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The Paradox of Poverty: Exploring the Intersection of Online Loan Defaults and Corruption Among Low-Income Communities

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ABSTRACT

The rise of online lending platforms in Indonesia is accompanied by significant issues, one of which is the "galbay" (gagal bayar) movement that has emerged through Facebook groups advocating for individuals to default on their online loans. While the Technology Acceptance Model affirms the convenience of digital lending platforms, there exists a disjunction between culturally prescribed financial goals and the institutional means available to achieve them, leading to an anomie within the social structure. This paper employs netnography to explore the "Raja Galbay" group on Facebook, examining the motivations and behaviors of its members. this paper explore the motivation, causes, and how user decided to default their online lending. Concern like privacy, collective movement exploration also discussed in this paper. indicate that online communities play a critical role in shaping the perception and behavior of individuals facing financial distress. This galbay movement is recognized as a legitimate reaction to financial difficulties rather than a violation of ethical or legal responsibilities. The community functions not only as a platform for sharing information but also as a support network that reinforces the normalization of loan defaults. These observations underscore the necessity for a more nuanced approach to financial regulation and consumer protection, taking into account the social dynamics that shape financial decision-making in digital environments.

1. Introduction

Online lending, particularly through fintech platforms, has rapidly expanded in Indonesia, presenting both significant opportunities and challenges. This growth is primarily driven by technological advancements and an increasing demand for accessible financial services. However, the sector also grapples with substantial regulatory hurdles and consumer protection issues that need to be addressed to ensure its sustainability and safety. The online lending landscape in Indonesia has experienced remarkable growth in recent years. Fintech platforms have revolutionized the borrowing process by offering easy digital onboarding, quick loan processing, and unsecured credit options. These features are particularly appealing to unbanked customers who previously had limited access to traditional banking services (Hardayu et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2024). As of now, there are 101 licensed fintech peer-to-peer (P2P) lending providers operating in the country, serving millions of active loan recipients and facilitating significant funding volumes (Putri et al., 2024). This surge in online lending reflects a broader trend towards digital financial services, which are increasingly seen as essential for promoting financial inclusion in Indonesia.

Despite the rapid growth of online lending, the sector has outpaced existing regulatory frameworks, leading to critical challenges in consumer protection and legal enforcement. The Financial Services Authority (OJK) has implemented regulations aimed at governing fintech lending; however, many platforms continue to operate without proper licenses, exposing consumers to various risks (Tan, 2022; Sigalingging et al., 2024; Subagiyo et al., 2022). The prevalence of illegal lending practices is alarming, often characterized by data misuse and unethical collection methods. These practices underscore the urgent need for stronger regulatory measures and enhanced consumer protection laws to safeguard borrowers from exploitation (Sigalingging et al., 2024; Sasmita et al., 2022; Admiral & Pauck, 2023).

Illegal online lending poses a significant threat to consumers, with numerous platforms operating without authorization from the OJK. This situation has led to widespread consumer exploitation and data breaches, resulting in material losses and psychological distress for victims (Suryono et al., 2021; Angkasa et al., 2023; Subagiyo et al., 2022). Current law enforcement measures have proven inadequate in addressing these issues, leaving many consumers vulnerable. Furthermore, the absence of specialized institutions dedicated to personal data protection exacerbates the risks associated with online lending (Admiral & Pauck, 2023). The lack of accountability and oversight in the sector highlights the pressing need for comprehensive regulatory reforms.

Consumers are increasingly drawn to online lending due to its convenience and speed, despite the potential risks and high-interest rates associated with these loans. Several factors influence consumer decision-making in this context, including performance expectancy, social influence, and security concerns (Putri et al., 2024). However, low financial literacy among consumers and the perceived switching costs from traditional banking to online lending also play a significant role in shaping their choices (Hardayu et al., 2024). Many consumers may not fully understand the terms and conditions of online loans, which can lead to unfavorable financial outcomes.This leads to loan defaults.

The issue of loan defaults in Indonesia's online lending sector, particularly within peer-to-peer (P2P) lending platforms, is a significant challenge in the fintech industry. Several factors contribute to the high rate of loan defaults in Indonesia's online lending platforms. One major factor is the specific characteristics of loans and borrowers. Research indicates that platforms focusing on small loans for micro-businesses tend to increase interest rates following the introduction of formal regulations, which can affect default rates (Santoso et al., 2019). Additionally, online crimes are also rising as there are privacy violations such as whatsapp blast to user’s contact informing about the loan default. This is humiliating for those who have a loan and have some months left in paying the monthly installment. Other frauds, exacerbated by weak regulations, also contribute to the rising number of defaults (Maghfirah & Husna, 2022).

