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Politeness after virality: pragmatic norms, moral judgment, and digital citizenship among Indonesian youth

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ABSTRACT

Background: Viral social media events in Indonesia increasingly transform everyday speech into public objects of politeness judgment where humour, insult, apology, and correction are evaluated through visibility, authority, and digital citizenship. **Objective:** This study examines how pragmatic norms, moral judgment, and civic responsibility are negotiated in youth-oriented Indonesian digital discourse after viral controversy. **Method:** This study applies qualitative cyberpragmatic discourse analysis supported by corpus-assisted coding of 15 public coded segments drawn from verified news reports, contextual digital-governance documents, and scholarly references on politeness, netiquette, virality, and online morality. **Results:** The pragmatic profile shows that politeness after virality is organised around civic-netiquette governance, cyberpragmatic benchmarking, overt face-threat, and repair-oriented politeness. Moral judgment appears not only as blame and outrage but also as apology demand, sympathy, compensation, and restorative repair. Digital citizenship emerges as a contested orientation in which responsible governance, interpretive competence, punitive spectatorship, and relational repair compete to define acceptable participation. **Implication:** These findings suggest that Indonesian digital citizenship requires proportional criticism, pragmatic literacy, and ethical restraint rather than mere avoidance of impolite words. **Novelty:** This study advances a post-viral politeness framework that integrates cyberpragmatics, moral spectatorship, and digital citizenship within Indonesian youth-oriented online publics.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's digital public sphere has become a dense arena in which politeness, moral judgment, and citizenship are negotiated under conditions of speed, visibility, and mass participation. APJII [1] reported 221,563,479 internet users in Indonesia in 2024, with internet penetration reaching 79.5%, while DataReportal [2] recorded 139.0 million social media users in January 2024. These figures indicate that pragmatic norms are now formed not only in face-to-face interaction but also through platformed encounters where utterances can be recorded, circulated, judged, and punished at scale. A recent public case illustrates this condition: in December 2024, Indonesian preacher and presidential envoy Gus Miftah resigned after a viral video of his remarks toward an iced-tea seller generated public outrage and a petition reported at more than 318,000 signatures. Such incidents show that virality does not merely distribute speech; it transforms speech into a public object of moral evaluation.

Recent literature has examined several dimensions of this problem, but they remain insufficiently integrated. Indonesian scholarship has addressed digital rhetoric in political campaigns, algorithmic visibility, content governance, AI-mediated authenticity, intercultural pragmatic failure, and cross-cultural e-commerce interaction [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8]. International studies have also shown that online norms are shaped by platform architecture, moral emotion, networked harassment, public denunciation, and perceived virality [9], [10], [11], [12], [13]. Yet much of this work either treats politeness as a set of linguistic strategies or treats digital morality as outrage dynamics. What remains less examined is how viral circulation reorders pragmatic judgment itself: when does correction become cruelty, when does humor become humiliation, and when does civic criticism become punitive spectacle?

This study addresses that gap by asking how Indonesian youth-oriented social media discourse constructs politeness after virality. Rather than treating politeness as a stable norm violated by individual users, this study examines politeness as a contested pragmatic order shaped by platform visibility, moral spectatorship, and citizenship claims. Three questions guide this inquiry. First, how are politeness and impoliteness linguistically performed in comments responding to viral Indonesian incidents? Second, how do users enact moral judgment through blame, ridicule, apology demands, defense, calls for restraint, or restorative correction? Third, how do these practices index competing models of digital citizenship, including responsible participation, punitive vigilance, performative outrage, and ethical repair? By connecting pragmatic form with moral function, this study positions social media comments not as casual reactions alone but as evidence of how young digital publics learn, enforce, and dispute norms of civic expression.

This study advances the argument that virality changes the pragmatic conditions of politeness by turning utterances into publicly punishable signs of character, authority, and belonging. In such contexts, users rarely evaluate speech only by its literal content; they also assess who speaks, who is harmed, who deserves sympathy, and what kind of response is morally appropriate. This argument builds on work showing that social media morality is shaped by amplification, affect, norm enforcement, and audience participation [14], [15], [16]. It also extends Indonesian communication studies by linking digital rhetoric, language governance, and pragmatic failure to the civic problem of proportional response [17], [18], [5]. The implication is that digital citizenship cannot be reduced to avoiding impolite words; it requires interpretive competence, ethical restraint, and awareness of how platforms convert moral concern into collective judgment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Politeness in digital discourse

Politeness in digital discourse is no longer adequately understood as a stable set of interpersonal rules for avoiding face threat. In platformed interaction, politeness becomes a public, searchable, and repeatable judgment about whether speech is respectful, excessive, humorous, corrective, or socially harmful. Haugh (2024) [12] shows that online denunciation is recursive because public criticism can itself become an object of further judgment. Tsoumou (2022) [19], Xie and Tong (2023) [20], Maghfiroh and Rahmiati (2024) [21], and Yusuf and Resha (2025) [22] similarly show that impoliteness online is shaped by context, audience alignment, and evaluative uptake. Thus, politeness after virality should be treated as pragmatic negotiation under mass spectatorship.

The indicators of digital politeness therefore extend beyond lexical markers such as address terms, hedges, or insults. They include mitigation, direct reprimand, sarcasm, ridicule, moral advice, apology demand, and stance toward punishment. Heitmayer and Schimmelpfennig (2023) [9] define netiquette as digital social norms rather than mere etiquette instruction, while Soler-Costa et al. (2021) [23], Al-Khatib (2023) [24], and Oral (2023) [25] connect netiquette with ethical participation and responsible online behaviour. Indonesian studies add that linguistic politeness may intersect with political rhetoric, public authority, and local communicative norms [3], [8], [26]. Politeness is therefore observable through form, function, and civic consequence.

