



## Uncovering the Connection of Cancel Culture and the Internet

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to unveil the relationship between cancel culture and the internet, to identify the causes and factors of its occurrence. A descriptive research design was adopted. A case study of the cancellation of the different social media personalities of the country the Gonzaga sisters, Buknoy Glamurr, President Rodrigo Duterte, and BryanBoy was also conducted to identify the factors of the emergence of cancel culture. The findings of the study revealed that cancel culture happens for several reasons. The reasons are as follows: (1) varying political views and perspectives, (2) misbehavior, (3) different religious beliefs, (4) violations of human rights. This study gives an exemplary contribution in uncovering the connection between cancel culture and the internet.

*Keywords: Cancel culture, the internet, social media.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Internet has enabled users to spread information, connect, and engage in many sorts of interaction. In modern society, social media has become a powerful force as it makes it easier for the emergence of social movements and digital participatory culture. With the interconnectedness of technology and society, new types of collectiveness have been made. The internet is not only a means of exchanging information; it is also paving the way for the emergence of social movements and digital involvement. It has also evolved into a platform for presenting and contending ideologies, cultures, and information. As a result, one of the most common practices carried out by internet users is the act of canceling a person without considering the implications.

When we talk about cancel culture, the first thing that comes to mind is how people used to be called out on social media for their actions and statements that were insulting to a certain group. Those who have been offended take to social media to publicly denounce the offending party using various social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Before someone knows it, others have taken to the internet to express and voice out their ideas and views. The outcome may be to cancel the offending party by disclaiming or denying them the status they may have posted, or they may be ostracizing them to the public. In other words, it is like blacklisting an individual or a group. "Almost everyone worth knowing has been canceled by someone" (**Bromwich, 2018**). According to the unmarked and utterly vague norm of today's social media milieu, those who were ostracized or canceled had crossed the line of social acceptability. "It's a withdrawal from someone whose expression – either artistic, political or otherwise – was previously welcomed or allowed but is no longer" (**Bromwich, 2018**). Furthermore, it is a strategy of seeking to remove someone from public debate – either by requesting their dismissal, publicly humiliating, or de-platforming.

"The phenomenon known as "cancel culture" is very common in the online community. The term "canceling," has gained popularity in recent years as a result of discussion sparked by movements that demand and expect more accountability from prominent individuals, such as the #MeToo movement, which began in 2006 (**Gill & Rahman-Jones, 2020**). This movement uplift women to speak up about sexual abuse they had experienced. The #MeToo movement obtained traction by holding powerful men in politics and the entertainment industry responsible for their conduct (**Greenspan, 2020**). This civilization demonstrates how quickly content can disseminate through digital networks, and as well as how large-scale responses can be generated in response to behaviors that are viewed as undesirable (**Ng, 2020**). Cancel culture frequently entails previously unheard groups making a minor dent in the authority of those who are privileged by race, gender, class, or other factors (**Butler, 2018**).

The concept of canceling has been present for over a decade, but the phrase cancels culture first emerged in 2017 after the idea of canceling politicians and celebrities, poor for moral remarks, and breaches became popular (**Greenspan, 2020**). In 2017, the term "cancel culture" was coined, and it is exploded in popularity. Before 2018, insiders notice fewer than 100 tweets and threads featuring the phrase "cancel culture" (**Greenspan, 2020**).

To "cancel" is to do more than simply unfollowing a politician, celebrity, or influencer celebrity; it also means making it a point to discourage people from following them for what they are known for, and joining a movement that openly mocks them. Publicly canceling someone necessitates announcing the act, which draws the target's attention. The intent of canceling someone is frequently to deprive them of their "cultural cachet." (**Merriam-Webster, 2019**). The intention is to deprive the target of a significant following, respect, and attention, even if the target of cancellation becomes a prominent point of attention for the public and sometimes the media.

"People talk about the attention economy - when you deprive someone of their attention, you're robbing them of a livelihood," Lisa Nakamura, a professor in the Department of American Cultures at the University of Michigan, said of this attention deprivation. (Merriam-Webster, 2019).

