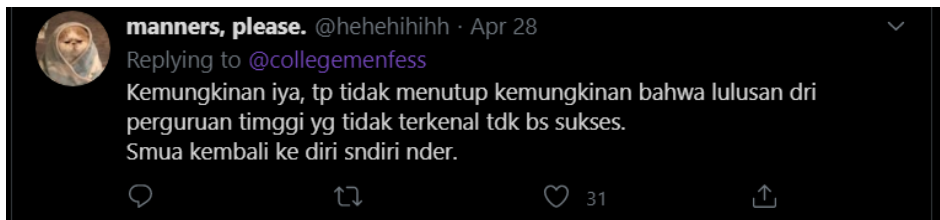
Source:Twitter/nellaretaPrtw

Figure 14. Comments containing opinions about the menfess



Source: Twitter/collegemenfess

Figure 15. Comments containing opinions about the menfess

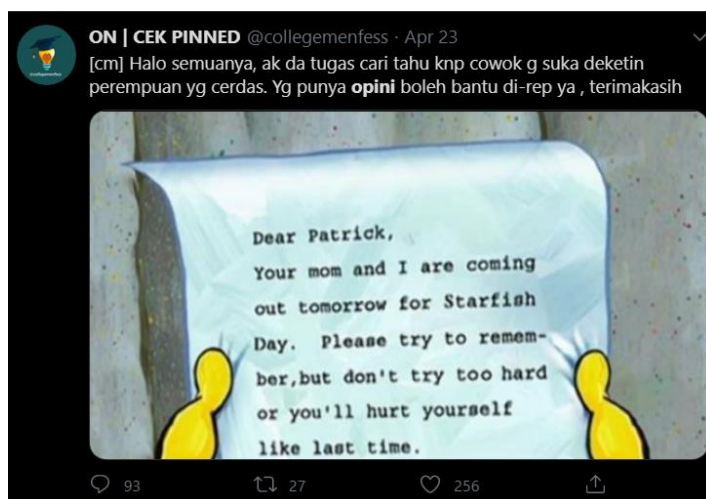


Source: Twitter/hehehihjh

DISCUSSION

From the findings and data observations and associated with the theory used, the researchers analysed the following:

Figure 16. Menfess asking users

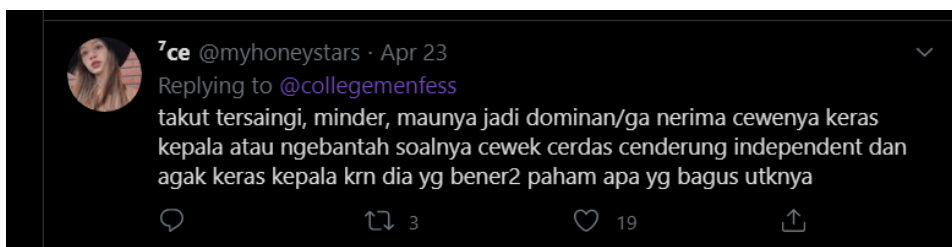


Source: Twitter/collegemenfess

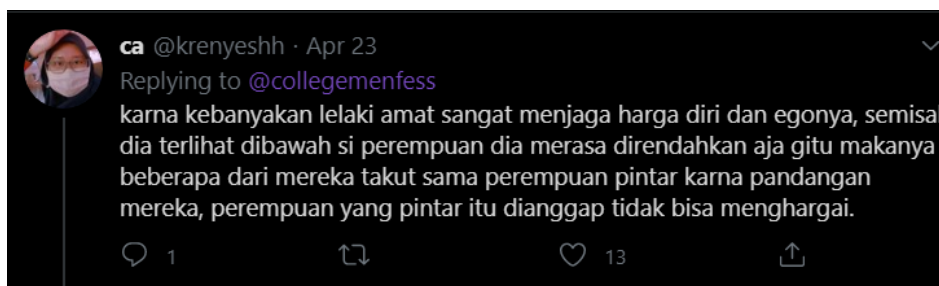
In the menfess, it can be concluded that the sender or the person who sent the menfess wanted to ask other Twitter users' opinions on an issue, namely why men do not like being approached by smarter women. This menfess becomes a medium for other Twitter users to share opinions about the issue through the comment's column on the menfess. Some opinions are as follows:

Figure 17. Comments containing opinions on the menfess

Source: Twitter/lunaelumentum

Figure 18. Comments containing opinions on the menfess

Source: Twitter/myhoneystars

Figure 19. Comments containing opinions on the menfess

Source: Twitter/collegemenfess

The three comments in figures 17-19 are some of the comments on the menfess. The three comments were written by different accounts and contain different opinions as well. The account @lunaelumentum believes that men do not like smart women because men think that they are the highest in the world and invincible. In addition, men are afraid of being silenced by intelligent women. Another account that gave an opinion on the menfess was @myhoneystars, who argued that men will be afraid of competition, feel inferior, want to be dominant, and cannot accept stubborn and independent women. The @krenyeshh account conveyed another opinion that men really care about their self-esteem and do not want to feel humiliated. According to them, men believe that smart women are considered to have no respect for men.

The three accounts shared their opinions on the issues contained in menfess. The three opinions differ. In accordance with the opinion theory stated by Wahyudi in Fatima (2016), opinion is individual and not based on facts. Instead, it is more based on the individual's own personal thoughts. So, the three accounts wrote their opinions based on their thoughts. Then, when viewed from the component theory of opinion formation by William and Cleve, opinions are formed through beliefs, values and expectations. Everyone has different beliefs, values and expectations. These three components affect the three accounts in opinion. Because the three components are different for each person, opinions on an issue are also different, as seen in the comments on the menfess. Senders who send menfess and Twitter users who share their opinions in the comment's column apply the function of social media, namely as a medium for democratising information. In addition, they also show the function of social media as an information and education function by providing new information and new knowledge through the opinions they write about an issue. So, in this case, the auto base @collegemenfess account is used by users as a medium to share opinions by sending menfess and asking for opinions. Other users also share their opinions by commenting and writing their opinions on related issues.

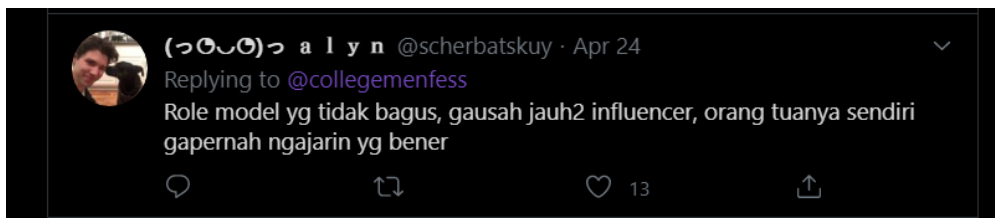
Figure 20. Opinions about the causes of low morals and ethics in today's youth



Source:Twitter/collegemenfes

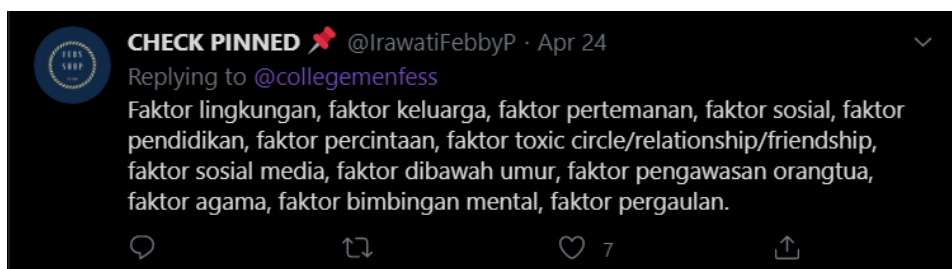
In the menfess, it is known that the sender or the person who sent the menfess wanted to invite other Twitter users to discuss by asking their opinions on an issue, namely the causes of low morals and ethics in today's youth. menfess is a medium for other Twitter users to share opinions on the issue through the comment's column. Some opinions are as follows:

Figure 21. Comments containing opinions on the menfess



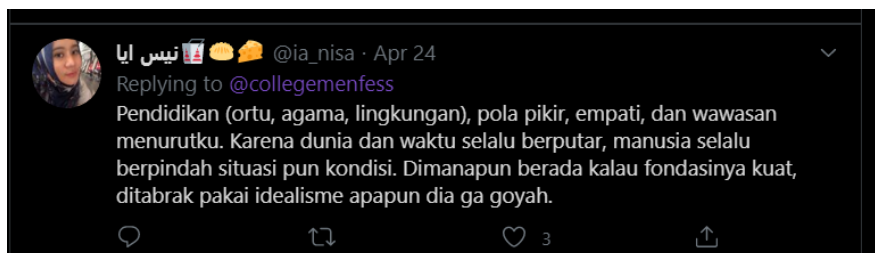
Source: Twitter/scherbatskuy

Figure 22. Comments containing opinions on the menfess



Source: Twitter/IrawatiFebbyP

Figure 23 Comments containing opinions on the menfess



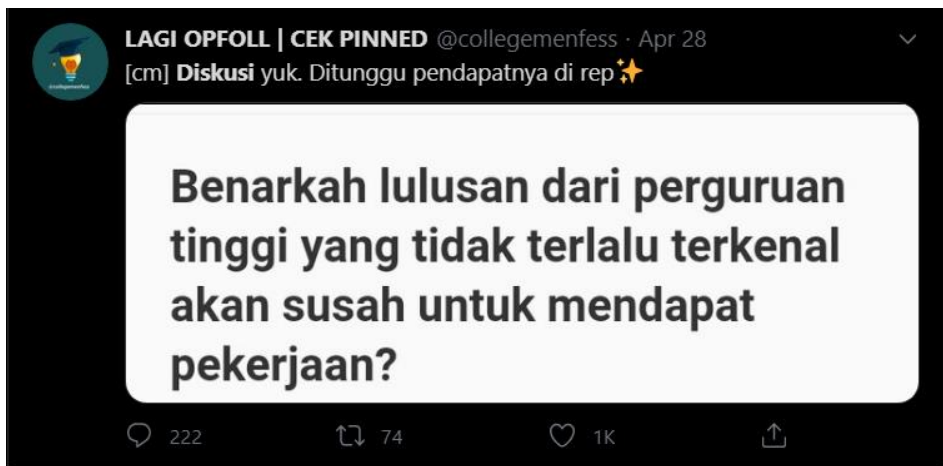
Source: Twitter/ia_nisa

The three comments above are some of the comments on the menfess. Different accounts with different opinions wrote the three comments. The @scherbatskyus account thinks that the cause of low morals and ethics in adolescents is due to bad role models. According to them, parents never taught the right thing. The @irawatifebbyP account conveyed another opinion that this can be caused by many factors, such as environmental factors, friendships, family, social, education, romance, unhealthy relationships, social media, underage age, religion, mental guidance, and parental supervision. Meanwhile, the @ia_nisa account believes that the cause of the issue is education, parents, religion, environment, mindset, insight, and a strong self-foundation.

In accordance with the opinion theory stated by Wahyudi, opinion is an individual opinion that is not based on facts and is based on the individual's own personal thoughts. The

three accounts wrote their opinions based on their thoughts. Different thoughts and components of opinion formation, such as different beliefs, values and expectations, also give different opinions. In the object of this research, it can also be seen that the sender who sent the menfess and Twitter users who share their opinions in the comment's column apply social media as a medium for democratising information by providing opinions. In addition, social media functions as information and education by providing new information and new knowledge through the opinions they write about an issue. In addition, the @collegemenfess account is used as a medium to share opinions by sending menfess, asking opinions, and sharing opinions with other users by commenting on related issues.