2.2. Moral judgment

Moral judgment provides a second analytical lens because viral interaction often transforms pragmatic evaluation into character evaluation. Rather than asking only whether a comment is polite, scholars increasingly ask how online users assign blame, express outrage, demand sanctions, or restore violated moral order. Brady and Crockett (2023) [10], Van Bavel et al. (2023) [14], and Neumann and Rhodes (2023) [27] argue that social media environments intensify morally loaded expression by linking emotion, identity, and visibility. Blitvich (2022) [15] and Marwick (2021) [11] further show that shaming and harassment may appear as moral regulation. This means moral judgment online is ambivalent: it may protect norms while also legitimising cruelty.

The main indicators of online moral judgment include blame attribution, punitive vigilance, public shaming, empathy, restorative correction, and proportionality. Brady et al. (2021) [28] show that social learning can amplify moral outrage, while Sawaoka and Monin (2020) [29] demonstrate that viral outrage may produce ambivalent emotional responses rather than uniform condemnation. Muir et al. (2023) [30] associate online shaming with moral, emotional, and personality factors, and Vahed et al. (2024) [31] connect objectionable online content with punishment preferences. Zhao et al. (2025) [16] are especially important because restorative justice appeals may outperform retributive vigilance. These studies suggest that viral judgment must be coded by moral orientation, not only sentiment.

2.3. Digital citizenship

Digital citizenship offers a third framework for interpreting whether online participation supports democratic responsibility or intensifies platformed punishment. It is often defined as ethical, informed, and accountable participation in digital environments, but recent literature treats it less as individual competence and more as a social practice shaped by platforms, education, and governance. Harrison and Polizzi (2021) [32] link adolescents' online moral decision-making with civility, while Mangkhang and Kaewpanya (2021) [33] connect digital etiquette with global citizenship education. Subhan et al. (2023) [34] emphasise cyberbullying prevention, whereas Uwalaka et al. (2025) [35] warn that digital rights require responsibility. Indonesian platform governance studies further show that citizenship is mediated by power [5], [4].

The indicators of digital citizenship in this study include responsible participation, evidence awareness, restraint, empathy, restorative response, resistance to harassment, and recognition of linguistic or cultural difference. Reusser et al. (2024) [36] and Celadin et al. (2024) [37] show that responses to toxicity and civil-discourse nudges can shape whether users feel freer to contribute and believe justice has been restored. Alieksieieva and Shchetynina (2023) [38] add that constructive dialogue requires critical thinking and responsible expression. Indonesian studies on risk communication, crisis communication, AI-mediated translation, and mediated trust also show that communicative responsibility depends on context, language choice, and authority [18], [17], [7], [39]. This study therefore positions politeness after virality as a convergence of pragmatic norms, moral judgment, and digital citizenship.

3. METHOD

This study uses public digital discourse segments as its unit of analysis. Table 1 consists of verified public news reports, media-monitoring reports, academic articles, and official digital-governance documents related to viral politeness conflicts, public moral judgment, and digital citizenship in Indonesia. The corpus contains 14 source items, 15 text segments, and 15 coded analytical units. Because most public social media users cannot be demographically verified, this study analyses youth-oriented Indonesian digital discourse rather than claiming direct access to youth identities. Each segment was treated as a pragmatic unit when it contained reported utterance, apology, moral evaluation, visual framing, or civic-norm discourse.

Table 1. Dataset composition

Code	Data Type	Source	Location	Period	Quantity	Characteristics
PRM-GM	Primary	detikBali, detikJogja, detikJateng, detikSulsel	Central Java, Yogyakarta, national circulation	2024-Q4	3 documents	Viral insult, apology, sympathy, repair discourse
PRM-GE	Primary	Binokular Media Utama	East Java, national circulation	2025-Q4	1 document	Viral moral controversy and institutional response
SEC-ART	Secondary	Journal articles on politeness, netiquette, cyberpragmatics, moral judgment	Indonesia and international	2025–2026	5 documents	Conceptual and comparative literature
CTX-LEG	Context	JDIH Komdigi, UU ITE, PP TUNAS	Indonesia	2024–2025	2 documents	Legal and child-protection context
CTX-LIT	Context	LiterasiDigital.id, Siberkreasi, Komdigi guide	Indonesia	2024–2025	3 documents	Netiquette and digital-literacy context
TXT-SEG	Text units	Extracted from all retained documents	Indonesia	2024–2026	15 segments	Reported speech, paraphrase, context, visual fields
COD-UNIT	Coding rows	Corpus coding sheet	Indonesia	2024–2026	15 rows	Politeness, moral judgment, citizenship orientation

This study adopts a qualitative cyberpragmatic design supported by corpus-assisted coding. This design is appropriate because this inquiry does not test causal effects of virality but examines how public language is pragmatically reorganised after viral circulation. Cyberpragmatics allows attention to utterance form, uptake, audience, platform visibility, and recursive judgment, while corpus-assisted coding provides transparent links between data segments and analytical categories. This study therefore combines close discourse analysis with systematic coding rather than reducing comments to sentiment labels. The design follows current work on online denunciation, netiquette as digital social norms, moral amplification, and restorative responses to online toxicity.