"Culture" is defined as "a distinct set of people's qualities and knowledge." (Zimmermann, 2017). The advent of social media, smart technology, and viral content has resulted in the emergence of internet culture. Because each area of the internet has its own distinct culture, internet culture cannot be characterized in a single way (Allebach, 2019). YouTube, for example, has its own set of norms and procedures. People all over the internet have developed an understanding and practice of "canceling," and there have been so many "cancellations" that it has turned into a movement (Greenspan, 2020). The term "cancel culture" came from this prevalent behavior.

Theories suggest several factors in modern societies which may help to explain the rise of a canceled culture. Perhaps the most important factor in most accounts is the preference of individuals in everything—politics, morality, social norms, or in other aspects. Likewise, minded people, on the other hand, only hear what they want to hear. Anything that goes against their beliefs and interests is regarded as undesirable. Users of social media follow pages that share their beliefs and unfollow those who don't appear to. It becomes more difficult to integrate views that are counter to the prevalent ideological climate when one's thoughts and ideas grow more in sync with other mediated connections on social media. This is the present digital social milieu to which we are all exposed. As individuals who wield influence over their various networks, celebrities, influencers, and public personalities are held to a strict standard of contemporary social acceptability.

Another hot topic for someone to be called out on the internet is the political stand. Almost every day someone is being bullied on the comment section of every post on different platforms just because he expressed his political views. Someone is canceled for exercising his freedom of expression that others don't seem to comprehend. Furthermore, cancel culture refers to the act of canceling someone due to past wrongdoings. It can be also seen in a society that when someone doesn't agree with the other people's views or opinions, they will get canceled since they do not have the same take in either their political views, culture, ethnicity, race, skin color, etc. Especially, in these times in which the campaign period happens, supporters of different parties try to do background checking and share to the public, undesirable things about the other and seek validation from their co-supporters. A simple misused word in a post, a comment that contradicts the mainstream narrative, an "insensitive" joke, or even a "problematic" essay can unleash a torrent of rage from social media users. You'll be publicly humiliated, and your show will be canceled.

To further understand the connection between cancel culture and the internet in a simple yet concise manner, the researchers answer the following objectives: (1) Determine the influence of the internet on cancel culture and (2) identify the key factors that contribute to the emergence of cancel culture.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Instrument

In this study, descriptive research was employed to understand the root cause and factors of cancel culture and its connection to the internet. The researchers utilized the case of various famous personalities cancellation to determine what factors led to the emergence of cancel culture.

This research method was easy and convenient in obtaining information which strengthened the viewpoints and arguments in the study.

### **Procedure**

This study was conducted during the first semester of the school year 2021-2022. This was accomplished through reading, watching, and evaluating the case of famous public figures who have been subjected to cancel culture. In addition, the descriptive design was used to present and acquire as much information and relative evaluation as possible. This method was utilized to analyze documentary evidence, answer specific questions that need to be answered, or observe specific situations, making it a useful tool for ensuring that our research is comprehensive and reliable. During the observation process, the researcher kept a field note, which they used to jot down data on the datasheet so that it could be organized directly. Using a laptop and a cellphone, the researcher took down notes on all the relevant information. To obtain the data, some measures were taken. The researchers began by watching and reading the case of the famous public figure who has been canceled.

The researchers then evaluated and analyzed the data gathered to gain meaning and empirical knowledge about the connection of cancel culture and the internet as well as the factors of the emergence of cancel culture.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This study uncovers the connection between cancel culture and the internet. It is evident that cancel culture and the internet truly interconnect with each other, internet worsens the toxicity of cancel culture because of its wide reach, on contrary, cancel culture has positive impacts that made users digitally literate. The amount of data collected from the cancellation of those famous personalities presented us with a rich data set that provided us with the knowledge we needed to figure out the factors of cancellation. The result of this study provides empirical findings regarding the reasons why someone got canceled out. As a result, cancel culture happens for a variety of reasons, all of which are the following: varying political views and perspectives, misbehavior, different religious beliefs, and violations of human rights.

