

Analysis of FWB (Friends With Benefits) Behaviour Phenomenon among Adolescents through Social Media in the Information Technology Era

Sintya Kartika Prameswari*
Universitas Darussalam Gontor
Email: alf9559@nyu.edu

Rahmad Maulana Tazali*
Universitas Darussalam Gontor
Email: rahmadmaulanatazali54@student.pba.unida.gontor.ac.id

Mohammad Muslih*
Universitas Darussalam Gontor
Email: muslih@unida.gontor.ac.id

Ranya Choirunnissa**
International Islamic University Islamabad
Email: ranya.bsir2132@iiu.edu.pk

Abstract

In the current era of information technology development, both the positive and negative impacts of technology have garnered significant attention from society. One of the issues emerging in the realm of information technology is the phenomenon of friendship with sexual benefits, commonly known as “Friends with Benefits” (FWB). This issue presents substantial implications for adolescents.

* Jl. Raya Siman, Dusun I, Demangan, Kec. Siman, Kabupaten Ponorogo, Jawa Timur.

** Sector H-10, Islamabad, Pakistan.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the FWB behavior phenomenon among adolescents through the observation of social media. The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. Primary data sources comprise books, journals, and written materials relevant to the FWB phenomenon and adolescent behavior. Secondary data is obtained from observations of social media and relevant websites. Data analysis involves the collection, filtering, and interpretation of content related to FWB behavior and its impact on adolescents. The research findings indicate that FWB behavior among adolescents today significantly influences moral deviations and social norms. While interactions between males and females within the FWB context inherently involve dimensions of sexuality, many adolescents perceive it merely as entertainment. This phenomenon underscores a gap between sexual gratification devoid of emotional attachment and commitment-based relationships. Consequently, FWB behavior has the potential to undermine societal and religious norms that govern interpersonal relationships.

Keywords: Friends With Benefits (FWB), Information Technology, Adolescent Behavior, Social Media, Social Impact.

Abstrak

Di era perkembangan teknologi informasi saat ini, dampak positif dan negatif teknologi telah menjadi fokus perhatian masyarakat. Salah satu permasalahan yang muncul terkait teknologi informasi adalah fenomena perilaku pertemanan dengan manfaat seksual, dikenal juga dengan istilah "Friends with Benefit" (FWB). Permasalahan ini menghadirkan dampak yang signifikan bagi remaja. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis fenomena perilaku FWB di kalangan remaja melalui pengamatan media sosial. Penelitian ini mengadopsi pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Sumber data utama berasal dari buku, jurnal, dan karya tulis yang relevan dengan fenomena FWB serta perilaku remaja. Data sekunder diperoleh dari pengamatan media sosial dan situs web yang relevan. Analisis data dilakukan melalui proses pengumpulan, penyaringan, dan interpretasi konten yang terkait dengan perilaku FWB dan dampaknya pada kalangan remaja. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perilaku FWB di kalangan remaja saat ini memiliki dampak yang signifikan terhadap penyimpangan moral dan norma sosial.

Meskipun interaksi antara pria dan wanita dalam konteks FWB pada dasarnya mengarah pada dimensi seksualitas, banyak remaja yang menganggapnya sebagai hiburan semata. Fenomena ini mengindikasikan adanya kesenjangan antara kepuasan seksual tanpa keterikatan emosional dan hubungan yang didasari dengan komitmen. Oleh karena itu, FWB berpotensi merusak norma-norma sosial dan agama yang mengatur hubungan antara individu.

Kata Kunci: Friends With Benefit (FWB), Teknologi Informasi, Perilaku Remaja, Media Sosial, Dampak Sosial.

Introduction

The development of Information and Communication Technology in the community has facilitated access to various information. This is evident from the widespread assumptions of news received by the public. In this era of globalization, news can become the public's assumption without being bound by time and place limitations. The public can access news from different countries. Furthermore, this news also influences people of all ages¹. The advancement of technology plays a crucial role in society and shapes the lifestyle of the community differently as time progresses. One of the key factors that distinguishes this phenomenon is the development of Information and Communication Technology in social relationships within society.