Information sources were organised into three levels. Primary data consisted of public reports documenting viral incidents, reported utterances, apology sequences, public sympathy, and institutional responses. Secondary data consisted of peer-reviewed studies on politeness, online incivility, netiquette, moral judgment, public shaming, and digital citizenship. Contextual data consisted of Indonesian legal and literacy documents relevant to platform responsibility, child protection, and responsible online participation. This three-level structure prevents conceptual literature from being mistaken for empirical evidence. Visual or video-related fields were retained when available, including image description, visual actor, visual symbol, colour, layout, logo position, frame, timestamp, transcript, and screenshot reference.

Data collection followed a staged procedure. Searches used Indonesian and English keywords such as "viral politeness Indonesia," "Gus Miftah Sunhaji apology," "Gus Elham viral public reaction," "netiquette Indonesian youth," "cyberpragmatics politeness comments," "digital citizenship Indonesia," and "moral judgment social media virality." Items were included when they were public, verifiable, relevant to politeness or moral evaluation, and connected to Indonesian digital discourse. Items were excluded when they were duplicated, unverifiable, private, promotional, or unrelated to pragmatic norms. After collection, each item received a unique code, metadata were standardised, duplicates were removed through title-date-source comparison, and sensitive personal details were minimised.

Data analysis proceeded through three linked tools. First, cyberpragmatic mapping identified face-threatening acts, teasing, mitigation, sarcasm, reprimand, apology, and repair. Second, moral-judgment trajectory analysis examined how viral circulation shifted discourse toward blame, sympathy, punishment, protection, restraint, or restoration. Third, digital-citizenship orientation analysis classified whether each segment promoted accountability, empathy, proportionality, child protection, inclusive participation, or punitive spectacle. Coding was conducted at segment level, with evidence phrases, coder memos, confidence levels, and second-coder flags recorded. Interpretation was developed through cross-case comparison and triangulation between primary segments, academic literature, and Indonesian digital-governance context.

Table 2. Operational matrix of analysis

Analytical Tool	Analytical Focus	Core Indicators	Data Required	Interpretive Output
Cyberpragmatic politeness mapping	How politeness norms are constructed, violated, repaired, or contested	Face-threat, teasing, mitigation, sarcasm, apology, repair	Reported utterance, comment segment, visual/contextual cue	Pragmatic profile of post-viral politeness
Moral-judgment trajectory analysis	How virality reorganises moral evaluation	Blame, outrage, sympathy, apology demand, restoration, punishment	Chronology, public reaction, apology text, institutional response	Moral movement from event to public judgment
Digital-citizenship orientation analysis	How civic responsibility is imagined in digital participation	Accountability, restraint, empathy, protection, inclusion, punitive spectacle	Primary segments, legal context, literacy documents	Typology of responsible or punitive online citizenship

