



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# HASHTAG ACTIVISM: CANCEL THE CANCEL CULTURE AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

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### ABSTRACT

With the freedom of expression individual's have, it allows the person to express opinions on any social media platforms concerning political, social, cultural, and other present notions. However, when that view contradicts another group or person, the person is vulnerable to what they call cancel culture. Having said that, the researchers conducted a working title which is Canceling the Cancel Culture: Basis for Advocacy Program and conducted a study using Qualitative Descriptive Research Design. Moreover, the researchers conducted a focus group interview with 8 participants coming from the HUMSS strand of Notre Dame of Marbel University-Integrated Basic Education Department Senior High School and purposive sampling is used to select the participants based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Also, the researcher use the Key Informant Interview (KII), as the researchers formulated research questions to be answered by the participants of the study based on the two Statement of the Problems: (1) How do social media users view cancel culture? And (2) How do these views affect the perspective of social media users on cancel culture? After gathering the data, the findings of the study state that social media users see how destructive a cancel culture is as it can lead to negative experiences. Where these views on cancel culture affect the perspectives of social media users, seeing cancel culture can affect social media users' emotions and it lessens social media users' usage as afraid of being mocked, bullied, or social media user. Moreover, the researchers created an advocacy program about canceling the cancel culture where the advocacy program aims to cancel the cancel culture as the themes and codes or results state that cancel culture really needs to be canceled and making the study achieve its new title: Hashtag Activism: Cancel the Cancel Culture Among Social Media Users. In conclusion, social media users may participate in constructive discussion and can demonstrate a sense of commitment to conscientiousness but cancel culture or being ostracized in the virtual world is not justifiable at all. Harming the transgressor or canceling them in any way without being critical and cannot meet the legal process is not an effective but rather a threat.

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## INTRODUCTION

Given free speech in modern times, different social media become full of racists, misogynists, body shamers, homophobes, and offenders that leads to bullying, trolling, harassment, and other forms of discrimination. As a result, social media users and activists cancel people or groups who have taken action in response to these social issues, which they refer to as "cancel culture." Furthermore, the term "cancel culture" derives from the slang term "cancel," which refers to breaking up with someone that appeared in a 1980's song. Vogels et. al (2021). Later, this term was used in film and television, and it evolved and became popular on social media. Moreover, netizen use the term "canceling" to refer to the act of "canceling" a person, usually a public figure, in order to prevent them from having a prominent public platform or career.

From a global context, the rise of cancel culture and its popularity especially on Twitter, people canceling a person, place, or thing is a socially mediated phenomenon with origins in queer communities of color. This followed by people canceling people's opinions with regards to political, gender, social structures, and other social aspects just like American voters who campaigned and cancel people last 2020 at United States of America because politicians block them in ballot box. Also, brands have been called out on social media and boycotted for a variety of issues, many of which are related to sexism, racism, homophobia, or abuse Flor (2021). This phenomenon is not just a phenomenon in the United States of America but it's also a growing force in other countries where it is taking on distinctly local characteristics. Moreover, based on the study of Vogels (2019), entitled Americans and cancel culture: where some see accountability, others see censorship, punishment, the majority of participants in their study defined cancel culture as a method of withdrawing support for public figures or companies. It can also be viewed as a form of online