Efforts to mitigate loan defaults include educating the public about the risks and legal consequences of defaulting on online loans, aiming to reduce future default cases (Ismayani, 2024). Some studies suggest using social media data to predict the likelihood of defaults, which can assist platforms in assessing credit risk (Khilfah & Faturohman, 2020). Cases and Closure of Illegal Platforms From 2018 to February 2023, the Financial Services Authority (OJK) closed 4,567 illegal online lending platforms, highlighting the scale of the problem and efforts to address it (Putri & Ramantoko, 2023).

Loan defaults often lead to legal disputes and unlawful actions, causing material losses, psychological stress, and social impacts on victims (Angkasa et al., 2023). Despite regulations aimed at consumer protection, such as POJK No. 77/POJK.01/2016, the implementation and effectiveness remain significant challenges due to the prevalence of unlicensed lending platforms (Sigalingging et al., 2024; Subagiyo et al., 2022). Consumer Protection and Law Enforcement Consumer protection in the context of online lending is governed by various regulations, but many loopholes are exploited by illegal lenders (Sigalingging et al., 2024; Maghfirah & Husna, 2022). Law enforcement against illegal lending is often ineffective, with lenient penalties for violators (Angkasa et al., 2023). However, there are some researches that suggest enhancing lender protection through policies like the Indonesian Securities Protection Fund (ISPF) to help lenders safer and decrease the risk of loan default (Amalia et al., 2019).

The primary challenge in addressing online loan defaults is ensuring that existing regulations are effectively enforced and closing loopholes exploited by illegal lenders (Maghfirah & Husna, 2022). Improving the quality of information and trust in platforms can help reduce default risks (Kurniasari & Utomo, 2020). Public education on the prudent use of online loans is also crucial to prevent future default cases (Ismayani, 2024). In summary, the issue of online loan defaults in Indonesia is influenced by various factors, including loan characteristics, weak regulations, and online crimes. Efforts to reduce these cases involve public education and the use of technology to predict default risks. The closure of illegal platforms by the OJK represents a concrete step in tackling this issue. However, challenges remain in effectively implementing regulations and enhancing consumer protection. Study conducted in 2023, reveals that at least 2.6 million individuals are facing difficulties in repaying these loans, with more than half of them being young people under the age of 35. This demographic has become the primary target for online loan distribution due to their consumptive behavior, despite having low incomes (Krisna et al., 2023).

The analysis research also mentions a 5.3 percent increase in the number of young borrowers aged 17 to 34 who are delinquent or have defaulted on their loans for over 30 days. In 2023, an average of 1.5 million borrowers in this age group were reported to have non-performing loans, accounting for 57 percent of the total 2.6 million non-performing borrowers. The study also highlights that the average loan amount exceeds the borrowers' income. In 2022, the average income was Rp 2.17 million per month, while the average loan per person was Rp 2.31 million, or 106 percent of their income. Young workers aged 17 to 34 are particularly affected, with loans averaging Rp 2.44 million, which is 121 percent of their average monthly income of Rp 2.02 million (Krisna et al., 2023).

The research points out that the trend of using online loans for consumptive purposes is increasing. From January to August 2023, 62.1 percent of the loans were used for consumptive activities, totaling Rp 19 trillion for 18.9 million recipients. This represents a significant increase from previous years. Experts suggest that the rapid penetration of online loans should be balanced with adequate financial literacy to prevent individuals from falling into debt traps. The Financial Services Authority (OJK) aims to increase the portion of loans for productive activities, such as supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), to 70 percent by 2028, as part of their roadmap for developing and strengthening technology-based joint funding institutions. Overall, it underscores the need for better credit scoring systems, stricter lending criteria, and increased financial education to address the challenges posed by the growing online lending industry in Indonesia.