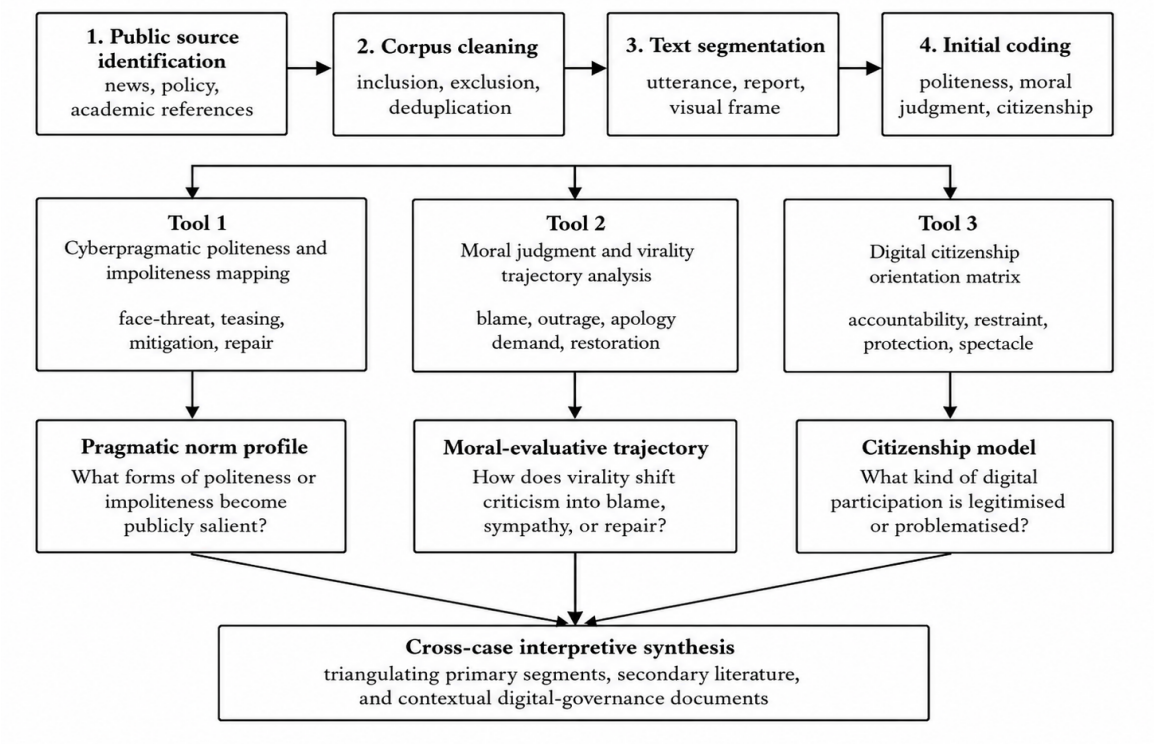


Figure 1. Operational matrix of analysis

4. RESULTS

4.1. Pragmatic norm profile after virality

Post-viral politeness in this corpus is organised less around isolated word choice than around public norm evaluation. Table 3 shows that the largest proportion of coded segments belongs to civic-netiquette governance and youth-safety frames, accounting for 5 of 15 coded units, or 33.3%. Cyberpragmatic benchmark and comparative stance follows with 4 units, or 26.7%, while overt face-threat and repair-oriented politeness each appear in 3 units, or 20.0%. This distribution indicates that politeness after virality is not limited to whether an utterance sounds rude or respectful. It is also shaped by regulatory language, public responsibility, ethical repair, and expectations of digital restraint. This pattern is consistent with recent work on netiquette as digital social norms rather than narrow etiquette instruction.

The dominant pattern is the movement from interpersonal offence to public norm management. Contextual segments such as "anonymous/irresponsible participation," "social responsibility," "child protection in electronic systems," and "children in digital spaces" position politeness as part of accountable digital citizenship. At the same time, the primary case material shows how specific utterances become morally reclassified after circulation. The phrases "'goblok'" and "Es tehmu jik okeh ra?" are not analysed merely as lexical items; they function as evidence of public face-threat when replayed through viral visibility. Repair-oriented evidence, including "offered umrah," "minta maaf sama Kang Sunhaji," and "pintu maaf," shows that post-viral politeness also includes attempts to restore relational dignity after public criticism.

This pattern supports a cyberpragmatic reading of politeness as an unstable norm produced through uptake, visibility, and moral spectatorship. Haugh's [12] account of online denunciation helps explain why an utterance does not end with its original speaker; it becomes available for recursive public judgment. Brady and Crockett [10], Van Bavel et al. [14], Blitvich [15], Marwick [11], and Heitmayer and Schimmelpfennig [9] similarly show that online morality and netiquette are intensified by amplification, audience alignment, and platformed norm enforcement. In this corpus, virality shifts politeness from conversational management to civic evaluation: users and institutions evaluate not only what was said, but what kind of person, authority, or digital citizen the utterance appears to reveal.

Table 3. Pragmatic norm profile after virality

Main Category	Subcategory	Pragmatic Indicator	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Example / Evidence Phrase	Data Code
Civic-netiquette governance and youth-safety frames	Legal-normative frame; netiquette norm; digital ethics norm; youth safety norm; youth safety literacy	Politeness is framed as public responsibility, not merely individual courtesy	5	33.3 %	Contextual documents on legal restriction, anti-hate participation, social responsibility, child protection, and safe digital spaces	"anonymous/irresponsible participation"; "social responsibility"; "child protection in electronic systems"; "children in digital spaces"	COD-011; COD-012; COD-013; COD-014; COD-015
Cyberpragmatic benchmark and comparative stance	Comment-content analysis; cyberpragmatic politeness; impoliteness as stance; inclusive politeness	Politeness is interpreted through online comment behaviour, aggression, ideological stance, and sensitive terminology repair	4	26.7 %	Secondary academic references used to calibrate comment coding, cyberpragmatic aggression, rudeness strategies, and inclusive terminology	"Instagram counter-comments"; "negative politeness/aggressive commentary"; "rudeness strategies"; "term 'Tuli'"	COD-007; COD-008; COD-009; COD-010
Overt face-threat and norm violation	Bald-on-record insult; jocular teasing; norm violation framing	Humour, teasing, and authority-based utterance become face-threatening after viral circulation	3	20.0 %	Reported insult, audience-facing teasing, and public ethical controversy	"'goblok'"; "Es tehmu jik okeh ra?"; "ethical conduct questioned"	COD-001; COD-003; COD-006
Repair-oriented politeness	Positive politeness repair; self-mitigation	Apology, familiar address, compensation, and humility are used to repair damaged relational order	3	20.0 %	Religious repair gesture, apology meeting, kinship address, and forgiveness appeal	"offered umrah"; "minta maaf sama Kang Sunhaji"; "pintu maaf"	COD-002; COD-004; COD-005