shaming on social media platforms. In the Philippine context, cancel culture is viewed as a negative connotation wherein simply speaking, it is where a mass of people withdraws from supporting someone like a public figure or a celebrity because they have done something that is particularly not accepted socially Monde (2021). Filipinos also see numerous instances of cancel culture in the Philippines since Filipinos are known to have active social media accounts where Toni Gonzaga, a Filipina actress or public figure, and host experienced being canceled by netizen or people withdrawing their support. And Filipinos showed the power to cancel through debate, hashtags, and social media petitions. Cancel culture is also evident in Koronadal City, South Cotabato so cybersecurity and other seminars about social media behavior are being conducted or must take into consideration Jabagat (2020). Moreover, cancel culture is rampant, especially on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. And some users from Koronadal City questioned if this cancellation worked or withdrawal of support works, and others support it-bidding tie to amplifying voices Mondejar (2019). Especially if it is for protecting the rights of indigenous people in Koronadal City, Province of South Cotabato, and other controversial things. Furthermore, as most people nowadays contribute to mass cancellations and invest in making these platforms free from discrimination. Cancel culture has been studied because it can now be seen as a way of defending victims from public shaming against a higher authority. To fill the research gap, this study will look into how Notre Dame of Marbel University-Integrated Basic Education Department Humanities and Social Sciences students perceive cancel culture as social media users and how this culture influences their perceptions. Furthermore, this study aims to conduct advocacy programs from the findings of the study to provide accessible materials and increase in awareness.

## METHODOLOGY

This section discussed the methods used which includes the research design, setting of the study, participants, research instruments, data gathering procedures, data analysis, peer debriefing, role of the researchers, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness of the study.

**Research Design:** The study is a qualitative type of research since researchers will deal with human experiences. Also, the researchers will utilize the qualitative descriptive research design to carry out their investigation in individuals, groups, and situations. Furthermore, a qualitative descriptive research design tries to characterize a scenario, problem, phenomena, service, or program in a consistent way or gives information on, for instance, a community's living conditions, or describes effects on issues Kumar(2021). Having said that, researchers will achieve the Qualitative Descriptive Research Design to achieve the study's goal without consuming a lot of time. And consume the available resources with that given amount of time. In this way, the researchers can attain an in-depth understanding of the statements of the problems and be able to identify the effects of cancel culture through the experiences of social media users.

**Setting of the Study:** The setting of the study is in Notre Dame of Marbel University-Integrated Basic Education Department Senior High School, a private Catholic School founded in 1945. A private school located at General Santos Drive, 9506, Koronadal City, South Cotabato, on the island of Mindanao, Philippines. Moreover, this school is also well-known and regarded as a Catholic educational establishment administered by the Marist Brothers and continues to develop its improvement as it upholds educational excellence and spiritual or moral formation. Furthermore, the researchers chose the setting instead of other settings for the reason that it is the most convenient way of acquiring data in this time of pandemic or virtual communication. Also, the researchers are from Notre Dame of Marbel University Integrated Basic Education Senior High School Department so it is an advantage for the researchers when it comes to recording, storing, disseminating information throughout the whole study. Lastly, there is a great mobility advantage and enhances the mode of communication for the researchers and participants to effectively consume the available time and resources of the study.

**Participants of the Study:** Participants of the study will mainly be Notre Dame of Marbel University Integrated Basic Education Department Grade 11 and 12 Humanities and Social Sciences students. Eight participants of the study will be chosen. The purpose of having this number is for the researchers to maximize the time given for the study. Also, in qualitative research purposive sampling is commonly employed to identify and choose information-rich examples linked to the topic of interest Palinkas (2021). As a support, purposive sampling will be used to select the participants, which is a non-probability sampling technique chosen based on the population's characteristics and the study's objective. This sampling technique is also suitable for this study because participants will be selected based on inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria.

**Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:** Furthermore, to maximize the time available for the study and perform the sampling technique, eight students will be chosen on purpose based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria such as (1) the participants must be Notre Dame of Marbel University-Integrated Basic Education Department Humanities and Social Sciences student; (2) the participants must be active on any social media platforms; (3) the participants must not be experiencing any medical conditions; (4) the participants must see the informed consent that includes his or her rights; (5) and the participants must not be aged 16below.