The Financial Services Authority (OJK) has reported that 25 online lending companies are grappling with high non-performing loan (NPL) ratios, with default rates exceeding 5%. This alarming trend has prompted the OJK to issue warnings and request comprehensive action plans from these companies aimed at reducing their default rates. The situation is particularly concerning as many borrowers are struggling to meet their repayment obligations.(Bestari, 2023). While this is concerning, there is a movement of “Gagal Bayar or GalBay” to advocate people to not pay their online loan. As the result of a Facebook search there are numerous groups discussing this topic. There are even groups that offer Joki or people that offer service to guide them to get money from online lending and not paying them.

In this research we would like to know how the conversation that goes in the facebook group that advocates this issue. From the conversation we expect to have clearer understanding about the motives, knowledge sharing, privacy and ethical concern.

The phenomenon of loan default in Indonesia, particularly within the online lending sector, can be analyzed through the theoretical frameworks of Merton’s social structure and anomie theory and Sykes and Matza’s techniques of neutralization. These two perspectives provide complementary explanations for the structural conditions that facilitate financial delinquency and the individual mechanisms through which borrowers rationalize their failure to meet repayment obligations. The integration of these theories offers a comprehensive sociological understanding of the rising trend of online loan default in Indonesia, revealing both systemic economic pressures and cognitive justifications for financial noncompliance.

Merton’s theory of social structure and anomie argues that deviant behavior arises when there is a disjunction between culturally prescribed goals and the institutional means available to achieve them (Merton, 1938). In the context of Indonesia, where economic aspirations are high but access to stable employment and affordable credit remains limited, many individuals experience strain in their pursuit of financial success. The rapid expansion of digital lending platforms has provided an alternative means of obtaining credit, bypassing traditional banking institutions that often impose stringent requirements. However, when borrowers find themselves unable to meet repayment obligations due to economic instability, financial mismanagement, or exploitative lending practices, anomie emerges as a structural strain that normalizes default. The cultural emphasis on financial success, coupled with a financial system that disproportionately benefits those with higher economic capital, creates an environment where loan delinquency becomes a rationalized response rather than an aberration. Thus, online loan default is not solely an issue of individual irresponsibility but rather a structural consequence of economic disparity and unequal access to financial resources (Merton, 1938).

While structural strain explains the macro-level conditions that facilitate loan delinquency, Sykes and Matza's theory of techniques of neutralization provides insight into the micro-level justifications that borrowers use to rationalize their actions (Sykes & Matza, 1957). According to this perspective, individuals engage in deviant behavior while maintaining a self-concept as moral and law-abiding by employing specific cognitive strategies to neutralize feelings of guilt. In the case of loan default, borrowers often invoke these techniques to justify their noncompliance with repayment obligations. Many individuals deny responsibility by attributing their default to external factors such as job loss, economic downturns, or unethical lending practices, positioning themselves as victims rather than as financially negligent. Others deny injury by asserting that their actions do not cause significant harm, especially when defaulting on loans from large financial institutions rather than from individual lenders. Similarly, some borrowers deny the victim by portraying online lending platforms as exploitative entities that engage in predatory lending, justifying non-repayment as an act of resistance against an unfair financial system (Sykes & Matza, 1957).

In addition to these justifications, borrowers may also employ the condemnation of the condemners technique, wherein they criticize lending institutions for engaging in high-interest lending, aggressive debt collection practices, or deceptive marketing tactics. By shifting blame onto financial institutions, defaulters absolve themselves of moral or legal responsibility, framing their default as a consequence of systemic injustice rather than personal failure. Furthermore, some individuals appeal to higher loyalties by prioritizing family welfare over debt repayment, arguing that meeting essential needs takes precedence over fulfilling financial obligations. These cognitive strategies enable borrowers to engage in loan delinquency while preserving their self-image as ethical individuals, thereby reducing the social stigma associated with financial default (Sykes & Matza, 1957).

By synthesizing these two theoretical frameworks, it becomes evident that online loan default in Indonesia is both a structural and an individual phenomenon. Merton's anomie theory highlights the systemic economic pressures that push individuals toward financial noncompliance, while Sykes and Matza's techniques of neutralization explain how individuals cognitively reconcile their actions. Addressing this issue requires macroeconomic policy interventions, such as improved financial inclusion, regulatory measures to curb predatory lending, and social programs that enhance economic stability. Simultaneously, micro-level strategies, including financial literacy education and borrower accountability initiatives, are necessary to reshape attitudes toward credit responsibility and repayment ethics. Ultimately, the rising incidence of loan delinquency in Indonesia underscores the need for a sociologically informed approach that moves beyond punitive measures and instead addresses the underlying economic and psychological factors sustaining the cycle of loan default.

