



## You are Cancelled: The Views of Gen Z on Cancel Culture to Social Media Influencers

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### ABSTRACT

The notion of cancel culture has become widely known in contemporary society. It is mainly associated with social media influencers, who are usually the victims of this phenomenon. Gen Z, on the other hand, is predominantly exposed to this culture. Hence, their views matter. Following the creative research format, the researchers interviewed four Gen Z participants with prior knowledge about cancel culture and two media professionals to expound the Gen Z's responses. The researchers found out that the differences in beliefs and values, wokeness, accessibility of social media, and exposure to the internet are among the factors as to why cancel culture takes place. The results also show that Gen Z views cancel culture as both positive and negative as it is toxic, harmful, and unhealthy; yet, it can also bring awareness and be informative. Whereas, for Gen Z participants, the journey towards self-redemption of canceled social media influencers requires an apology and hiatus from social media.

**Keywords:** *Cancel Culture, Gen Z, Social Media Influencers, Creative Works, Davao City*

### INTRODUCTION

The act of canceling people, known as the cancel culture, has become a familiar pattern nowadays, and people sometimes need help to realize where to draw the line. According to Mueller (1-14), cancel culture is an act of pulling back the support given by a group of people to a particular public figure due to their unacceptable or problematic behavior on social media. The rise of cancel culture behavior paved its way to becoming the talk of contemporary society, and social media influencers are marked as its target. Additionally, Chiou (297-299) follows the cancel culture as a typical process where public figures are commonly bombarded with disparaging comments on social media after saying or doing something offensive to a group of people. In most cases, it can act as a double-edged sword where people can easily be called out and held accountable for their misbehavior while raising awareness concerning injustice.



James Charles, a YouTube makeup artist, was called out across social media platforms for being racist, a rapist, transphobic, and a liar (Kesslen, n.p.). He was further accused of alleged sexual misconduct and grooming underage boys by sending them non-consensual messages and demanding to send an image and videos that were sexually explicit. Worse, the said beauty influencer can be regarded as sexually manipulative and attempted to use his stardom against individuals who rejected his sexual advances (O'Connor and Haylock, n.p.). As a result, his number of followers and subscribers plunged, and brands refused to collaborate with him because, as Miller explained, someone who continues to support or sponsor an individual with controversial issues would be criticized by social media users as well ([Garvey, n.p.]). Hence, the case of James Charles showed that social media users' canceling him (or anyone) only indicated that they do not tolerate such wrong behavior and that he should be held accountable for such actions. However, James Charles did not remain "canceled" for long (Willingham, n.p.). In the Philippines, the issue of Buknoy Glamur on TikTok became viral. Viernes et al. (86-97) stated that misbehavior is among the factors why cancel culture is prevalent, such that Buknoy Glamur was called out for his indecent remarks towards a tricycle driver during one of his vlogs. With such behavior, he is deemed insensitive and offensive by the netizens, signaling his supporters to withdraw their support towards him.

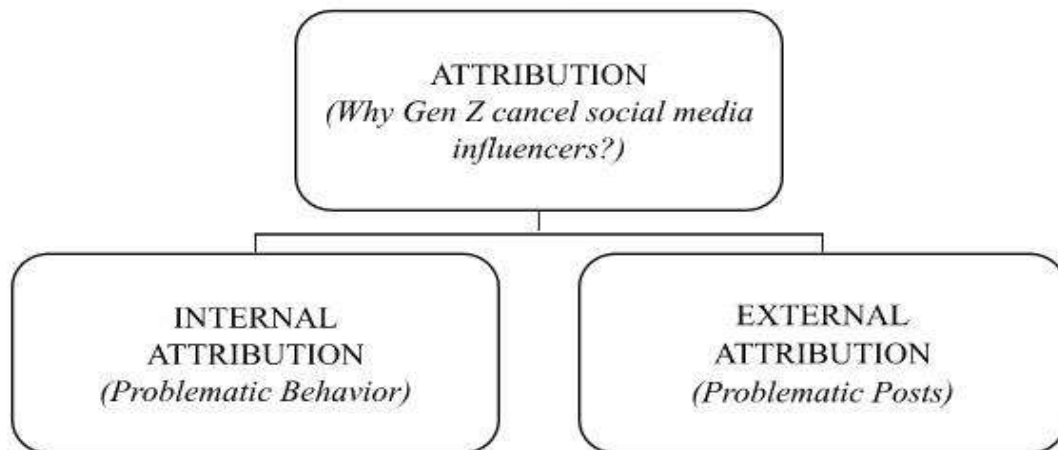
On the other hand, Phillip Hernandez, also known as "Davao Conyo," received a tirade of comments after he commented on the statement of President Duterte on social media about shooting the disruptors amid the coronavirus pandemic (Garcia, n.p.) Thereby, "DDS," a slang name for Duterte's supporters, asked Hernandez to remove "Davao" from his persona as Davao Conyo and attacked his cancer-stricken mother (Russo, n.p.). It corresponded to the idea of the cancel culture for Romano when a celebrity received a public backlash from people on politically progressive social media, which resulted in the call to end their career. On top of that, the previously stated circumstances supported the claim that the cancel culture targets social media influencers who became victims of this practice. While cancel culture towards social media influencers has been the focus of several scholarly works and articles, the researchers explored the views of Generation Z regarding the cancel culture among social media influencers; hence, they filled the gap in our research study.