The impact of technology has brought about changes in social interactions, especially with the emergence of various social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Line, WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube. The youth are one of the most active groups using these social media platforms.² Youth is a phase where physical and spiritual potential and strength reach their peak. It's a phase between two weaknesses, childhood (physical weakness) and adulthood (mental weakness), as described in Surah Ar-Rum verse 34

¹ Muh. Usman and Moch Nurcholis Majid, "Era Masyarakat Informasi", *Al-Maquro*, (2020), 4.

² Eddy Syarif, "Pengaruh Media Sosial Terhadap Sikap dan Pendapat Pemuda Mengenai Ujaran Kebencian", *Jurnal Common*, Vol. 3, (2020), 120-41.

(TafsirWeb, n.d.) which states: “Allah creates humans from a position of weakness, then provides them with strength, and then weakens them again”, From this verse, it can be concluded that providing knowledge to the youth is crucial for strengthening society and measuring the level of civilization. Good youth contribute to the advancement of civilization, while the opposite can threaten its continuity.

Currently, the social phenomena among the youth are a cause for concern. Many negative behaviors are emerging among them, including obtaining inappropriate or harmful content from their social media,³ leading to uncontrolled desires and lust.⁴ Without proper guidance, this can lead to harmful actions.

As an example, the results of a social survey conducted by the Indonesia Demographic Health Surveys (IDHS) in two different periods (2003 and 2012) showed an increase in premarital sexual activity among Indonesian youth aged 15-24, from 5% to 8.⁵ The uncontrolled globalization era has also allowed foreign thoughts and terms to enter the youth through social media, making it easy for them to adopt such terms without constraints. An example of a term known among the youth is 'friends with benefits' or FWB, which represents a form of commitment-free interaction leading to sexual relationships between men and women. This is a relatively new phenomenon among Indonesian teenagers, and partner selection for FWB is often influenced by the opinions of their close friends.⁶

The research employed a qualitative descriptive method. This method allows researchers to describe and summarize various situations and conditions related to the research object. As Moloeng explains, qualitative descriptive research aims to understand phenomena, including perceptions, actions, and other aspects

³ Kemendikbud, *Nafsu: keinginan (kecenderungan, dorongan)*, (September, 2022), Retrieved from <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/nafsu>

⁴ Ulya Hikmah Sitorus Pane, “Syahwat Dalam Al-Qur'an”, *Kontemplasi: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Usuluddin* Vol. 4, (2016), 385-402.

⁵ Annisa Nur Azizah, *Friend With Benefit Agensi Seksual Kaum Muda Dalam Kontestasi Nilai dan Norma*, (Universitas Indonesia, 2020).

⁶ Jessica & Abdul Firman, “Konstruksi Sosial dalam Jalanan Hubungan Friends With Benefits”, *Intercode Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, (2022), 08-19.

involved in the research. Therefore, the data collected in this study are qualitative in nature.⁷

The Origins of the Friends with Benefits (FWB) Phenomenon

The advancement of technology has garnered significant attention in today's society, primarily due to the increasing need for information among internet users. Presently, the public is abuzz with the phenomenon of "Online Dating." Online matchmaking services have become an alternative way for people to find potential partners.⁸

A pressing issue among today's youth is the emergence of new relationships that characterize a blend of friendship and romance, known as "Friends with Benefits" (FWB) relationships, which involve sexual activities. FWB relationships combine the psychological intimacy of friendship with the sexual intimacy of a romantic relationship while attempting to avoid the label "romantic".⁹

The societal unease regarding the phenomenon that occurs among young people through FWB relationships is an expression of exploration within the relationships of individuals in the context of urban Indonesian society. FWB is not only related to the transformation of individual relationships but also to its implications for broader social relationships within society.¹⁰ Since the quality of a person's relationships, whether positive or negative, is undoubtedly linked to various emotions.

Social Relationship Patterns in Friends with Benefits (FWB)

To better understand the phenomenon of a new form of relationships among young people, known as friends with benefits (FWB), its prevalence is increasing in Indonesia. Friends with benefits relationships are primarily focused on the psychological aspects,

⁷ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D*, (Bandung: ALFABETA, 2013).

⁸ Aisyah Dwi Fitriyani, "Online Dating dalam Relasi Percintaan FWB di media sosial", *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, (2020), 340-351.