In terms of digital as new and emerging media. We also should take a look at user acceptance. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a widely recognized framework that explains how users come to accept and use new technologies. Developed by Davis (1989), TAM posits that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness significantly influence users' decisions to adopt technology. This model has been extensively applied in various fields, including online lending and fintech, to understand user behavior and acceptance. Recent studies have expanded on the original TAM framework by incorporating additional variables that affect technology acceptance. For instance, Alalwan et al. (2020) explored the role of social influence and trust in the context of mobile banking, demonstrating that these factors significantly impact users' intentions to adopt financial technologies. Similarly, a study by Venkatesh et al. (2021) introduced the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), which integrates TAM with other models to provide a more comprehensive understanding of technology acceptance in various contexts, including fintech.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) has been widely used to analyze the adoption of online lending platforms, particularly peer-to-peer (P2P) lending. Central to TAM are perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEoU), both of which significantly influence user attitudes and behavioral intentions toward digital lending services (Ghofar et al., 2023; Hasyim, 2020; Yadav & Shanmugam, 2024; Alief & Astuti, 2024). Studies suggest that ease of use enhances user satisfaction, leading to habitual adoption (Hasyim, 2020). Additionally, factors such as perceived security, trust, and self-efficacy play crucial roles in shaping user acceptance, while perceived risk has been found to be an insignificant predictor in some studies (Yadav & Shanmugam, 2024; Alief & Astuti, 2024). Trust acts as a mediating factor, strengthening the relationship between ease of use and intention to use digital lending platforms (Alief & Astuti, 2024). Furthermore, the rise of online lending, particularly among millennials, poses a challenge to traditional financial institutions, as users increasingly shift toward more convenient digital alternatives (Hasyim, 2020).

To promote user adoption, service providers must prioritize improving platform usability, strengthening security measures, and fostering trust (Yadav & Shanmugam, 2024; Alief & Astuti, 2024). Ensuring a seamless user experience can enhance satisfaction and encourage long-term engagement. At the policy level, governments should establish regulatory frameworks that balance financial innovation with consumer protection, fostering a stable yet progressive digital lending ecosystem (Ghofar et al., 2023; Rahadian & Thamrin, 2023). By leveraging TAM insights, both industry stakeholders and policymakers can create a more inclusive and efficient financial environment, encouraging the sustainable growth of online lending.

To understand the dynamics of online loan default communities deeper through communication perspective, we can use Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) theory. CMC refers to human communication that occurs through the use of two or more electronic devices, and is increasingly used to explore how digital interactions influence social behavior. In the context of the “Galbay” movement, online platforms such as Facebook provide a unique communication environment characterized by anonymity, asynchronous communication, and selective self-presentation. These affordances reduce social risks and allow individuals to share deviant intentions or experiences more freely. According to Walther’s Social Information Processing Theory, individuals can form meaningful interpersonal relationships even in text-based environments, with message cues being adapted over time to convey emotional and moral alignment (Walther, 1992). Online forums become spaces for discursive legitimation, where users co-construct narratives that normalize loan default and demonize debt collectors. Such findings align with recent scholarship emphasizing how CMC fosters moral disengagement and collective resistance in marginalized digital communities (Tokunaga & Gustafson, 2014).

The gap in previous literature review is more on surface on online lending usage only, which mostly discussed about how online lending being accepted and widely used among people especially in millennials and younger segments. However there this study try to explore more on how this technology are being leveraged and abused for personal benefit while harmful for other parties. This study also try to explore how the communication process through mediated technology happened among parties.

2. Method

This research will be conducted by adapting the netnography method. Netnography is a qualitative research method adapted from ethnography to study online communities. This method allows researchers to observe and analyze interactions within virtual communities, such as Facebook groups, to gain insights into the behaviors, values, and consumption patterns of the community members. The foundational works by Ardley & McIntosh (2021) highlight the importance of this approach in understanding digital social dynamics. When conducting netnography in Facebook groups, whether open or closed, researchers engage in observing and collecting qualitative data from the interactions of group members. This data is then analyzed to comprehend the community dynamics and the values created by its members. The studies by Roth-Cohen & Lahav (2018) and Ardley & McIntosh (2021) emphasize the significance of this method in capturing the essence of online community interactions and see the object as third perspective.