The purpose of this study is to explore the views of Gen Z towards cancel culture in the Philippines. This study has looked into the viewpoints of Gen Z and delved into their understanding of social media influencers that were canceled on social media platforms. Hence, two research questions are provided, which cover the research study. First, what are the views of Gen Z towards cancel culture? Second, how does Gen Z view social media influencers that are being canceled?

This study ought to reveal how Gen Z views cancel culture. It also seeks to present the viewpoints of Gen Z, who are exposed to this practice. Moreover, this study will provide an in-depth discussion that determines Gen Z's perception of why cancel culture exists and how they view social media influencers who are being canceled online. The collective views of Gen Z will allow the canceled social media influencers to know better about this culture, specifically if there is



a possibility to restore their image and redeem their reputation successfully. If so, present how and what are those appropriate measures. This study will guide international and national social media users to get clear insights into the views of Gen Z towards the cancel culture. It will educate them about this social phenomenon. Also, the findings will significantly impact society, especially minorities, to become aware of the possible pros of the cancel culture that substantially help bring social change. This study will allow media professionals to handle the cancel culture and educate social media users to uphold the etiquette and responsibilities of using social media. In line with this, this study will provide reliable and up-to-date information that will elaborate on Gen Z's sentiments toward the victims of cancel culture in the digital media. Lastly, future researchers may use this study as a reference that shares the same research endeavors concerning locales in which cancel culture is observable.



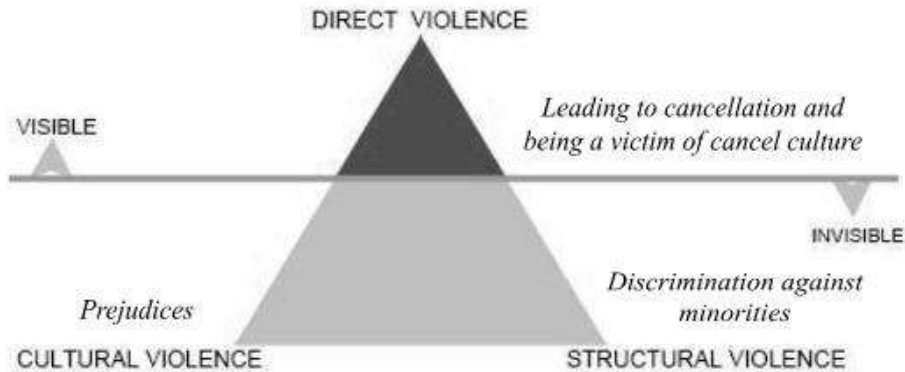
**Figure 1.** Fritz Heider's Attribution Theory

This study is anchored on the Attribution Theory proposed by Fritz Heider in 1958 (Heider, n.p., Schmitt 1-2). As presented by Heider, this theory helps individuals determine the causes of why an event happened. It further suggests that when an individual answers a question about why a particular event occurs, they tend to attribute an explanation to external and internal categories (Holley and Eberly 2). When anchored to this study, the attribution theory seeks to ask why Gen Z cancel social media influencers, and their responses lie between internal and external categories. As seen from the figure above, Gen Z cancels social media influencers for internal attribution because of the influencers' problematic behavior that had surfaced on social media.

On the other hand, the external attribution or 'situational attribution' answers that Gen Z cancels social media influencers who post content that is considered problematic. In conclusion, this theory explains the participation of social media users in cancel culture, mainly their interpretation of the unacceptable behavior of public figures. Thus, it drives them to call out such behavior in any means of canceling them across social media platforms.



## VIOLENCE TRIANGLE GALTUNG

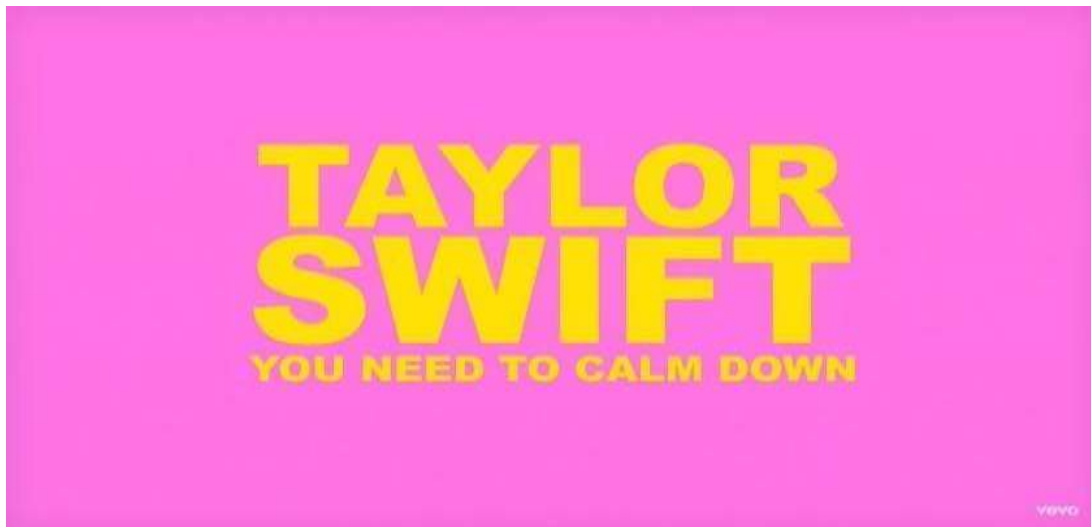


**Figure 2.** Galtung's Violence of Triangle

Consequently, this study is anchored on Galtung's Violence of Triangle (168-177) as the CSJ tool. The theory suggested the three dimensions of violence that represent the three arms of the triangle: Direct Violence, Structural Violence, and Cultural Violence. Direct violence is a type of violence that is visible. It may be physical or psychological violence. Structural violence is a type of violence that is related to social injustice. It is a product of the existing systems made up by society and its complex relationship of power.