⁹ Annisa Nur Azizah, *FWB: Agensi seksual Kaum Muda Dalam Kontestasi Nilai dan Norma*, (Depok: Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik, 2020).

¹⁰ Aisyah Dwi Fitriyani, "Online Dating...,"

including the hopes, emotions, and feelings of the young people involved in these relationships.¹¹

The prevalence of infobesity within social communities results in information being consumed without prior screening. While religious regulations and norms have established certain boundaries for social relationships, the era of globalization has opened doors to various external cultural influences, bringing the concept of FWB into the public spotlight.¹² The characteristics and forms of FWB relationships within society include:

a) The foundational basis of an opposite-sex relationship within FWB is "friendship," not "love."

b) Both parties agree to certain rules to stay within the essence of FWB.

c) FWB relationships lack a clear status, and individuals within FWB can engage with multiple partners simultaneously.

d) FWB relationships serve as an escape for those tired of traditional romantic relationships, offering a shortcut to connecting with the opposite sex.¹³

This phenomenon has become a common practice among young adults, turning ordinary friendships into extraordinary relationships. However, it's important to note that, in the context of FWB, many relationships between men and women fall into the category of "one night stand" (ONS), which involves sexual activities for just one night. The motives are primarily for sexual gratification, often without further emotional attachment. This phenomenon is particularly evident among individuals who use the online dating app Tinder to establish FWB relationships.¹⁴

In the Quran, it is clearly stated that fornication (zina) is a vile and reprehensible act. The following verse emphasizes the prohibition of engaging in activities that lead to fornication. The verse states, "And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way" (Quran, Al-Isra': 32).

¹¹ Annisa Nur Azizah, *FWB: Agensi seksual Kaum Muda...*,

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

The prevalence of FWB has raised concerns and had a negative impact on the morality of young people. This has led to strong disagreements between those in favor of and those against FWB. Those in favor justify it as long as there is no harm to either party. However, those against FWB consider it as morally wrong and in violation of social norms and religious values.¹⁵

Hadith from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also emphasizes that sins known to others can lead to shame. This emphasizes the importance of avoiding not only the act itself but also any behavior leading to it. The Quran provides a clear depiction of the faith and actions of the believers compared to the behavior of hypocrites, portraying the latter as wicked and evil. This is emphasized in Surah Al-A'raf, verse 29.

Social penetration is a process where shallow relationships become more intimate. Intimacy isn't limited to physical closeness but also includes intellectual and emotional closeness when various information is shared. The process of relationship development and increasing familiarity in introductions is identified as social penetration. In the context of friends with benefits relationships, young people are not exempt from their personal experiences that serve as self-reflection and shape their experiences in these relationships. These experiences are gained through various activities, whether in friendships, academic or non-academic activities, and more.¹⁶

Examining the life experiences of young people engaged in friends with benefits relationships, their views on such relationships, the factors underlying their decisions, and the consequences they face are crucial.¹⁷ The dynamics of youth relationships in the digital era have evolved rapidly. Consequently, the complexity of their cultural background has made it increasingly common for young people to engage in friends with benefits relationships. Shifts in adolescent lifestyles have led to their social interactions in society. The phenomenon of friends with benefits is now openly

¹⁵ Muh. Usman and Moch Nurcholis Majid, "Era Masyarakat Informasi", *Al-Maquro*, (2020), 4.

¹⁶ Aisyah Dwi Fitriyani, "Online Dating...",

¹⁷ Annisa Nur Azizah, *FWB: Agensi seksual Kaum Muda...*,

acknowledged by the public, and what was once considered deviant is now regarded as normal, albeit still considered taboo in some segments of society. Friends with benefits originated from Western culture, where men and women engage in intimacy without emotional attachment.

The relationship among young people in the digital age is rapidly evolving. The dynamics of teenage friendships have led to diverse perspectives on self and relationships with the opposite gender. Due to the complexity of culture, these relationships have become quite common. The shifting lifestyles of teenagers have influenced how they socially interact in society. The phenomenon of "friends with benefits" (FWB) has become openly acknowledged by society. This deviant phenomenon is now considered commonplace, even though it remains a taboo subject in society. Friends with benefits originates from Western culture, where men and women engage in intimate relationships without emotional attachment.¹⁸

These viewpoints can be clarified into two categories:

a) Adolescents who view these relationships as purely biological fulfillment.

b) Adolescents who perceive these relationships as commitment-free connections that provide them with affection and attention.