Maintaining privacy and ethical considerations is crucial in netnographic research. It is essential to ensure the anonymity of participants is key to protecting their privacy, as discussed by Mayne et al. (2023) and Zimmer (2010). Researchers must also understand how group members manage their personal information and respect the privacy boundaries they set, as highlighted by Chairil & Masrina (2023). Facebook now also provides a feature of anonymous posts that allow users to post privately without showing their profile and name. In this way we can ensure that Developing an ethical approach tailored to the context of online research is vital. This includes understanding privacy expectations on social networking sites and strategies for anonymizing data before publication, as noted by Lehner-Mear (2020) and Zimmer (2010). A dialogic and participatory approach that involves and respects participants is crucial for maintaining ethics in netnography, as emphasized by Mayne et al. (2023). This approach ensures that the research process is not only ethical but also inclusive and respectful of the participants' perspectives and contributions.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Victim Motives and Cause

The discussions within the observed online community reveal a recurring theme of individuals seeking advice regarding the safety of "galbay" (gagal bayar), a colloquial term referring to deliberately defaulting on online loan payments. Participants frequently exchange information about which lending applications are perceived as lenient in debt collection and which methods—WhatsApp messages, phone calls, or home visits—debt collectors typically employ.

For example, community members inquire about specific applications that allow easy cash withdrawals and have a less aggressive collection process:

> Ada yg pernah Galbay di amancepat . . Aplikasi yg seatap (Anonymous Participants, Feb 4, 2025, Facebook Group Post
>
> Ada yg pernah Galbay di amancepat . . Aplikasi yg seatap (Anonymous Participants, Feb 4, 2025, Facebook Group Post)
>
> Info nya apk cairin galbay aman ga ya nominal 1jt ada Fc lapangan nya ga (Anonymous Participants, Feb 4, 2025, Facebook Group Post)

They usually will ask which apps or online loan provider that will easily release cash for them and their debt collection process is not that rigid. This pattern aligns with Anomie Theory (Merton, 1938), which suggests that individuals experiencing financial strain may resort to deviant means when socially approved avenues for financial stability are inaccessible. In this case, economic hardship, coupled with the high interest rates of online loans, pushes borrowers towards intentional default as a survival strategy.

3.2 Building Trust and Experience Sharing Process

There are some members that share success stories to assure other team members that doing this is fine and this is part of a movement to make the online loan providers go bankrupt.

> Mungkin banyak tmn2 yg baru galbay pusing gk doyan makan, itu yg gue rasain th 2022 dulu saat baru pertama kali galbay total 67 jt di 13 apk, klau ilegal sya lupa mngkin ada 15 apk klau total jdi 120 jt an , mungkin disini banyak yg stress akibat pinjol, jujur sya perantau kena phk 2021 jdi pinjol lah yg nutupin kbutuhan sya pas kena PHK , awal 2022 sya mulai gk kuat byr soalnya sudh galtop tulop, sya putuskan buat galbay 2 minggu smpe 1 bulan hp gk berhenti tpi sya gk ganti no hp , sya biarkan saja , 2 msuk bulan ke 2 teror mulai redup , mulai chat email, sya sudh siap konsekuensi didatengin dc lapangan, dr bnyk apk sya galbay cm divo yg dtng 3 kali sya bilang msukan slik aja sya gk kuat byr, prcuma nagih hbis itu lnyap smpe skrng , ingat klau gk kuat byr jgn dipaksa mnding uang buat kbutuhan hidup, pinjol tuh lemah cuma bisa nagih neror doang , lemah gk bisa nyita soalnya gk ada jminan kyk bank atau leasing, resiko terberat galbay tuh cm msuk slik ojk, itupun gk smua pinjol msuk slik, sya galbay 120 jt yg msuk slik cuma 3 jt 🤣🤣🤣🤣 , anda galbay udh di asuransikan sm pinjol, jdi klau galbay lama masih ditagih berarti pinjol mau cari untung 2 kali lipat, anda berharap pinjol bangkrut tapi anda semua masih takut galbay itu percuma, yg bisa nutup pinjol tuh bukan pemerintah atau ojk tapi para galbay2 yg bisa bikin pinjol bangkrut, coba lihat sekarang banyak dc mulai pusing gara2 banyak yg galbay kerja kena tekanan suruh nagih 🤣🤣🤣🤣🤣 kasihannn bgt nasib dc goblok, berarti bentar lagi pinjol2 bangsat mau bangkrut, ingat loe semua pada galbay makin banyak yg galbay berarti investor pada lari dari pinjol duit asuransi gk cukup buat nutupin prusahaan pinjol, jadi cara kerja pinjol tuh smakin kita byr dia akan semakin subur, klau kita semakin galbay investor penanam modal pada kabur takut investasi dan otomatis bangkrut, galbay tuh enak gak usah takut dc pinjol tuh cuma bocah2 kmarin sore, dc ambon2 gk mau ngurus pinjol cuma recehan dia main yg ratusan juta milyaran. (Anonymous Participants, Feb 4, 2025, Facebook Group Post)