On the other hand, cultural violence is a type of violence that refers to the attitudes and behaviors that legitimize the use of direct or structural violence. When anchored to this study, cultural violence are the prejudices that come from the intellectual knowledge of a person, and Structural violence is the discrimination against minorities in society. Direct violence is the decision to cancel someone on social media leading to the cancel culture. It legitimized the violence rooted first in the minds to the point of someone becoming a victim of the cancellation. On that note, this study mainly seeks to unravel the underlying meaning of these forms of violence, enlighten the causes of cancel culture, and how it affects social media influencers and the views of their Gen Z supporters.

This section consists of the visual references related to our study: Music, Documentaries, and Trends on the Internet.



**Figure 3.** Thumbnail of Taylor Swift's "You Need to Calm Down"

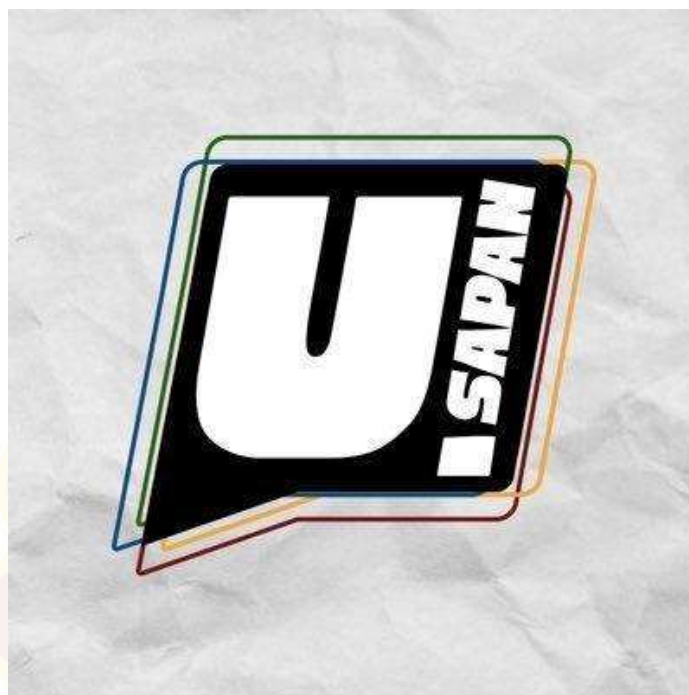
*You Need to Calm Down* is the second single released from the 2019 album of Taylor Swift's *Lover*. In an interview with Aguirre (n.p.) of *Vogue*, Swift said that the song's first verse is about trolls and cancel culture. It referenced the 2016 backlash against Swift with the trending hashtags #TaylorSwiftIsASnake and #TaylorSwiftIsCanceled. She added that the "cancellation" was an isolating experience. People do not actually grasp what it is like for millions of people to hate her very loudly, even sending her death threats (English, n.p.).



**Figure 4.** Thumbnail of the Documentary "This You? A Documentary about the Toxic Rise of Cancel Culture"



*This You? A Documentary about the Toxic Rise of Cancel Culture.* "This You?" is a satirical question used to call out someone for mocking an individual for what they have done and then exposing them to doing the same thing in the past. It is also commonly used when boycotting or shaming a particular social media personality. The show was hosted by Jecris Sorila and produced by Eoh Salvador in 2021. This study used the documentary as a visual reference for its narration style. They have used voice-overs and B-rolls to elevate their storytelling.



**Figure 5.** Logo of the U-SAPAN Organization

*U-SAPAN.* As stated in the YouTube channel description, it is a junction of communication students aiming to inform and entertain. They produce mainly relevant viewpoints in politics, society, and pop culture. In the episode entitled "Cancel Culture, Explained | Madaling USAPAN," they summon guest speakers to initiate a healthy discourse about cancel culture and its complexities. The program hosts are Angel Torres and Sita Valenzuela, while the guest speakers are Monique Angelika Santos and Sophia Rosello. This study used the documentary as a visual reference for its art direction. They utilized moving images and frames in the creative presentation of their online interviews.

## METHOD

This study is qualitative research utilizing the creative works format. Creative research is an efficient method for an ingenious way of communicating the crucial narrative of a study. It maximizes an output manifested through writing, producing, composing, designing, recording, performing, or curating. Additionally, innovative research is context-based and is used as a form of expression or medium (Kara 54). On the other hand, Qualitative research focuses on understanding a research endeavor from an idealistic or humanistic perspective. It comprehends people's



attitudes, interactions, behaviors, and beliefs (Kalra et al. 192). It reinforces the study of cancel culture from the point of view of Gen Z through a video documentary.