**Research Instrument:** The research instrument will use Key Informant Interview (KII). Furthermore, with the use of the Key Informant Interview (KII), researchers will formulate research questions to be answered by the participants of the study in the focus group interview. Also, in the interview, the researchers will use platforms such as Google Meet that include note-taking and recording. Furthermore, the researchers will use informants, an interview guide, and study questions. In this way, the researchers will increase the reliability and validity of findings to transcribe the data. Moreover, the researchers will also ensure that the data will be validated and will be administered thoroughly since a Key Informant Interview (KII) will validate the information received from the social media users. The research instrument to be used in the study will be a researcher-made instrument. In constructing the interview guide questions, it will undergo the Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) method Montoya (2016). In this technique, the interview guide undergoes the following processes: (1) The interview guide must be formulated based on the alignment of interview questions to the research questions. (2) To construct an inquiry-based interview guide. (3) The interview guide will be validated by the experts (4) The interview guide will be then subjected to pilot questioning. (5) Piloting the revisions of the final interview guide.

**Data Gathering Procedures:** The researchers made an interview guide and write a proposal letter before conducting the study. Next, the researchers validated the self-made interview guide with the three professionals and seek permission from the Principal of the Senior High School Department at Notre Dame of Marbel University-Integrated Basic Education Department. Furthermore, for the participants, the researchers conducted a screening of who will participate in the study based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Also, the researchers conducted focus group discussions. It is a common qualitative method for gaining a deeper understanding of social issues. Rather than a statistically representative sample of a larger population, the approach tries to acquire data from a purposefully selected group of individuals Nyumba (2018). Moving on, after the screening and gathering of the participants or the focus group that will represent the large population, the researchers will introduce the informed consent to inform participants on their rights with regards to the study. After the presentation of the informed consent, the researchers will conduct the interview with the use of Google Meet as a platform that includes recording and document taking. After the interview, the researcher will gather the data, conduct coding, and analyze the data.

**Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis used by the researchers to evaluate the data from the in-depth interview and focus group discussion.

Moreover, it is a technique for detecting, analyzing, organizing, characterizing, and reporting on themes discovered in a data collection Braun & Clarke (2006). And the purpose of thematic analysis is to uncover themes, such as important or intriguing patterns in data, and utilize these themes to address the study or say something about a problem. The researcher initially read and reread the transcripts to become acquainted with the data before conducting the theme analysis. The information will be arranged in order to produce initial codes. Codes break down large concepts into tiny bits of meaning. The codes will be evaluated and grouped together based on topics. The topics that have been established will be examined and expanded upon to seek help for a panel of experts to analyze the accuracy of the thematic approach in the study.

**Peer Debriefing:** To ensure the trustworthiness of the data analysis, the results of the focus group discussion will be subjected to evaluation of an expert. The expert will be asked to evaluate the data analysis based on accuracy and reliability in answering the research questions. The expert must have at least a knowledge on conducting qualitative research.

**Role of the Researchers:** In this research study, the researchers performed the following roles in order to accomplish the goal of the study. The researchers were the main proponents of this research from which they conceptualized and authored concepts related to the study. Also, the researchers act as the interviewers of the study. Since the study required interviews to gather the data, the researchers interviewed the participants in the study. Lastly, the researchers were the ones who analyzed the data in the study.

**Ethical Considerations:** The researchers followed an e-interview protocol before conducting the interviews. The participants provided with an e-letter containing the participants' rights to agree or refuse to be interviewed. An informed consent will be requested from each research participant. The study adviser will accept and sign an electronic letter to perform the focus group discussion using e-signature with the approval of the principal of the NDMU Senior High School Department will be attached. Enclosed in the letter are the expression of confidentiality of identity of the participants and all responses will be used for the study purposes only. The anonymity of the participants will never be divulged by any means as it will be deemed unethical in the conduct of the study. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, credibility will be established through the peer debriefing. The researchers will ask the help of an expert who will evaluate the analysis of the study. Dependability will be highlighted through peer debriefing in order to establish the reliability of the data which emphasize the specificity of the data only applies to the participants and not beyond its means. In the study, the transferability of data gathered from the participants most likely presents an indefinite outcome for future researchers since it depends on the context of the study such as the characteristics of the participants. The confirmability of the research can be expounded on the ability of other researchers to replicate this study with respect to the original author. Researchers should establish boundaries that set the limit of the replicability of the data.