The process of objectification within relationships pertains to how adolescents perceive the FWB phenomenon. In their objectification process, they realize that each individual's experience is unique. Adolescents who construct FWB relationships as beneficial friendships in meeting their sexual needs tend to endure longer in intimate relationships. This involves feelings and is primarily for pleasure (Kemendikbud, 2022).¹⁹

The agency context in societal perspectives can satisfy desires that refer to the process in which adolescents become sexually active and engage in strategic actions and negotiations that may lead to unwise decisions. It is undeniable that social media and messaging

¹⁸ Jessica & Abdul Firman, "Konstruksi Sosial dalam Jalanan Hubungan...",

¹⁹ Kemendikbud, *Nafsu: keinginan (kecenderungan, dorongan)*, (September, 2022), Retrieved from <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/nafsu>

applications have become common facilities used by urban youth to interact with their social environment. One of the platforms widely known among urban youth is online dating apps. These platforms are usually used by young people to find partners. In their development, these platforms are not only used for finding romantic long-term partners but also for seeking conversation partners or short-term partners such as friends with benefits. The use of online dating platforms is evident in the stories of the three informants in this study when describing how they first met their friends with benefits or even when they learned about the term "friends with benefits" itself.²⁰ The frequency of friends with benefits (FWB) relationships among certain individuals has increased over time.

Construction and Negotiation of FWB Agency in Young Adults

The concept of friends with benefits (FWB) relationships in this study is positioned as a means for young adults to express their sexuality in a more liberated context. The discussion regarding the life experiences of young adults as individuals with agency is manifested in their experiences of engaging in FWB relationships, representing a new form of relational pattern resulting from changes in personal relationships and intimacy systems.²¹ Young adults possess subtle sexual agency, which enables them to make personal changes according to their desires. In other words, young adults have the capacity to navigate their lives in any direction they choose, actively becoming sexual individuals in accordance with their wishes and needs. In this study, subtle sexual agency is demonstrated through the strategies and negotiations they employ, shaping their perspectives and interpretations of FWB relationships, the factors influencing their decisions, and strategies for coping with the consequences of the FWB relationships they engage in.

The sexual agency held by young adults is expressed through non-conventional relationships, such as FWB relationships. Young adults, as agents, have the capacity to determine their own lives in

²⁰ Eddy Syarif, "Pengaruh Media Sosial Terhadap Sikap...,"

²¹ Aisyah Dwi Fitriyani, "Online Dating...,"

alignment with their desires, even if it contradicts collective family or societal values. The sexual agency manifested in FWB relationships is shaped by their historical experiences, culminating in the adoption of new values and the negotiation of these values with the values instilled in them from an early age.²² In this research, the sexual agency of young adults, in the form of subtle sexual agency, emerges as the most dominant. Subtle sexual agency shapes the sexual agency of young adults within constraints, influencing how they adapt to living within their families and broader society as unique individuals.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, the issue among adolescents today revolves around new relationships among young people, characterizing both friendship and romantic relationships. One such relationship is known as "friends with benefits" (FWB), a type of relationship that leads to sexual activities. FWB combines the psychological intimacy of a friendship with the sexual intimacy of a romantic relationship while attempting to disregard the label "romantic". The phenomenon of friends with benefits has become openly acknowledged by society. What was once considered deviant behavior is now seen as commonplace, although it remains somewhat taboo in society. Friends with benefits originates from Western culture, where men and women engage in intimate relationships without being emotionally attached.

Various studies indicate that relationships among young people often involve sexual processes. Sexual activity among young people in Indonesia has become a common secret, with studies demonstrating a steadily increasing prevalence. The dynamics of adolescent friendships in the digital age have diversified perspectives on self-identity and interactions with the opposite sex. This complexity in cultural norms has made such relationships more socially acceptable. The shifting lifestyles of adolescents have influenced their social interactions within society, and the phenomenon of friends with benefits has become openly acknowledged by society.

²² Eddy Syarif, "Pengaruh Media Sosial Terhadap Sikap...,"

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