According to Talmon (1), Gen Z is used for individuals born between 1990 and 2010. Hence, the primary participants of this study are Gen Z ranging from ages 18 to 25. We selected this age range to narrow down our participants. Individuals 18 to 25 years old are the only age group qualified to be part of our study. Aside from that, they must have at least one social media account, be active on social media, and be aware of cancel culture. These inclusions should be present in all the participants. Any individuals who did not meet these requirements were not allowed to participate in our study. That also filled the exclusion criteria for the participants of our research. Accordingly, purposive sampling refers to the selection of individuals intentionally based on their capability to explain or elucidate a phenomenon. Thus, researchers usually use this method to select participants following their particular knowledge or experience (Robinson, n.p.).

According to Kumar et al. (7107), the recommended sample size by Creswell for a phenomenological study is between three to ten participants. Hence, the researchers invited a total of six participants. The target participants are four from the Gen Z population and two media professionals.

Before conducting the interview, the researchers formulated an interview guide questionnaire consisting of two research questions. Each of the questions has its corresponding identifying and probing questions. On the other hand, the researchers utilized online resources that were available to them. Through internet sources and laptops, Google Meet was used as a digital communication platform to interview the participants, and OBS Studio to visually record their interviews. More so, DJI Pocket 2 portable camera, a phone, earphones/mic, and an audio recorder were used for the production proper. While in post-production, editing tools like CapCut and Canva were used to produce materials needed for the documentary presentation.

An art-based collection technique was utilized for the gathering of data in the process of production, as it is known for having the audiences share their presumptions, emotions, or experiences toward topics that can be challenging to express through words. Given that it is required and suitable for this type of research, a documentary film was selected as the art form for collecting data. This technique will further lighten the narrative or explanation behind the art. In line with this, the researchers took permission before conducting the study and obtained consent from the Gen Z and media professionals participants. They were informed about the options available and discussed what was expected of them to maximize their rights as our chosen participants. The researchers provided prompts or questions for the participants to help them focus and engage in the interview session. Nonetheless, compiled responses from participants are presented in an art form following data analysis and interpretation ("Arts-based data collection techniques - program evaluation," n.p.).



Behind every project, the production process varies, and filmmakers develop their methodology. Generally, the production process is divided into three phases: pre-production, production, and post-production. These stages represent the preparation, execution, and assembly of the documentary film (Reid and Sanders 29).

*Pre-Production.* The pre-production is the first production phase where planning takes place. It is the phase where all the ideas are gathered (Jenkins, n.p.). In the conceptualization, the researchers produced a documentary output entitled "#Cancelledt." They required research to create a context for the documentary, including the raw video footage of the participants sequenced in a manner that followed specific coherence and consistency in its storytelling (Berry, n.p.). In casting, accompanied by the appointed documentary host, the researchers invited representatives from the Gen Z population and two media professionals to further elaborate on Gen Z's responses.

Moreover, collaborating with the crew is where the researchers have spent the planning, brainstorming, and communicating through Messenger and Google Meet. During these sessions, the members raised significant suggestions and developments in creating a quality output. Including the distribution of the work as it promotes productivity and monitoring progress in the project's pursuit.

The location of interviews was conducted online, still following the COVID-19 health protocols provided by the government. Hence, the researchers interviewed the participants through Google Meet according to their preferred schedules. On the other hand, shooting the Host's spiels took place inside the campus to maximize the researchers' time and resources. Production design, on the other hand, did not require studio shoots. As well as, re-enactments were not included in the production process since the researchers had utilized B-rolls instead. The Host needed a production team to help execute the shooting of its spiels. For the logistics, all production processes proceeded online via Messenger and Google Meet. Hence, a stable internet connection was needed for a seamless flow of communication throughout the production process.

*Production.* The production stage refers to the actual recording and filming phase (Spicer, n.p.). In materializing the pre-production stage, the production stage comprised the recording or filming of the footage and clips that may be included in the documentary's final cut (See Tables #1 - #2 on Appendix A). The content of the documentary film included B-rolls and clips of standupper and participants, as indicated in the A/V script. During this stage, the plans and actions were carried out accordingly. The content of the documentary film included B-rolls and clips of standupper and participants indicated in the A/V script. The researchers carefully followed the Gantt chart, which detailed the timetable for shooting the documentary and conducting virtual interviews with each participant. Moreover, the flow of the documentary



was manifested through scene breakdown.

For the opening scene, the B-rolls and voice-over were recorded and taken to establish the documentary film's content further. The history of cancel culture was briefly introduced and presented along with the opening spiel of the Host. Furthermore, the participants were introduced, and their responses to the research questions highlighted act two of the documentary. The final act of the sequence concluded with the participants' collective responses.

*Post-Production.* The Post-Production phase is where the captured elements are put together to create a cohesive output. It is where editing takes place (Autar, n.p.). In the post-production stage of the documentary, the editor used the editing tool CapCut wherein the editor put all the compiled materials (videos, audio, pictures) for the video documentary. On the other hand, Audacity for audio enhancements and Canva for documentary poster layout