### **Factor 1: *Varying Political Views and Perspectives***

Political views are a set of beliefs on something, it is the ideology that someone has in the political system. It was found that people who identified as either Republican or Democrat are generally more likely to have a greater level of engagement and that was the reason why people got canceled out because of political differences. Some people will cancel the ones who support their opposition. Republicans and Democrats are the opposing teams who will never agree with each system of authorization and leadership (**Price and Remaly 2021**). In connection with this, was the latest issue with the Gonzaga sisters whereas “kakampinks” canceled them for supporting its’ opposition. The Gonzaga sisters were slammed on Twitter by Vice President Leni Robredo’s followers after Alex and Toni’s husband was spotted at Ferdinand Bongbong Marcos Jr.’s headquarters. As a result, some supporters of Leni Robredo chastised the Gonzaga sisters. Their followers who were rooting for their presidential rival chose to “cancel” the Gonzaga sisters. One of the main reasons why the Gonzaga sisters were chastised by the public is simply because their political point of view is different from the point of view of those who are canceling them, especially the supporters of Vice-president Leni Robredo.

The vloggers/influencers/actresses/models Gonzaga sisters were canceled because they are so-called apologists and revisionists. Due to garnered immense backlash in the tweet of the Team BongBong Marcos calls for canceling them was now evident on Twitter. The following are some tweets on Twitter that shows Twitter user seeking to cancel and boycott their upcoming movie, which reads *“Next my Gonzaga sisters movie to boycott, My Sassy Girl.”* Another compiled tweet reads, *“It’s good time to unfollow the Gonzaga sisters LOL not that I followed them in the first place.”* Another tweet reads, *“It’s time to teach the Gonzaga sisters a lesson by unfollowing and unsubscribing from all their socmed platforms! No to apologists and revisionists!”* Subsequently, they started connecting the issue with their religious beliefs as a Twitter user tweeted as reads *“Prime example of hypocrite yan. Same pa naman kami ng church, ang disappointing kasi sana man lang sinabihan ng Pastors. Sa mga non-born-again Christians po, please remember, Gonzaga sisters (face vomiting emoji) do NOT represent us ha.”* Another user said that *“unfollow Gonzaga sisters. Meged puro verses pero gusting gusto and demonyo at magnanakaw...kadiri.”* Other users started to tag affiliated brands with the Gonzaga sisters to call their attention to their remarks. *“ABS-CBN should not make the Gonzaga sisters renew their contract with them anymore. “Those two supports the son of the dictator who closed ABS-CBN down back in the 70s, and also the current ABS-CBN refused ABS-CBN’s franchise. ABS-CBN NEEDS TO STOP GIVING HOME TO TRAITORS!!”*

Many observers have suggested that, by facilitating the circulation of hate speech, social media are responsible, at least in part, for an apparent increase in xenophobic attitudes and, ultimately, for hate crimes. Conceptually, social media could affect hate crimes through different channels. First, because social media facilitate coordination and collective action (**Enikolopov et al. 2020**), they could also do so for potential perpetrators of hate crimes. Second, social media could change attitudes: Previously tolerant individuals might become hateful after being exposed to xenophobic views online, whereas individuals with moderately xenophobic views might become more extreme as a result of the polarizing effects of echo chambers (**Sunstein 2001, 2017; Settle 2018**). Third, social media could reduce the social stigma of hate speech and possibly even hate crimes by providing xenophobic individuals with a platform to connect to like-minded people, giving a (false) sense of the normality of such actions. In this case, the evidence has unpacked and examined the cancel culture as a trending issue in the social media platform as a social movement. It is high democratization of discourse. A force of intolerance in discerning the ideas of the contrary leads to the cancelation of the opposition.