**Trustworthiness of the Study:** In this section, the study will implore a qualitative approach in analyzing the data. Though this study requires validity and reliability of the gathered data, the trustworthiness of the data gathered will be based on thematic analysis, triangulation method, and peer debriefing. In the thematic analysis, data will be analyzed highlighting annotation, clustering, identification of themes, and writing the emergent themes. Secondly, the triangulation method guarantees the validity of the responses of the participants in the study. Finally, the peer debriefing phase requires the researcher to seek help from a panel of experts to analyze the accuracy of the thematic approach in the study.

## RESULTS

This section represents the key findings of the study with literature and implications and insights of the study.

### Social Media Users View On Cancel Culture

**Negative Viewpoint:** Cancel culture negative effects arouse on social media making cancellation culture is a red flag or warning of danger to social media users. Cancel culture is cruel, and it has become a bad trend in society as a result of social media's effect. So far it is to suggest that it is a toxic ideology that does more harm than good by Shank (2020). This aligned with what the participant 4 said, " My view of cancel culture is both toxic and the worst punishment." Toxic or in a way that it can it has negative impacts and worst punishment in a way that people are really vulnerable to any form of attacks just to take accountability of his or her unacceptable committed actions. As cancel culture is relevant in punishing institutions has yet to be demonstrated or notable individuals Mishan (2020). Social media users indeed express negation or denial about cancel culture, making them stand for a negative viewpoint.

**Societal Influence:** Social influence is the process through which people change their minds, modify their views, or alter their conduct as a result of social interactions with others. Many self-organized activities are influenced by social impact in our highly linked world by Moussaid (2013). Coming up with such ideology, society really influence someone, specifically, on how they view cancel culture. This is evident on what participant 1 said, " I see cancel culture negative because as society looks at it and I think in a good way or they see it as a disciplinary action for someone." Where a social media user really views cancel culture as a disciplinary action because of societal influence.

**Vexatious Experiences:** It is no wonder that influencers are greatly affected by their peers in this day and age of technology and social media. When they make a mistake, though, many are ready to "cancel" and condemn them. Furthermore, the negative side is solely experienced by the generations by Celentano (2021). It is evident when Participant 2 said, "I see it that way because it ruins a person's image and it is not just the image, it also hinders a person from engaging in the society again. It also hinders them from having more opportunities, for example, in celebrities, when they are subject to cancel culture or when they are the one being cancelled, usually they would go on hiatus for things to ball down, for the mass to forget them." Indeed, social media users really view cancel culture as a negative connotation because of a negative experience: it ruins a person's image. This will enter online public shaming where online public shaming utilizes social media to create discourse within in-groups and out-groups by sharing memes, hashtags, and images with an expanded audience Mielczarek (2018). And cancel culture also hinders a person, as after seeing a lot of people being cancelled, they are plagued with fear, instead of expressing how they feel, they choose to remain silent, also a negative experience faced by social media users Toler (2022). Evident to what Participant 6 said, " Because of the idea that it ahm hinders a person function well."

### Effects on the Perspectives of Social Media User on Cancel Culture

**Lessens Technological Usage:** Cancel culture is called group bullying since many individuals are constantly ready to criticize or invalidate someone else viewpoint—enclosed in a bubble of public hostility that leads in people not using social media for an extended period of time Delgado (2020). This is similar to what Participant 1 said, " I have been not using too much of social media apps and I find it troublesome to like socialize anymore. It lessens my exposure to social media. " It is clear that cancel culture no longer upholds social bonds and no longer ensures that everyone inside communities are equal and recognized, but rather creates boundaries between social media users and their technological usage.