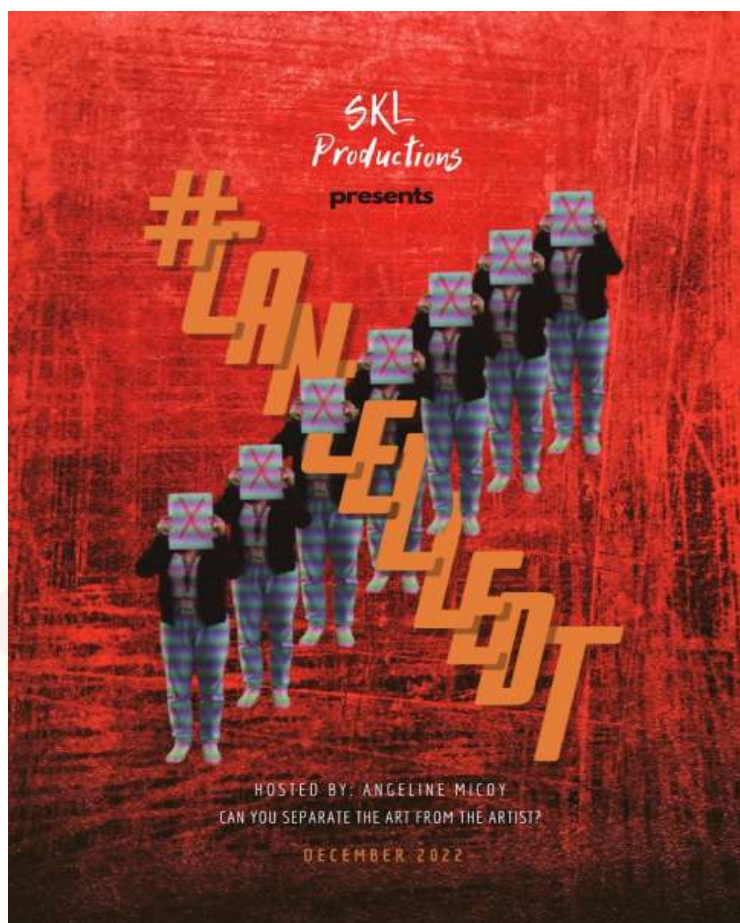
The video editing lovers community admires the CapCut video editing mobile app for its practicality, extensive features, and ease of use on mobile devices. It is a free video editing app for iPhones and Android phones, which is so powerful that it can meet practically any creator's needs (Greene, n.p.). Such as Picture-in-Picture (PiP) for videos, keyframe video animation, speed curve tools, chrome key, video stabilization, auto-captioning, and removing the background in videos. For audio quality, Audacity is free and excellent for audio- editing projects for its full-featured software with multi-tracking editing features. All essential tools come with download plug-ins to add sound enhancements, effects, import and export options, and other elements that cater well to professional needs in a digital audio workstation (Rosenberg, n.p.). For the documentary layout, Canva is a digital layout design software that has wide- ranging customizable templates for specific uses. It creates social media materials, presentations, slides, posters, and other graphic design outputs (Singleton, n.p.). The mentioned software or applications are user-friendly for students who are beginners in video editing.

Ethical considerations in research are guidelines that a research endeavor must adhere. These guidelines set a standard for how a research study must be conducted. It is also a vital and core aspect of conducting research interviews. Moreover, the ethical considerations function to (1) protect the rights of research participants, (2) enhance research validity, and (3) maintain scientific integrity (Bhandari, n.p.). Following the most important principles of ethical considerations: The researchers made sure that the participants, including Gen Z and professionals, were all informed about the study; assured of their anonymity and privacy with confidentiality, and given a right to withdraw from the study if they wished to do so (Bryman and Bell 134).



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter encapsulates the result of "You are Cancelled: The Views of Gen Z on Cancel Culture to Social Media Influencers," a creative work. The production of the documentary supported the study in determining key points upon answering the research questions. Conducting this study also addressed the need to let the public be informed about this phenomenon.



**Figure 6.** *#Cancelledt*

### Documentary Output

The poster is for the documentary. Its texture background used for the output is from Google images and is free from copyright infringement. The researchers also included a screenshot from the documentary to exhibit originality and a creative presentation of being a victim of the cancel culture. Moreover, the color palettes used are red, orange, black, and gray. However, the color that stands out is red as it symbolizes violence, war, and the powerful scope of the cancel culture. Nevertheless, it can also be associated with love and compassion from Gen Z toward the social media influencers to choose to do the next right thing even if it means being #Cancelledt.



Documentary Title: Social Media Scoop

Segment: #Cancelledt

Final Medium: CapCut

The documentary is "Social Media Scoop," which consists of a segment called "#Cancelledt," which runs for about 18 minutes. The researchers have applied explanatory journalism or explanatory reporting in presenting the study. As quoted by Vankin (n.p.), explanatory journalism is a style of reporting that seeks to make subtle topics more accessible by exploring the nuanced stories: the background, the impact, and what it means to the general public. On the other hand, questions related to cancel culture were presented to the participants.

The documentary was established by a voice-over with a B-roll of a girl with an "X" mark in the middle of crowded places, signifying cancel culture. It is then followed by the opening spiel of the Host, expounding the topic and introducing the documentary's segment. Hence, the documentary title appears next. As the documentary progresses to the story's core, the interview proper takes place where the recorded clips of the Gen Z participants are presented. Then, followed by media professionals' remarks about the responses of Gen Z. Wrapping up the documentary, the Host concluded with her closing spiels and made a firm conclusion based on the participants' responses. The documentary then ended with the documentary title and ending credits.

### **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

As the documentary made its way to the final cut, the researchers carefully analyzed the participants' information to get the essential data for the research questions.

A total of two research questions were presented with corresponding identifying questions and probing questions to support the main questions. The questions provided encompass the cancel culture among social media influencers wherein only selected questions were asked for the two media specialists to either support, debunk, or add to the responses of the Gen Z participants.