Most of the success stories mention that they started when they couldn't afford to pay the online loans with high interest rates. They gave up on making payments and allowed the debt collectors to call them frequently, usually twice a day, while some debt collectors might even visit their homes. After two months, the harassment would diminish, and they felt fortunate that they no longer needed to pay.

In a Facebook group post, an anonymous user shared their experience with defaulting on online loans, commonly referred to as "galbay." They noted that many friends might be feeling stressed and losing their appetite due to similar situations. The user's personal experience began in 2022 when they first defaulted on a total of 67 million IDR across 13 loan applications, and if including illegal loans, the total could reach around 120 million IDR. The user, who is a migrant worker and was laid off in 2021, relied on online loans to meet their living expenses. However, by early 2022, they felt unable to continue making payments and decided to default for two weeks to a month. Despite their phone constantly ringing with calls from collectors, they did not change their number and allowed the harassment to continue. After two months, the pressure began to ease, and out of many loan applications, only one continued to pursue them for repayment. They emphasized that if someone cannot afford to pay, it is better to use that money for essential living expenses. According to them, online lenders are weak because they cannot seize assets, as they do not have collateral like banks or leasing companies. The worst risk of defaulting is being blacklisted by the OJK (Financial Services Authority), but the user pointed out that not all online lenders are registered there. Out of their total default of 120 million IDR, only 3 million IDR ended up being blacklisted. The user also argued that there is no need to fear defaulting, as online lenders are perceived as weak, and many debt collectors (DCs) are starting to struggle due to the increasing number of defaults. They believe that the more people default, the more likely these lenders will go bankrupt, leading investors to withdraw their funds. In essence, defaulting is seen as a way to weaken the online lending industry, and the user feels that debt collectors are merely inexperienced individuals unable to handle large loans.

These patterns are also echoed by other members. Reasons include that they will harass you to collect the money temporarily, online loan providers will always have insurance for loan defaults, so there is no need to worry about their staff and employees. Online loan providers are weak; they won't be able to seize assets. Lastly, if they come to visit your house, you can always tell your neighbors that there are family problems and that your data is being misused, so there is no need to feel ashamed.

There are also some tips to prevent personal privacy issues when dealing with loan defaults. First, use a different phone number from your personal one. Additionally, maintain privacy on social media to prevent your photos from being used for intimidation, and connect with your relatives through social media.

> Pengalaman galbay di lebih dari 10 total 50jt+ lebih apk galbay dari 2024 minggu pertama paling horor diteror terus kalo gakuat bayar gausah dibales pesan email tlpn wa kalo kondar nya tmn lu kalo di tlpn gausah bales ada beberapa apk ada yang datengyang legal bilang aja belom ada duit jangan janji tanggal nya akan teror terus 1 lagi kalo lu mau aman dari wa setting wa biar gabisa ditlpn bahkan chat nomor gua gapernah ganti dari galbay masih sama sosmed private karena bakal diambil foto lu dri situ buat nakutin lu dah segitu saran gua jangan takut dan jangan bales pesan apapun kalo galbay. (Anonymous Participants, Feb 4, 2025, Facebook Group Post)

The user shares their experience with defaulting on loans (galbay) across more than 10 applications, totaling over 50 million IDR. They describe the first week of 2024 as particularly intense, with constant harassment from debt collectors. The user advises that if you cannot pay, you should not respond to messages, emails, or phone calls. They mention that some collectors may come to your home, and in such cases, you can simply tell them that you don't have any money and avoid making promises about payment dates, as this will only lead to further harassment. Additionally, they suggest adjusting your WhatsApp settings to prevent calls and keeping your social media accounts private to avoid being targeted, as collectors may use your photos to intimidate you. The overall message is to not be afraid and to ignore any messages if you are in default.