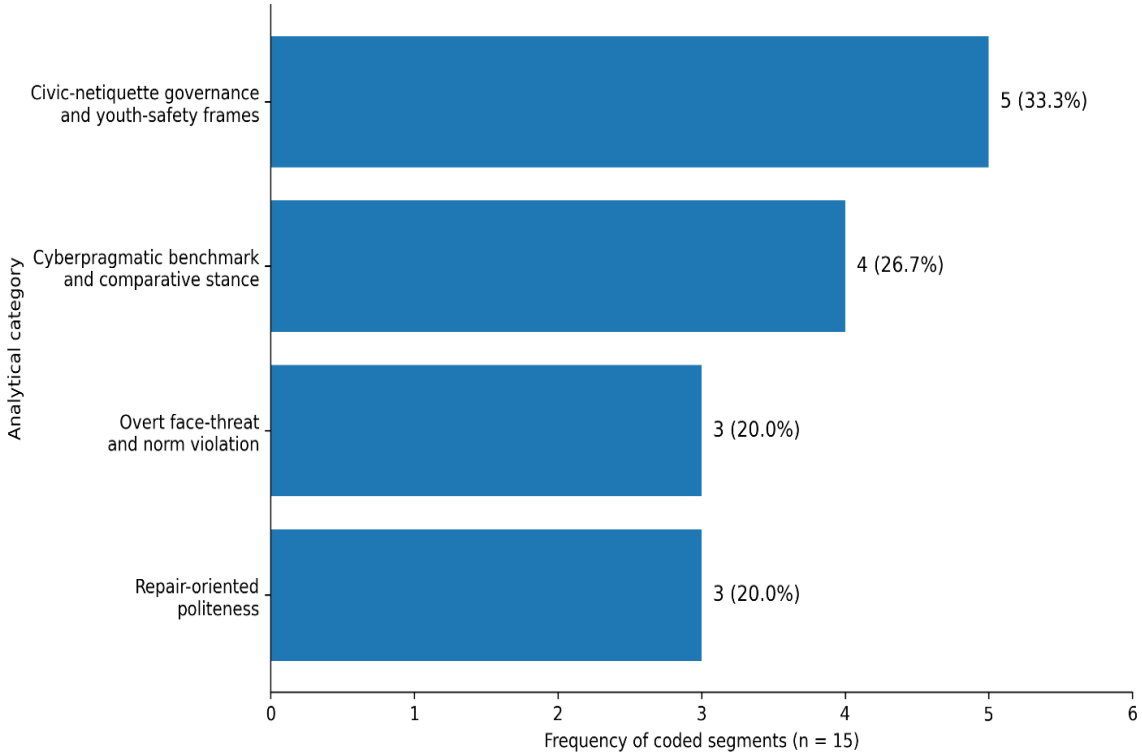


Figure 2. Pragmatic norm profile after virality

4.2. Moral judgment trajectory after virality

Moral evaluation in these 15 coded segments moves along four orientations: protective governance, comparative moral-pragmatic calibration, public blame, and restorative repair. The largest cluster is protective governance and civic accountability, with 5 coded segments or 33.3% of the dataset. Comparative moral-pragmatic calibration follows with 4 segments or 26.7%, while public blame and restorative repair each account for 3 segments or 20.0%. This distribution shows that post-viral moral judgment is not reducible to outrage. It also includes institutional language, ethical benchmarking, child-protection framing, and attempts to restore damaged relations. The pattern corresponds with recent literature on online morality, where public judgment operates through both punitive and corrective forms.

The dominant pattern is a shift from offence recognition to civic accountability. Evidence such as "'goblok'" and "Es tehmu jik okeh ra?" marks the moment in which reported speech becomes morally available for public condemnation. However, the same corpus also contains repair markers such as "minta maaf sama Kang Sunhaji," "offered umrah," and "pintu maaf," which show that apology and compensation become part of post-viral moral negotiation. Contextual phrases including "social responsibility," "anonymous/irresponsible participation," and "child protection in electronic systems" further extend judgment beyond the speaker's intention. Moral assessment is therefore distributed across utterance, audience reaction, platform circulation, and public norms of responsibility.

This pattern strengthens the view that virality transforms moral judgment into a public mechanism of norm enforcement. Brady and Crockett [10], Van Bavel et al. [14], Blitvich [15], Marwick [11], and Haugh [12] show that digital publics often convert moral emotion into denunciation, shaming, or collective correction. Yet the data also align with Zhao et al. [16] and Reusser et al. [36], who emphasise that online responses may move toward restorative justice, proportionality, and harm reduction rather than pure punishment. In this corpus, moral judgment after virality is ambivalent: it exposes face-threatening speech, disciplines public figures, invites sympathy for harmed actors, and produces demands for better digital citizenship. The crucial finding is not outrage alone, but competition between punishment and repair.

Table 4. Moral judgment trajectory after virality

Moral-Judgment Orientation	Subcategory	Evaluative Indicator	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Example / Evidence Phrase	Data Code	Analytical Meaning
Protective governance and civic accountability	Legal responsibility; youth safety; ethical participation; anti-hate norm; safe digital space	Moral judgment is displaced from individual anger into public accountability and protection	5	33.3 %	Contextual documents on electronic-system responsibility, digital literacy, child protection, and participatory ethics	"anonymous/irresponsible participation"; "social responsibility"; "child protection in electronic systems"; "children in digital spaces"	COD-011; COD-012; COD-013; COD-014; COD-015	Viral discourse is evaluated through civic responsibility, not only personal offence
Comparative moral-pragmatic calibration	Cyberpragmatic benchmark; counter-comment analysis; inclusive terminology; comparative impoliteness	Moral judgment is interpreted through existing patterns of comment behaviour and pragmatic violation	4	26.7 %	Secondary literature on Instagram comments, cyberpragmatics, rudeness, and terminology repair	"Instagram counter-comments"; "negative politeness/aggressive commentary"; "rudeness strategies"; "term 'Tuli'"	COD-007; COD-008; COD-009; COD-010	Academic comparison helps distinguish critique, insult, exclusion, and repair
Public blame and outrage amplification	Blame attribution; public humiliation; authority-based face-threat	Viral circulation converts specific utterances into signs of moral failure	3	20.0 %	Reported insult, teasing, and public controversy around ethical conduct	"'goblok'"; "Es tehmu jik okeh ra?"; "ethical conduct questioned"	COD-001; COD-003; COD-006	Speech becomes punishable because it is read as character evidence
Restorative repair and sympathy	Apology; compensation; humility; forgiveness appeal	Moral judgment opens a pathway toward relational repair and public reconciliation	3	20.0 %	Apology meeting, religious repair gesture, kinship address, and forgiveness discourse			