The first research question mainly highlighted the views of Gen Z towards cancel culture. For Elyza, her definition of cancel culture is the practice or tendency of people to cancel, call out, and pull out one's support to a well-known celebrity, public figure, or social media influencer, who has done something wrong, inappropriate, or unacceptable on social media.



**Figure 7.** Screenshot of the Interview with Elyza

*"In my definition, cancel culture is the practice or the act of pulling out one's support to a well-known celebrity, public figure or social media influencer."* (In my definition, cancel culture is the practice or the act of pulling out one's support to a well-known celebrity, public figure, or social media influencer.)

Vielle added that it is also a way of calling out the social media influencer for having opposing views, opinions, or actions from their own perspective.



**Figure 8.** Screenshot of the Interview with Vielle

*"Well, my definition of cancel culture, is it is the tendency of people to call out people or public figures who have different or opposing opinions, views, or actions from their perspective— own perspective."* (Well, my definition of cancel culture is the tendency of people to call out people or public figures who have different or opposing opinions, views, or actions from their own perspective.)



As for Janine, it is most rampant among young generations. The survey by Vogels et al. (n.p.) corroborated the respondents' views, finding that most Americans see cancel culture as a movement to remove a person, place, or thing because of their objectionable behavior or transgression. Furthermore, it is seen as a way to show disapproval for public figures or businesses by withholding one's support. Hence, it can be viewed as a type of online shaming on social media.



**Figure 9.** Screenshot of the Interview with Janine

*“It could be either a celebrity, or a brand, or a company, that shows something that is against or against a particular belief or value of a certain- certain group of people.” (It could be a celebrity, brand, or a company that shows something that is against a particular belief or value of a certain group of people.)*

The participants shared their views on the corresponding probing question about why cancel culture is prevalent. For Elyza (See Figure #22), the wokeness made this generation more progressive compared to the past, which is supported by the study of Burmah (5) that when compared to larger authoritative institutions, one cancellation may seem relatively insignificant to the average person. Nevertheless, the pursuit of justice encourages more people to become critical activists of oppressive beliefs and structures. Along with the legitimate goals of restorative justice, there are cases of "performative wokeness" in which people use their social media platforms by posting things to get other people to converse about them.

*“Mainly because this generation, or our generation, is woke and we have this practice that when we are woke, we are progressive. We've already come so far from tolerating morally unacceptable things in the past that violates human rights, but now, we practice things to become progressive. We will not tolerate the things we once tolerated before. We try to prune those things here today in our generation. And because of that, people become more educated, and the generation today become more woke, that's why cancel culture became prevalent. It gets easier to call out people who*



*needs to be called out.”* (Mainly because our generation is woke, and we have this practice that when we are woke, we are progressive. We've already come so far from tolerating morally unacceptable things in the past that violate human rights, but now, we practice things to become progressive. We will not tolerate the things we once tolerated before. We try to prune those things today in our generation, and because of that, people have become more educated, and the generation today has become more woke. That is why cancel culture became prevalent. It gets easier to call out people who need to be called out.)

On the other hand, Vielle stressed that it is prevalent because of the scope of social media, where social media platforms are accessible and convenient. It was further supported by Norris (n.p.) that the dissemination of technical information is significantly impacted by the use of social media, which the younger generation uses as an echo.

*“It is because of social media. I think it is because of the scope of the social media. We have different or hundreds of social media platforms available for everyone to use because it is free and convenient to use, everyone can share their perspective - everyone can share their opinion. It can be positive or it can also be negative.”* (I think it is because of the scope of social media. We have various social media platforms available for everyone to use. Since it is free and convenient to use, everyone can share their perspectives and opinions, which can be positive or negative.)

Meanwhile, Janine expressed that this generation is more exposed and enculturated by what can be seen on the internet.

*“I think it is prevalent and rampant in today's generation because this generation or the younger generations have grown up-- or they are exposed. They are the ones who grew up being influenced and being enculturated by what they see in the internet, and they have the easy access of the internet. And even when they were young, they already have access to smartphones and other new gadgets, unlike older generations.”* (I think it is prevalent in today's generation because younger generations have grown up and, thus, become exposed. They are the ones who grew up being influenced and enculturated by what they see on the internet, as they have easy access to it.



They already have access to smartphones and other gadgets at a young age, unlike older generations.)

The participants were asked about their perception of cancel culture for the second identifying question. They concluded that cancel culture is toxic, harmful, and unhealthy. However, Vielle said cancel culture could also be informative.

*“Initial perception, syempre toxic siya, and in a negative way talaga ang cancel culture because usahay man gud, unsa ba, ang pag-cancel sa mga tao pud is kanang sobra na gani, but at the same time, it can also be be informative.”* (Cancel culture is toxic and negative because sometimes, the way people cancel someone goes out of hand. On the same note, cancel culture can also be informative.)

Meanwhile, Stephen shared his perception that cancel culture is toxic because most people are quick to judge. This kind of behavior that the cancel culture elicits produces a harmful, threatening social atmosphere where people learn to self-censor to avoid being persecuted (Burmah 38).



**Figure 10.** Screenshot of the Interview with Stephen

*“Something negative siya kaayo and something toxic. Unhealthy siya kay we are quickly judging the person without knowing the whole story.”* (It is negative, toxic, and unhealthy because we quickly judge the person without knowing the whole story.)