## **Factor 2: Misbehavior**

Misbehavior is an action when a person displays inappropriate behavior such as throwing hate and making fun of someone wherein social media platforms have become breeding grounds for user misbehavior. **Chiou 2020** said that cancel culture happens when a certain public figure does something pejorative to a certain people or group, offensive, and unjust behavior will lead him to be canceled out by the public. A lot of people became famous and gained large followings. However, what they tried to instill and communicate with their followers is not always accepted. Concerning this, Buknoy Glamurr an influencer and vlogger was the best example of this. He was suspended from social media due to indecent remarks directed towards the public.

He uploaded a video of himself criticizing a tricycle driver, which was deemed insensitive and offensive by netizens. Furthermore, he received a lot of criticism from the public because of the offensive comment he throws at the tricycle driver during his vlog. He stated that, *“Ang gusto ko talagang sabihin sa inyo is wag kayong sumuko na mangarap. Wag na wag kayong sumuko na*

*tuparin ang mga pangarap ninyo kasi kung hindi kayo magsu-sumikap sa buhay, walang-wala kayong mararating tulad nito,”* [I just want to say that you should not stop dreaming and never give up on your dreams because if you don't work hard, you will never succeed in life, 'just like him'], Buknoy was referring to a passing tricycle driver. Social media users call out for the misconduct and advertise to withdraw his supporter's support towards him. **Virtuz (2020)** stated that the video generated unfavorable comments from online users who remarked on how intense the vlogger was and that tricycle drivers should not be underestimated because they work hard to support their families and are simply trying to get out of poverty. In this regard, the video has received over two million views on the microblogging platform. On Friday morning, July 3, 2020, the keywords “Buknoy” and “TRICYCLE DRIVER” entered the local top trending list, as some Filipinos expressed their outrage and disgust over the vlogger's views against the workers (**Malasig, 2020**).

Thus, displaying bad behavior, making fun of someone, and saying inappropriate words can lead someone to be canceled out by the public. **Müller & Schwarz (2019)** show how social media can instigate hate crimes by propagating nasty statements from opinion leaders, such as extremely influential social media users, to the broader public.

### **Factor 3: Different Religious Beliefs**

Religious beliefs are a collection of the cultural system, each religion has its forms of beliefs for example in Christianity they are the believers and followers of Jesus-the son of God while the other such a Muslims are the believers of Allah, Buddhism is believers in Buddha, and the likes. Religion influences human well-being wherein it can give people's lives meaning and purpose. However, in a culture that separates individuals ethnically and religiously, being connected with a specific group or viewpoint might result in you being “canceled” (**Haywood, 2020**).

Religious belief is a sensitive issue in society and it causes a lot of clashes between people who have a different perspective on religion. This has been observed in social media especially Tiktok and Twitter. Social media has become a ubiquitous form of interacting and sharing information. However, comments on social media sites are often aggressive and contemptuous, especially when topics are serious and controversial. Different personalities have been bashed and canceled because of their views on religion. Bryanboy is a rich famous personality in Tiktok wherein his content is about fashions and usually he answers his bashers' comments sarcastically. Bryanboy has been ostracized by the public because he mocked the religion by posting disturbing pictures of Jesus and making fun out of it. The reason why Bryanboy was canceled by the public was that the photos he posted in his blog were considered insulting to the Catholic Church. People call him an Atheist because he does not believe in any religion and called God “Invisible skydaddy”. Moreover, he added that “Religion is a very important tool to brainwash and to control people”. As a result, a lot of people called him out because he believed in religion. However, it became too far because someone said that: (*Kung ikaw nagkasakit at hindi ka pinagaling, nararapat lang sa iyo yan.*) [“If you get sick and you do not get better, you deserve it”].

He is rich and often boasts all his branded clothes and bags like Gucci, Channel, Prada, etc. in Tiktok. And someone said, (*Mag-ipon ka ng yaman sa langit wag sa lupa.*) [“Store up treasures in heaven, not on earth”]. Bryanboy however answered it sarcastically and does not get affected by what his bashers said about him and his views on religion.