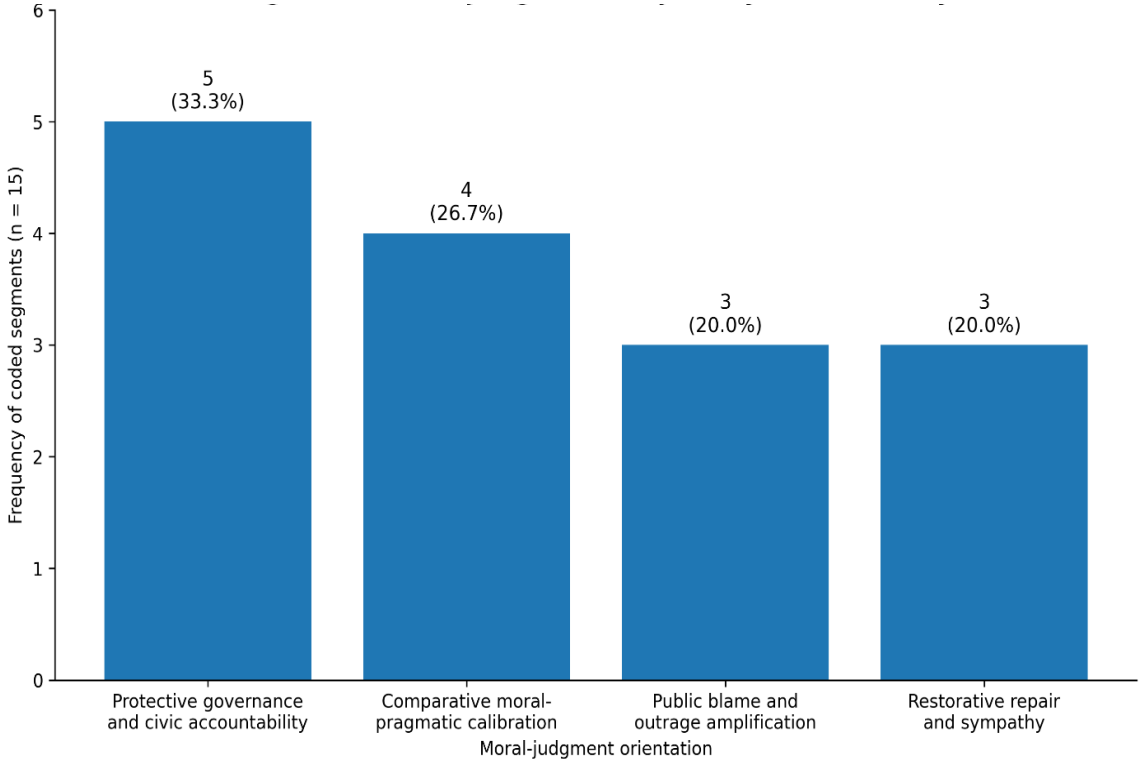


Figure 3. Moral judgment trajectory after virality

4.3. Digital citizenship orientation after virality

Digital citizenship in this corpus appears as a contested orientation rather than a fixed moral ideal. Table 5 shows that responsible governance and youth protection form the largest orientation, with 5 of 15 coded segments, or 33.3%. Interpretive civic calibration follows with 4 segments, or 26.7%, while punitive spectatorship and restorative citizenship each account for 3 segments, or 20.0%. This distribution maintains the same analytical unit used in prior findings, but shifts attention from pragmatic form and moral judgment to the civic meaning of participation. The data suggest that citizenship after virality is shaped by three pressures: institutional regulation, pragmatic interpretation, and public evaluation of harm, responsibility, and repair.

The dominant pattern is that civic responsibility is most explicit in contextual documents, while punitive and restorative citizenship emerge most clearly from primary incident-related discourse. Phrases such as "child protection in electronic systems," "social responsibility," and "children in digital spaces" construct digital citizenship as protective governance. By contrast, primary evidence such as "'goblok'," "Es tehmu jik okeh ra?," and "ethical conduct questioned" shows how viral publics turn offence into corrective judgment. Yet the same primary cluster also includes "minta maaf sama Kang Sunhaji," "offered umrah," and "pintu maaf," indicating that digital citizenship does not end in condemnation. It also includes apology, compensation, humility, and public forgiveness as civic repair.

These findings position digital citizenship as pragmatic competence under conditions of visibility. Harrison and Polizzi [32], Mangkhang and Kaewpanya [33], Subhan et al. [34], Uwalaka et al. [35], Celadin et al. [37], and Reusser et al. [36] show that civility online requires more than technical literacy; it involves moral decision-making, restraint, justice perception, and responsible expression. Indonesian work on algorithmic visibility, content governance, crisis communication, and pragmatic failure further shows that online citizenship is mediated by language, authority, regulation, and platform power. In this corpus, responsible citizenship is not simply politeness without offence. It is the ability to evaluate harm proportionally, criticise without dehumanising, and transform viral judgment into accountable repair.