Elyza stressed the importance of calling out someone, not to an extreme measure.



*“I think it’s ano kahit may ano kahit tawag nito. It’s still important kasi to call out someone’s mistakes but not to the extreme na salihan ng hate or threat kasi yung iba nag-cacancel sila ng isang influencer pero at the same time nabubully na rin.”* (It’s still important to call out someone’s mistakes but not to the extent of hating and threatening them. There are people who cancel influencers with the intention of bullying them.)

Along with the Gen Z participants, two media specialists were invited to participate in the study. One of them is Lady Bam, and the other is Mike Pasco. They were encouraged to share their remarks based on the responses of the Gen Z participants. Mike reacted to Elyza’s reaction by saying that social media influencers get canceled as people fail to understand our differences.



**Figure 11.** Screenshot of the Interview with Mike

*“Many people don’t understand our differences, dili nato gusto dawaton nga lahi lahi ta. The problem here is that, dili nato masabtan lahi lahi tag culture, lahi lahi tag upbringing, lahi lahi tag ginikanan, lahi lahi tag environment nga gidak an.”* (Many people do not understand our differences. We refuse to accept that we are different from each other. The problem is that we need to understand that we have different cultures, upbringings, and environments we grew up in.)

At the same time, Janine concluded that cancel culture aims to bring awareness about a specific issue unless mishandled. On the other hand, she expressed that cancel culture can go beyond cyberbullying. According to Burhmah (41), a minor public person or individual who is subjected to an excessive amount of unwanted and potentially life-threatening harassment as a result of the misguided conflating of accountability and cancel culture is putting themselves in a precarious position.



*"I think it's aim is good na it seeks to have positive change or like it aims to bring awareness to a certain behavior that is not good to the society, or it could be bad influence to other people, but, however like the cancel culture also, if get worse, it could also ruin someone's reputation or it could be mishandled and it could turn out to bullying or cyberbullying, which is really the opposite of what the aim of cancel culture is."*  
(I think it is good that it seeks positive change and bring awareness about problematic behavior that could influence other people. However, it could also ruin someone's reputation or turn into bullying or cyberbullying if mishandled, which is the opposite of what cancel culture is aiming for.)

Mike also commented on Janine's answer, where he emphasized that it is acceptable to correct people but not to the point of canceling them.

*"Siguro, butang natog mga off limits nga mga content or mga statement siguro, it is good nga musaway, mucorrect, but not to the point of canceling that person."* (If the contents or statements are off limits, it is good to correct, but not to the point of canceling the person.)

Lady Bam added that there are instances where cancel culture served its purpose positively, but there are also times when it ruined someone's reputation.



**Figure 12.** Screenshot of the Interview with Lady Bam

*"There were things I've seen on social media nga nag work gyud ang cancel culture, kanang mga very homophobic remarks, kanang very judgemental nga remarks nga makadaot sa isig kaingon, naa. Pero naa pud nga nadaot gyud ang pangalan sa tao. uban pud, victim lang pud of this propaganda."*



(There are things I have seen on social media where cancel culture worked. There are homophobic and judgemental remarks that can ruin people, and there are also instances when other people become victims of this propaganda and destroy their reputations.)

The participants were asked to probe about the chances and instances of canceling person based on their observations. For Elyza, the cases vary and one example is if the public misinterprets, misunderstands, and miscomprehends any actions or words.

*"Other people might misunderstand me. So like the chances of getting canceled, it's still varies pero kahit small things... If daghag tao ang makakita ato na para sa ilaha mali to pwede ka nila i-cancel actually or mamiscomprehend ang imohang iingon kahit sa tweet or kahit verbal."* (Other people might misunderstand me. The chances of getting canceled still vary. However, people might miscomprehend or cancel you even over petty things. For instance, if they see your post and disagree with your views.)

Meanwhile, Vielle emphasized that there is a big chance the public can react negatively on social media in response to the mentioned instances.

*"If ang words na dili na-filter... mamisinterpret nila ang imohang gi ingon, or kanang naa kay gi- post nga against sa ilahang belief-- against sa ilahang gipaniwalaan, so dako ang chances nga naay mureact negatively saimohang giingon or action on social media."* (If the words are not filtered, or if you post something that is against their belief, they will misinterpret what you are trying to imply and chances are, they will react negatively to your post on social media.)

Nevertheless, Janine stated that people can get canceled by their past mistakes.



*"It could be they have done something in the past that is brought up again, that a lot of people didn't see it that- they haven't changed, or it could be a present action or behavior that is still ongoing... People are trying to cancel that person to be aware of his or her behavior." (It could be they did something in the past that is brought up again, which many people did not see any changes in their behavior. People are trying to cancel that person to spread awareness about their behavior.)*

Mike shared his remarks regarding the Gen Z participants' responses. Cancellation of a person or brand can occur if the individual determines that the person or brand's attitude, actions, past, or present do not agree with the individual's ethical principles. The calling out content might vary, but standard arousal fields included racism, sexism, or transphobia (Romano, n.p.).