Beyond mere consultation, the community serves as a platform for reinforcing the acceptability of galbay through the sharing of "success stories." These narratives describe how members successfully defaulted on loans without facing severe consequences, thereby validating non-repayment as a viable option.

For instance, one participant recounted their experience of defaulting on loans totaling IDR 120 million across multiple lending platforms. They described enduring aggressive collection attempts in the initial months before the harassment subsided, ultimately concluding that online lenders are powerless to enforce repayment:

> Sya putuskan buat galbay 2 minggu smpe 1 bulan hp gk berhenti tpi sya gk ganti no hp , sya biarkan saja , 2 msuk bulan ke 2 teror mulai redup , mulai chat email, sya sudh siap konsekuensi didatengin dc lapangan... (Anonymous Participant, Feb 4, 2025, Facebook Group Post)

This normalization of loan default behavior can be examined through Deviance Normalization Theory (Sykes & Matza, 1957), which posits that individuals rationalize deviant actions to reduce the stigma associated with them. Within this community, defaulting is framed not as financial irresponsibility but as a strategic countermeasure against exploitative lending practices. The narratives function to alleviate guilt and justify galbay as an act of financial self-preservation rather than misconduct.

Additionally, members continuously provide emotional support and practical advice to individuals experiencing stress due to debt collection efforts. This reinforcement creates a feedback loop where new members become increasingly desensitized to the perceived risks of defaulting.

3.3 Psychological Adaptation and Risk Perception Reduction

The discussions also illustrate a gradual desensitization to the pressure of debt collection. Many members initially describe experiencing anxiety and stress when they first default, but over time, they adapt to the reality of being pursued by collectors. This aligns with the concept of moral disengagement, where individuals cognitively restructure a behavior to make it seem acceptable. The common reassurance that “debt collectors will eventually stop harassing after two months” is a recurring theme, reinforcing the belief that the consequences of galbay are manageable. The reduction in perceived risk is further emphasized by members explaining how most online lenders lack the legal means to seize assets. Many defaulting borrowers conclude that they have nothing to lose by refusing to pay, making it easier for them to commit to non-repayment as a strategy.

3.4 Strategies for Privacy Protection

The community also disseminates practical advice for mitigating the repercussions of defaulting, particularly concerning privacy and social stigma. These strategies include using alternative phone numbers, restricting social media access to prevent personal images from being misused for intimidation, and instructing household members to deflect inquiries from debt collectors. One participant advised:

> Kalo lu mau aman dari wa setting wa biar gabisa ditlpn bahkan chat nomor gua gapernah ganti dari galbay masih sama sosmed private karena bakal diambil foto lu dri situ buat nakutin lu dah segitu saran gua jangan takut dan jangan bales pesan apapun kalo galbay. (Anonymous Participant, Feb 4, 2025, Facebook Group Post)

These precautionary measures indicate a collective effort to minimize the social and emotional costs associated with defaulting, further reinforcing the normalization of galbay as an acceptable financial decision.

3.5 Collective Resistance Against the Online Lending System

A crucial element of the discussions is the perception of galbay as an act of financial resistance rather than merely a personal financial decision. Many members articulate a shared mission to undermine online lending institutions by increasing the rate of defaults.

They frame their actions as a counterattack against exploitative lending practices and argue that mass defaults can destabilize the system by discouraging investors from funding lending platforms. This perspective is rooted in Anomie Theory, where systemic financial pressures push individuals toward rejecting traditional repayment norms in favor of alternative, deviant financial behaviors.

3.6 Demonization of Debt Collector

Debt collectors are often portrayed as a common enemy that people are encouraged to despise. Their primary function is to recover loans by urging individuals to repay their debts through various platforms, such as WhatsApp, phone calls, SMS, and others. Additionally, some loan providers employ debt collectors who visit borrowers' homes to collect payments. This role is sometimes viewed as harassment, as they frequently make multiple calls, send text messages, and contact emergency contacts to pursue repayment.