We indeed have the freedom to speak and to share our ideas on a certain topic on social media. Of course, ideas and opinions have always been democratized in some form. Free speech

allows us to say whatever we want but does not grant us the freedom to say it anywhere we want. We must consider other people's beliefs before saying anything to prevent us from hurting other people as well as preventing ourselves not to be criticized and called out by others. Thus, it implies that if someone has a different religious belief and does not even meet society's standard in religion, hence, being canceled and being called out is the worst to happen.

#### **Factor 4: Violation of Human Rights**

One of the most appalling aspects of the war on drugs is that it can legitimize not just human rights abuses, but also a complete rejection of human rights as a principle. This is the reason why our current ruler, President Rodrigo Duterte has been backlashed and canceled on different platforms. The emergence of extrajudicial killings to provide development is like a quick fix but made lots of lost lives seen as collateral damage. The victims are often male, unemployed, or underemployed, underprivileged, and from the informal settlements or squatter communities. (Mogato, 2017). Some refused to partake in investigations by the Commission on Human Rights, as they are afraid of reprisals by the police (Conde, 2019). Activists have accused authorities of carrying out summary executions that killed innocent people, including dozens of children. Human Rights Watch also investigated adult homicides in which police showed little consideration for children's safety and well-being, entering homes in the middle of the night when the entire family was sleeping. During several raids where their parents were slaughtered or carried away, children were present. Millions of people have been traumatized by the continuous death seen on the different platforms. Thousands of children were also traumatized by their parents' or other relative deaths, by witnessing them firsthand, and through the fear, they feel for their lives (Conde, 2019).

In this regard, President Duterte has been canceled out by the Filipino people. The sharp reactions were mainly seen in social media seeking justice, as he violated the human rights of many to achieve his willingness to end the war on drugs. Cancel culture is a way to bring to justice for legal, social, ethical violations of a famous or empowered person or group by refusing support and (or) public condemnation, mainly on social networks (reply from acanthus, boycott of its projects) (Oksana Yaremko, 2021).

It is evident that cancel culture happens for a variety of reasons and that the internet has a huge impact on cancel culture. Truly, the internet publicizes cancel culture as seen in the Gonzaga sisters', President Rodrigo Duterte, Brayanboy, and Buknoy Glamurr's issues, made the researchers conclude that people cancel anyone in the society especially people who have a name in the society, where they were plugged on the internet particularly on social media. The cancellation of these people was a deliberate choice because of the attention it received along with its still occurring consequences. Shank, 2020 concluded that cancel culture is being practiced to cancel famous personalities, brands, or people who have done or said something harmful or regarded as wrong by society and being appeared in some form on practically every social media platform.

Cancel culture is a very enormous topic. Due to the emergence of numerous social media platforms, the number of people who can go online and condemn others for their behavior and words is enormous. Platforms like Twitter have helped to democratize the social media landscape, allowing individuals to openly express their thoughts and ideas on a certain topic (Marissa Chin, 2020). Lopez, et.al., (2021), pointed out that online platforms may be influencing how society reacts to taboo behaviors, the social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and others are making it simpler to swiftly exchange information and then comment with personal opinions. Moreover, canceling someone as the message and the internet as the medium is becoming rampant. Once an issue enters the virtual realm, it is no longer subject to private

resolution; it is there for the entire world to judge, criticize, and maybe fight over and end up canceling the people for making them feel offended by the words or actions made (**Mintz, 2021**).

Furthermore, this study had discovered that cancel culture becomes toxic due to the influence of the internet. As stated by **Lauren Shank (2020)** cancel culture is toxic and has become negative in society as a result of social media's influence. It is blooming in this season of life and has appeared in some form on practically every social media platform. The temptation to join the bandwagon of group shaming has gotten much easier, as witnessed most prominently on social media sites. After all, someone who engages in canceling culture can do it with the single click of a keyboard or the tap of a phone. **Horowitz, H. (2021)** emphasizes that cancel culture is thought to instill a sense of responsibility in those who make undesirable statements or actions. Instead, it fosters an atmosphere in which harassment and bullying are tolerated and even encouraged. Anyone can voice or comment their opinion about the individual who has been "canceled" on social media, putting that person's safety in jeopardy and putting them at risk of being utterly ostracized. In addition, if someone had been canceled, it might make him feel ostracized, socially alienated, and lonely, similar to bullying. According to other studies, loneliness has also been linked to higher instances of anxiety, sadness, and suicide (**Toler, L. 2021**). Many public figures especially celebrities have been subjected to the wrath of cancel culture through the advent of the internet in recent years.