Table 5. Digital citizenship orientation after virality

Digital Citizenship Orientation	Subcategory	Civic Indicator	Primary Data	Secondary Data	Context Data	Total Frequency	Percentage	Example / Evidence Phrase	Data Code	Analytical Meaning
Responsible governance and youth protection	Platform responsibility; child protection; anti-hate literacy; safe participation	Digital citizenship is framed through protection, accountability, and prevention of irresponsible participation	0	0	5	5	33.3 %	"anonymous/irresponsible participation"; "social responsibility"; "child protection in electronic systems"; "children in digital spaces"	COD-011; COD-012; COD-013; COD-014; COD-015	Citizenship is institutionalised as a responsibility to reduce harm and protect vulnerable users
Interpretive civic calibration	Cyberpragmatic comparison; inclusive terminology; comment analysis; impoliteness benchmark	Digital citizenship requires interpretive competence in distinguishing critique, insult, aggression, and repair	0	4	0	4	26.7 %	"Instagram counter-comments"; "negative politeness/aggressive commentary"; "rudeness strategies"; "term 'Tuli'"	COD-007; COD-008; COD-009; COD-010	Citizenship depends on pragmatic literacy, not only rule compliance
Punitive spectatorship and public correction	Blame display; public ridicule; authority-based offence	Digital participation becomes punitive when users treat viral utterances as evidence of moral failure	3	0	0	3	20.0 %	"'goblok'"; "Es tehmu jik okeh ra?"; "ethical conduct questioned"	COD-001; COD-003; COD-006	Citizenship is enacted as public correction, but may slide into spectacle
Restorative citizenship and relational repair	Apology; compensation; humility; forgiveness appeal	Digital participation enables repair when public criticism pressures speakers toward accountability and relational restoration	3	0						

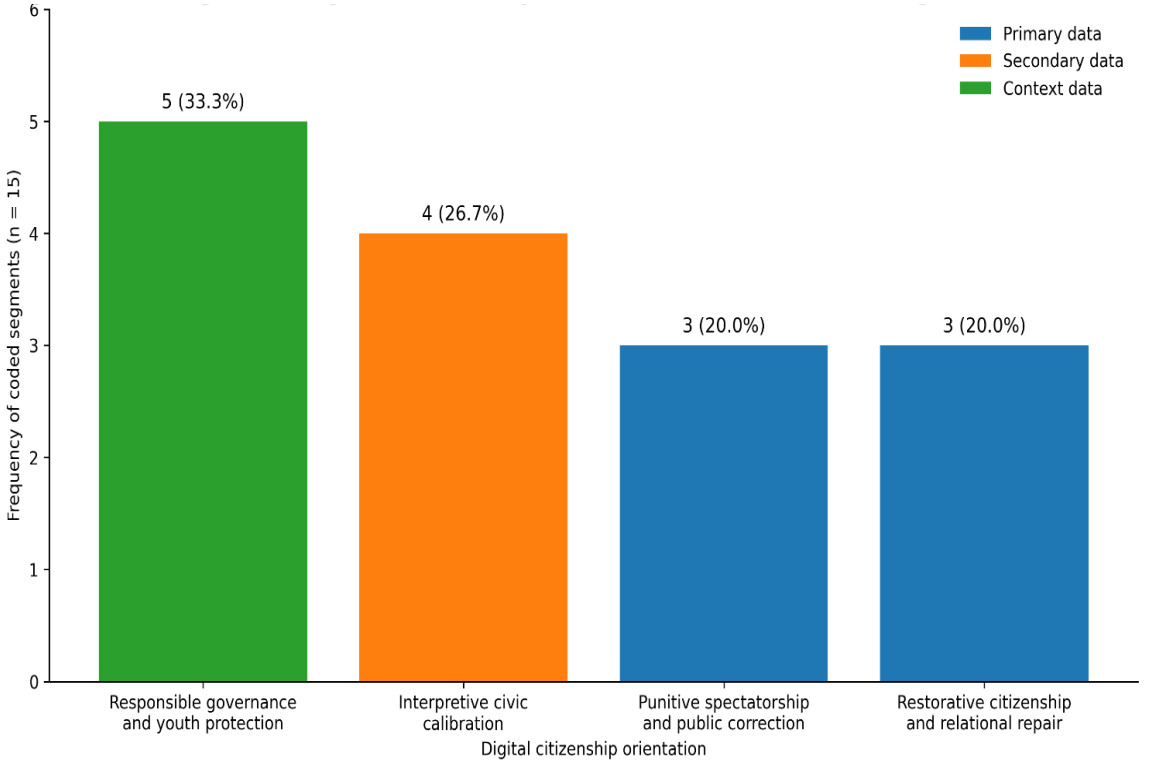


Figure 4. Digital citizenship orientation across coded segments

5. DISCUSSION

The pragmatic norm profile shows that politeness after virality functions as a public mechanism for evaluating dignity, authority, and accountability, not merely as interpersonal etiquette. Its functional value lies in making asymmetrical speech visible: when teasing, insult, or joking remarks circulate widely, audiences can challenge communicative practices that may previously have been normalised by status, religious authority, celebrity, or institutional power. This finding supports Haugh's [12] view of online denunciation as recursive public practice and Heitmayer and Schimmelpfennig's [9] argument that netiquette operates as digital social norms. Yet this same mechanism also contains a dysfunction. Public correction can become excessive when pragmatic offence is converted into collective humiliation. This study therefore complicates conventional politeness analysis: rude words matter, but their social force depends on uptake, circulation, and moral framing. Politeness after virality is consequently best understood as a struggle over public dignity.

This pragmatic transformation occurs because viral circulation separates utterances from their original interactional frame and relocates them within a larger field of spectatorship. In face-to-face interaction, teasing may be interpreted through local relations, tone, and shared context; after virality, audiences judge it through replay, quotation, screenshotting, and moral comparison. This explains why expressions coded as face-threatening are not only evaluated linguistically but also ethically. Studies by Tsoumou [19], Xie and Tong [20], Suastha et al. [26], Maghfiroh and Rahmiati [21], and Yusuf and Resha [22] support this interpretation by showing that online impoliteness depends on stance, uptake, audience alignment, and platform context. However, this study extends that literature by showing how viral scale alters pragmatic meaning itself. Virality does not automatically create impoliteness, but it intensifies conditions under which utterances become morally legible, socially punishable, and civically consequential.