> DC Mo keras sih boleh, minimal jangan pake anonim dan jangan kunci profil lah. Biar kita" bisa kenalan. 😁😁 (Anonymous Participants, Feb 1, 2025, Facebook Group Post)

> sekarang jamannya DC banyak gantung diri karna ga nyampai targer..tololl ttololl (Anonymous Participants, Jan 3, 2025, Facebook Group Post)

> Lanjutkan GALBAY.jngn tkut sma DC. DC cma Brani di Medsos Aj. klo DC ke Rumah,hirauin. kita peras trus uangnya Pinjol (Anonymous Participants, Feb 1, 2025, Facebook Group Post)

> Gass para dc mulai banyak yg stress 😂😂😂😂 lanjut galbay (Anonymous Participants, Dec 27, 2024, Facebook Group Post)

> Sini dateng,gue siram pake air panas muka lu dc (Anonymous Participants, Dec 28, 2024, Facebook Group Post)

> Seneng lihatnya DC bangkrut (Anonymous Participants, Dec 28, 2024, Facebook Group Post)

People are urged to despise debt collectors, viewing them as engaging in unscrupulous work by collecting money through harassment. When anonymous participants remind the group that defaulting on loans is a criminal act, members often assume it is debt collectors posting these reminders anonymously. They perceive debt collection as a negative profession and believe that these individuals should seek other jobs that do not pressure low-income earners. Harsh language and curses are frequently directed at debt collectors, with expressions like "you should die" or "go to hell" serving as examples of how this group fosters animosity and demonization towards the role of debt collectors.

Another striking theme in the discussions is the overt hostility towards debt collectors, who are commonly portrayed as adversaries. Group members frequently mock, insult, and express aggression towards debt collection agents, sometimes even celebrating their perceived distress. Illustrative posts include:

> "Lanjutkan GALBAY.jngn tkut sma DC. DC cma Brani di Medsos Aj. klo DC ke Rumah,hirauin. kita peras trus uangnya Pinjol." (Anonymous Participant, Feb 1, 2025, Facebook Group Post)

> "Seneng lihatnya DC bangkrut." (Anonymous Participant, Dec 28, 2024, Facebook Group Post)

The aggressive rhetoric reflects a form of Anomie Theory, where debt collectors are depicted as enforcers of an unjust system rather than legitimate financial intermediaries. The perception that debt collectors operate unethically fuels the group's collective rationalization that resisting repayment is not only justifiable but also necessary for dismantling exploitative lending institutions.

3.7 Digital Communication and Mediatization of Deviance

The “Galbay” phenomenon does not only manifest as economic deviance but also as a digitally mediated form of resistance and identity-building. Through Facebook groups, individuals share stories, provide moral support, and reframe delinquency into a form of collective action. Within these digital communities, narratives of survival and resistance become normalized, contributing to the construction of an alternative moral economy—one that justifies loan default as a rational and even ethical response to systemic exploitation.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) theories highlight how anonymity, asynchronous interaction, and social presence cues in online platforms allow users to express deviant behaviors with reduced fear of social sanction. The asynchronous and pseudonymous format of Facebook groups enables a process of discursive legitimation, which happened in this community It enable users to co-construct a new moral order surrounding online loan defaults. Anonymity allows individuals to confess and justify their financial decisions without shame. Repetition of personal experiences functions as ritual reinforcement, solidifying collective beliefs. Language framing—such as popular phrases like “galbay bukan dosa” or “pinjol adalah penindas”—serves to reposition moral boundaries and challenge dominant narratives of financial ethics.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, while online lending in Indonesia offers substantial benefits in terms of accessibility and financial inclusion, it also presents considerable regulatory and consumer protection challenges. To foster a safe and sustainable online lending environment, it is crucial to strengthen legal frameworks and enhance consumer awareness. Other than that, the findings also indicate that online communities play a critical role in shaping the perception and behavior of individuals facing financial distress. Through the lens of Deviance Normalization Theory, galbay is framed as a legitimate response to financial hardship rather than a breach of ethical or legal obligations. Meanwhile, Anomie Theory explains how systemic economic pressures contribute to the adoption of such deviant financial strategies. The community serves not only as an information-sharing hub but also as a support system that reinforces the acceptability of defaulting on loans. These insights highlight the need for a more nuanced approach to financial regulation and consumer protection, considering the social dynamics that influence financial decision-making in digital spaces.

This research illustrates how mediated communication platforms such as Facebook facilitate the formation of counter-narratives around loan default. These digital discourses play a pivotal role in legitimizing deviant behavior, demonstrating the need for interdisciplinary communication strategies that address not only economic behavior but also the media ecologies that shape them.

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