Finally, through documentary analysis, we have discovered that the common reasons and factors that appeared in the cases of well-known personalities were the ones that influenced cancel culture toxicity. This signifies that (1) Cancel culture is toxic for the reason that it can reveal everything a certain well-known personality had done wrong in the past, it can reveal their background and personal life. (2) Cancel culture has a positive impact on digital citizenship; for it will make the user's mind curious to seek clarity, validity, and reliability. (3) Cancel culture can cancel its toxic attributes through social movements by the internet users to promote digital literacy. On top of that, it indicates that negative and positive cancel culture co-exists due to internet users' ability and inability to use, understand, and create something out of the existing digital tools.

### **EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

This research is beneficial to everyone who wants to avoid being shunned or canceled by others. We, as researchers, offer some implications in this study, including skepticism, critical thinking, and privacy respect.

1. **Skepticism.** The cancel culture, which is a popular trend on the internet will have a big impact on online society if it continues to advance negatively or if people utilize it for wrongdoings. People will tend to acknowledge the information they obtained on the internet as fake, and it will be affected those telling the truths. Also, it will become worst if people will take advantage of it in doing things that are inappropriate like hating or insulting someone for no reason and by going beyond the limit in which the human rights of that person were violated. Therefore, awareness and knowledge about the digital world must pursue not to be part or victim of anything inappropriate.
2. **Critical Thinking.** In addition, researchers determined that to minimize the negative impacts of the cancelation culture, it would be beneficial if individuals applied critical thinking to whatever they did on the internet. In a broader perspective, people should learn how to evaluate and assess the information they have obtained from social media and, most importantly, they should raise their awareness about those issues they have shared on the

internet about canceling people's due to different viewpoints on diverse issues. This has become more complex because of the vulnerable influence of social media, wherein people are free to give their perceptions about those matters. Therefore, elucidating the impression that digital users must take steps to become good influencers in the world of the digital era. Cancel culture is toxic. Therefore, people should spread accurate information and respect people's views in life.

3. Privacy. Furthermore, the internet has been popular in recent years as a result of the influence of modernity, allowing people to freely express their opinions and views on a variety of issues and topics via social media. Usually, the hottest celebrity concerns that people pay more attention to. However, the ramifications of this have had a severe effect on the persons who have been canceled as a result of their differing perspectives on some issues. People should learn to respect others' viewpoints as well as their privacy in this regard. People should not post everything on the internet, and they should be aware of the statements they have made in public, whereas people in today's social media are sensitive to the point where digital users are active and constantly throw words on people's viewpoints about their political views and so on.

Furthermore, the researchers suggest that the teachers should provide approaches for students to prevent the bad effects of this phenomenon. Thus, proper discipline and continuous reminders should always be given attention inside the classroom to mitigate the harmful effect of cancel culture on the students.

## I. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to unmask what is the underlying connection between cancel culture and the internet that made this good and bad exist in society. The factors influencing cancel culture were further examined, and it was seen that technological modernization and the inability to grasp hard truth were the root cause of cancel culture toxicity. It was then identified that inaccurate behavior of the well-known personalities lead them to be canceled out by the people. On contrary, cancel culture enlightens the mind and prevailed facts covered by fake news. This is due to people believing in what the majority thinks. It was seen then that skepticism, digital literacy, and critical thinking were lacking among internet users.

These findings accentuate the significance of digital literacies among internet users. This would subsequently lessen the toxicity of cancel culture if users are digitally literate, skeptical, respectful, and critical thinkers.

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