**Emotionally Depleting:** Cancel culture swipes away the other person's existence, publicly humiliating them, while disguising as ethical advocacy or activism-visionless. The alternative is the time-consuming, deft, and emotionally draining technique of calling Cooperman (2020).

This situate with what Participant 7 said, " It is very draining and it just is not really uh makes sense for people to cancel each other." Also, cancel culture can contribute to strong negative emotions such as outrage, deplete, disgust, fear, and anger in response to the transgression Dholakla(2020). Indeed, the feeling emotionally worn-out that can result in disconnecting from people as what Participant 5 said, " It kinda love and irritated me to see a lot of people canceling each other just because their views or something which they are not particular in one other so overall affected my social media usage making me spend less time in social media and or rather to spend to doing my work."

**Awareness:** They are sounding alarms about the emergence of a new cancel culture that invades rights and even puts our physical safety at risk that somehow leading to everyone being aware or conscious of social media Foster (2021). Evident in what participant 3 said, " My negative views on cancel culture affects me as a social media user since it makes me more careful and weary about what I do or say online, or even in personal because of my negative perception towards it, I really consider my movements, to avoid offending someone and then consecutively get cancelled. I get worried and anxious at time, wondering if I may say or do something offensive without knowing it was so, in the first place." Through this, greater awareness is really being mirrored by an increase in the number of persons looking for errors. This stated that the the perspective of social media users on cancel culture affects them in a way that these give them consciousness on the how they act concerning social media and cancel culture. Furthermore, the combined platform obtained by the person being pointed out and the others calling out allows for a significant amount of progress. It increases awareness of the issue, whether discrimination, misogyny, or ableism, so that others may learn more about it. It encourages individuals to educate themselves and others on the issue, as well as to discover what they can do to alter not just their own behavior, but also the behavior of others. Some may even claim that when one cancels another, they become more conscious of their own actions and can learn from that experience and change their conduct. Cancel culture permits a large amount of change, increasing knowledge about current challenges facing our society and allowing people to learn from different perspectives by Celentano (2021). This supports what Participant 7 said, "It affects me in a way where I get to uh sometimes uhm some issues being drawn out to me and uh a way for me to educate myself into certain issues such as like uhm I do just pick a certain issues that is just very relevant to our society and for me to be educated and I do not really mind or do not really uhm certain."

### Advocacy Program

**Your Story, Our Story:** The internet has become so intertwined with our lives, that we had to learn how to network and navigate social media platforms. Meesala, social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok aided in the development of cancel culture. Many people are being canceled and have different stories to tell (2020). In line with this, the researchers conducted an activity called Your Story, Our Story or posting of quotes or any literary pieces about cancel culture, and the sender can choose to make the identity anonymous or not. An activity that aims to educate people about cancel cultural effects through different stories.

**Educating Social Media Users:** In cancel culture, comprehension of prevailing opinion infractions, such as who is responsible, is essential. or triggering the cancel, identifying the perceived transgression, and acknowledging It is necessary to have the intended target Andrejevic (2004). Cancel culture is indeed needs to be studied in all its, aspects. Coming up, the researchers created infographics concerning the opposing views on social media, who are the vulnerable on cancel culture, and explore all the different aspects of the process of canceling.

**Canceling the Cancel Culture Virtual Training 2022:** Similarly, when we collectively condemn an individual for the motivation could be plagiarism, a vulgar joke, or a racist comment made on the