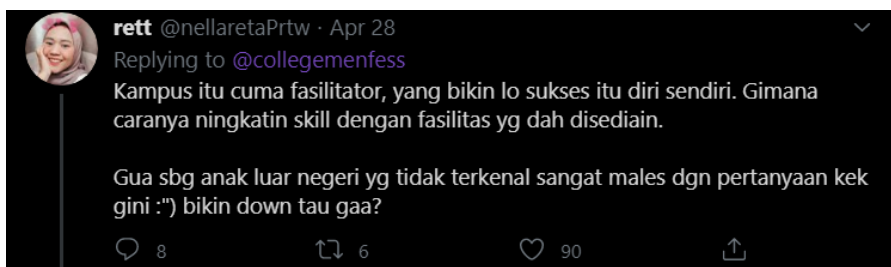
Figure 24. Inviting users to comment about job availability for university graduates



Source: Twitter/collegemenfes

In the menfess, it was discovered that the sender or the person who sent the menfess wanted to invite other Twitter users to discuss by asking their opinion on an issue. The issue discussed is that graduates from lesser-known universities will find it difficult to find work. Menfess is a medium for other Twitter users to share their opinions on the issue through the comment's column. Some opinions are as follows:

Figure 25. Comments containing opinions about the menfess



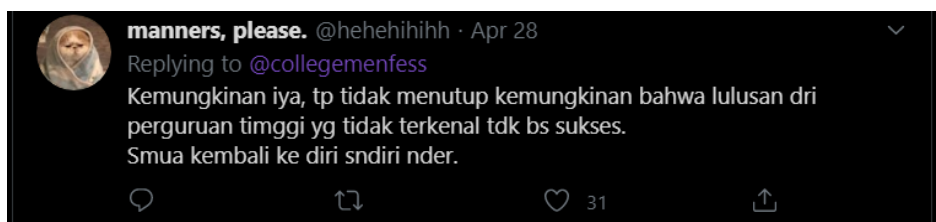
Source: Twitter/nellaretaPrtw

Figure 26. Comments containing opinions about the menfess



Source: Twitter/01KadekPanca

Figure 27. Comments containing opinions about the menfess



Source: Twitter/hehehihihh

The three comments above are part of the comments on the menfess. The three comments were written by different accounts and had different opinions as well. The account @nellarettaprtw thinks that the campus is only a facilitator and what determines a person's success is their respective abilities and skills. The @01kadekpanca account conveyed another opinion that some companies did see the origin of the campus for specific majors. However, to register as a civil servant, only the accreditation of the campus and the study program is checked. Furthermore, the account @hehehihihh also has the opinion that there is a possibility that universities are not famous for being difficult to get a job. However, according to them, it is possible that people who are graduates from not well-known universities can also be successful. According to them, it all depends on each individual.

Based on the analysis of the object, it was found that according to the opinion theory stated by Wahyudi, opinion is an individual opinion that is not based on facts and is based on individual personal thoughts. In this case, the three accounts wrote their opinions based on their own thoughts. Different thoughts and opinion-forming components such as beliefs, values, and different expectations make the opinions given different. In the object of this research, it was also found that senders who sent the menfess and Twitter users who shared their opinions in the comment's column implemented the function of social media as a medium for democratising information by providing opinions. In addition, the function of social media as a function of information and education is also seen from the existence of new information and new knowledge through written opinions on an issue. It can also be seen that the @collegemenfess auto base account is used by its users as a medium to share opinions by sending menfess, asking opinions, and also sharing opinions by commenting and writing their opinions on related issues.

This finding shows that the auto base account on Twitter can be used as a medium to share opinions by sending menfess to ask opinions about something, invite discussions, and provide opinions through the comment's column. It was found that the @collegemenfess auto base account can also be used as a medium of discussion for its users.

CONCLUSION

From this research, it can be concluded that its users can use social media for various things. In this case, the auto base account is used as a medium to share opinions. In addition, the results of the study also show that the @collegemenfess auto base account is used as a medium for sharing opinions through menfess that ask opinions, invite discussions, or provide opinions on related issues through the comments column.

However, this study has limitations; namely, the researcher could not interview the person who sent the menfess due to the sender's anonymity. Another limitation is the large number of tweets from the @collegemenfess account, so that researchers cannot observe all tweets that might be used as a medium to share opinions.

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