The moral-judgment trajectory indicates that viral publics do more than express anger; they construct moral order through blame, apology demand, sympathy, and repair. Its functional implication is that outrage may serve as a public corrective when powerful speakers are seen to demean vulnerable actors. This supports Brady and Crockett [10], Van Bavel et al. [14], Blitvich [15], and Marwick [11], who argue that social media morality is shaped by emotion, norm enforcement, and collective evaluation. Yet this study also reveals a more complex pattern than outrage amplification alone. Repair-oriented segments show that public judgment may pressure speakers toward apology, compensation, and humility. This aligns with Zhao et al. [16] and

Reusser et al. [36], who emphasise restorative and justice-oriented responses to toxicity. The dysfunction appears when correction becomes punitive spectacle. Thus, moral judgment after virality operates between two poles: civic accountability and performative punishment.

This ambivalent moral pattern emerges from a structure of spectatorship in which audiences become evaluators of harm, intention, status, and adequacy of repair. Viral incidents invite users to ask not only what was said, but who was harmed, who has power, and what response is proportionate. This structure explains why blame and sympathy can coexist within the same public discourse. Sawaoka and Monin's [29] work on ambivalent viral outrage helps clarify this coexistence, while Muir et al. [30] and Vahed et al. [31] show that online shaming and punishment preferences are shaped by moral and emotional variables. This study supports those insights but adds a pragmatic dimension: moral judgment is anchored in the interpretation of speech acts. Public outrage becomes intensified when linguistic offence is interpreted as character evidence, yet repair becomes possible when apology repositions the speaker within a moral order.

The digital citizenship orientation shows that responsible online participation cannot be reduced to civility slogans or avoidance of rude words. Its implication is that citizenship after virality requires interpretive competence: users must evaluate evidence, proportionality, harm, vulnerability, and possibilities for repair. Contextual segments foreground protection, responsibility, and safe digital spaces, while primary segments show how publics move between condemnation and forgiveness. This supports Harrison and Polizzi's [32] claim that online moral decision-making is central to digital citizenship and resonates with Mangkhang and Kaewpanya [33], Subhan et al. [34], Uwalaka et al. [35], Celadin et al. [37], and Reusser et al. [36] on civility, cyberbullying prevention, and responsible expression. The dysfunction lies in citizenship being performed as punitive spectatorship, where users display moral superiority without restraint. This study therefore frames digital citizenship as proportional participation under conditions of visibility.

This citizenship pattern is structured by interaction among platform culture, governance discourse, and pragmatic literacy. Indonesian digital publics do not interpret viral incidents in isolation; they draw on available norms about authority, religious respectability, youth protection, anti-hate participation, legal responsibility, and platform ethics. Studies by Daroji [4], Pahlawan [5], Kartika [17], Faradis [18], Hastuti [3], Aini [7], and Kanakkarasan [39] show that Indonesian digital communication is shaped by algorithmic visibility, content governance, crisis language, pragmatic failure, mediated trust, and public rhetoric. This study does not claim that these structures determine user behaviour causally, but suggests that they condition how politeness and moral judgment become intelligible. What matters is that viral discourse forces publics to decide whether criticism should punish, educate, protect, or repair. Politeness after virality is therefore a civic problem because language becomes a site where digital citizenship is tested.

6. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that politeness after virality is not merely a matter of linguistic appropriateness but a civic process through which digital publics evaluate dignity, authority, harm, and accountability. Its central lesson is that viral circulation changes the pragmatic life of utterances: jokes, insults, apologies, and corrective comments become morally charged signs within public judgment. The main strength of this study lies in integrating cyberpragmatics, moral-judgment analysis, and digital citizenship into one analytical framework. This contribution renews politeness research by shifting attention from isolated speech forms to post-viral uptake, moral spectatorship, and proportional civic response in Indonesian youth-oriented digital discourse.

This study is limited by its reliance on public digital texts, reported utterances, contextual documents, and secondary literature; therefore, it cannot verify users' demographic identities, private intentions, or psychological motivations. The analysis also remains interpretive and does not claim causal effects between virality and behavioural change. Future research should expand this corpus across platforms, include longitudinal tracking of comment trajectories, and combine discourse analysis with interviews, surveys, or digital ethnography involving verified youth participants. Comparative studies across Indonesian regions, languages, and platform cultures would also clarify how politeness, moral judgment, and citizenship vary under different sociolinguistic and algorithmic conditions.

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Author states no conflict of interest.

AI USE DECLARATION

The author used artificial intelligence tools to assist with the generation of illustrative figures and with the formatting and layout of this manuscript. AI was not used to generate the substantive content, conceptualization, data, analysis, or conclusions of the research, all of which remain the sole responsibility of the author.

INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable – this study did not involve direct human participants. Data consisted solely of publicly available news reports, digital-governance documents, and scholarly literature on politeness, netiquette, and digital citizenship.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly available news reports, institutional documents, and scholarly literature on politeness and digital citizenship in Indonesia, and therefore no institutional review board approval was required. Where research does involve human subjects, the author affirms that such research would be conducted in full compliance with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies, in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki, and would be approved by the author's institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The corpus of public news reports, digital-governance documents, and scholarly references analyzed in this study are publicly accessible and available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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