internet. The purpose of the act is not to persuade the wrongdoer that he is repayable not that he has grown and changed as a person, but rather this massive, anonymous amphitheater allows cancel culture to flourish in its endeavor of publicly shaming offenders Presswood (2017). As a result, the researchers conducted a virtual training with a theme: Hashtag Activism: Cancel the Cancel Culture last April 20, 2022, a virtual training that aims to cancel the cancel culture among social media users. Moreover, to instill to social media users that social media platforms are not the supreme court or there's no enough forensic evidences to publicly neglect someone's humaneness through canceling or ostracizing. That people have opposing views, values, and traditions, is social media, in order to learn from each other in a professional way.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As the researchers cancel the cancel culture as a basis for the advocacy program, the researchers find out that there are different views concerning cancel culture and there are different ways how to cancel culture affects the social media users. In a way that most social media users view cancel culture as negative and the perspectives about cancel culture affect their social media usage and their emotions negatively but somehow open them to become aware of how cancel culture dominates different social media platforms. Moreover, the finding of the study states that social media users see how destructive a cancel culture is as it can lead to negative experiences. Where cancel culture can affect social media users' emotions and it lessens social media users' usage as afraid of being mocked, bullied, or social media user is indeed vulnerable to hate. With all the findings gathered, the researchers conclude that cancel culture cannot fix the damage brought by objectionable or offensive viewpoints, rather, cancel culture turned into a form of public shaming and it hinders someone's liberty of speech. Social media users may participate to constructive discussion and can demonstrate a sense of commitment to conscientiousness but cancel culture or being ostracized in the virtual world is not justifiable at all. Harming the transgressor or canceling them in any way without being critical and cannot meet the legal process is not an effective rather a threat. To sum up the results, cancel culture needs to be cancelled among social media users through an advocacy program as cancel culture has done something bad that good.

**Implications:** Based on the result of the study, the following implications were formulated to cater to the significant entities as mentioned in the significance of the study.

**Society:** After the researchers have gathered and analyzed the data, the researchers would like to recommend the cancellation of cancel culture among the society as it was found out that cancel culture has negative implications on people who are using social media. As some social media users tend to avoid social media interactions especially when voicing out their opinions and stand on something, as doing so puts them in a vulnerable state of mass hating or canceling.

**Social Media Users:** Social media users should know the truth before making a false action; it is fine to express and engage in constructive conversations in social media platforms but canceling people as a form of public shaming is not justifiable to any social media users. It is recommended to challenge existing norms. Social media users should really know that canceling is an hindrance to attain safe space in the virtual world. Activists, Cancel Campaigns, and Social Media Movements. Based on the conclusion gathered by the researchers, this study would highly recommend the active participation of activists, cancel campaigns, and social media movements on the negative effects of cancel culture. If a social media user has done something unacceptable, they should be addressed privately and should be educated on the matter carefully by the activism campaigns, and other movements.

**Students:** The results of the study would recommend to the students to have awareness on the negative implications cancel culture can bring among the social media users.

Students should study more news and other related articles to become aware of the negative effects of cancel culture, so that, they will not lead into action concerning canceling someone on social media platforms. For them to step up using the knowledge about cancel culture to avoid dehumanization.

**Teachers:** The results of the study enforce teachers to further teach students proper social media etiquette and to be guided on the effects of cancel culture on others. Teachers should always ask their students concerning their social media usage, especially in today's increasing rate of issues caused by misconduct.

**Parents:** The negative result recommends that students should continue to be wary and cautious in the online setting and exude proper behavior to their children. They should monitor their children's social media usage and educate them that canceling someone or engaging in any forms of public shaming, exclusion, and bullying are not justifiable at all costs as we neglect the moral choices in an online environment.

**School Administration:** They should implement more programs, possibly implemented by the school guidance counselor, on spreading awareness about the negative implications, how to avoid, and what to do against cancel culture especially in this digital age where most students are active users of social media.

**Researchers:** The result of the study revealed the negative effects and implications of cancel culture in students to the researchers. As a result, the researchers must set a good example for the school and their peers by refusing to condone or participate in mass hating. Instead, the researchers must encourage positivity, constructive criticism, and humility in accepting and improving bad behavior.

**Future Researchers:** The researchers would recommend the future researchers to conduct more empirical and systematic study concerning cancel culture. Encouraging to obtain more evidences to come up with more findings about cancel culture negative effects on social media users. Moreover, use the obtained findings to influence a bigger scope in a virtual community.

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