*"We should always give somebody a chance to move on. Let us help one another, guide one another, nga kung unsa may nahimo natong past, there's always room to correct, room to improve, room para mu grow up, para mu-mature sa tanan natong desisyon sa kinabuhi and that is humanitarian understanding." (We should always give somebody a chance to move on. Let us help one another and guide one another that whatever happened in the past, there is always a room to correct, room to improve, room to grow up, and to think maturely in every decision that we make in our lives. That is humanitarian understanding.)*

The second research question mainly highlighted the views of Gen Z on canceled social media influencers. Some of the participants shared almost the same ideas on how they view social media influencers got compensated. Elyza expressed that social media influencers who got canceled are pitiful because of the damage it has done to their career.

*"Views ko sa mga na-cancel na influencers? Luoy sila. Actually, ano kasi even if mag-apologize sila, the hate is still there. So it might break their career kanang ma-damage ilang career in the long run and some of them di sila maka-recover." (I pity canceled influencers. Even if they apologize, the hatred will remain, so it might ruin their career in the long run, and some may not be able to redeem themselves.)*



Meanwhile, Janine stated that it is scary to be a media influencer and make self-redemption. A study found that people exposed to cancel culture are more likely to get radicalized and less likely to understand the "other side", leaving victims helpless and jobless (Roberts, n.p.).

*“My views to the social media influencers that are being canceled is sometimes I feel scared about them because if you’re already being canceled, it is hard to redeem yourself and as a social media influencer, you should also be like critical of like what you post and you have to establish your brand, I mean to your audiences. It’s scary to be a social media influencer in other words.”* (My views on social media influencers that are being canceled is I feel scared for them because if you are canceled, it is hard to redeem yourself. If you are a social media influencer, you should be critical of your posts since you must establish your brand for your audience. In other words, it is terrifying to be a social media influencer.)

As for Vielle, her response highlights why it is suitable for social media influencers to acknowledge their mistake and for audiences to understand a particular issue.

*“For those who were able to kanang redeem themselves and kumbaga mag-apologize or acknowledge their mistakes. I think it’s good not just for them but also for their audiences kasi they will be able to understand, diba especially if it is unintentional ang ilahang nahimo na mistake or kanang something na different from what people believe..”* (For those who were able to redeem themselves, apologize, and acknowledge their mistakes, it is suitable not just for them but for their audience since they will be able to clear up the misunderstanding, especially if what they did was unintentional.)

For its probing question, the participants shared their viewpoints about social media influencers redeeming themselves after being canceled. According to Janine, social media influencers release public apologies upon cancellation and note that some influencers take a hiatus from interacting with social media at such times. The YPulse survey (n.p.) revealed that Gen Z is more likely than Millennials to look forward to celebrities and influencers apologizing and explaining themselves through a public apology. The younger group is more reasonable in demanding that these influencers justify their decisions and assure that they will never do controversial acts in the future. Moreover, conforming to Ryan McCormick's statement, co-founder and Media Relations Specialist at Goldman McCormic, said that dropping out from the public eye is a good idea to suggest to his clients. There is a high chance of a client being involved in a global event or national scandal eclipsing, so let time heal (Garvey, n.p.).



*“Most of them they tried to apologize through apology videos or like post, or contents... Some of them they would try to be quiet, they would gethiatus or like they would go away from the internet just stop posting first and try to reflect themselves.”* (Most of them tried to apologize through apology videos, posts, or contents. Some of them would try to be quiet, get a hiatus, disconnect from the internet, and reflect on themselves.)

The fourth identifying and probing question led to a decision to support still or not support the art of the social media influencer after being canceled. Stephen and Vielle both relied on their belief system when choosing to support still or not support the canceled social media influencer. Vielle shared about the change in her consumption of the influencers' content.

*“If it is against my belief, kana kay syempre I have my own belief system, I have my own principle, so if it is against sa kung unsa akong gipaniwalaan, then kana. It will greatly affect jud ang akoang pag-consume sa ilahang content.”* (Since I have my belief system and principle, if it is against my belief, then it will significantly affect how I consume their content.)

However, Stephen is not interested in them after being canceled. Hence, canceling people denies attention to personalities for them to lose cultural admiration. In most cases, this is through unfollowing social media influencers on social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram or unsubscribing from their YouTube channels (Laud, n.p.).

*“Cause on my end our views are not the same so it’s not good for me to follow him again... It would just fuel anger or masuko lang gihapon ko og mutan-aw lang ko saiyaha or makit-an nako siya something like that.”* (On my end, it’s not good to follow the influencer again if we have different views since it would just fuel anger if I continue to watch their content.)

Meanwhile, Elyza believed in the weight of evidence and stated that social issues like racism and homophobia lost her interest in supporting the influencer. Most of those who were "canceled" experienced this backlash from the public after being accused of being violent, sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobic, and other objectionable or offensive acts. They were having problematic behavior that caused harm to a group of people, a community, and even a single person (Walsh 15, Tran, n.p.). Simply put, public figures and influencers who had done or said something wrong will be canceled, held accountable for their problematic behavior, and called out across social media platforms.



For instance, if the social media influencer asserts offensive remarks that are sexist, racist and homophobic using their social media account, other users may collect these specific posts as a form of “evidence” for redistribution.

Then, users share them among their networks with additional contexts like support for reprimand to ensure that the perpetrator is accountable for amending the dispersion of baneful discourse (Burmah 4).

*“If ma-proven na true. Mag-start siya as rumors if naay like concrete evidence na mag-prove nga tinuod to. Mu-stop ko na mu-support ato. Bisan pag ano like ganahan kaayo ko sa iyaha na celebrity tapos or influencer... Labaw na kung ano tawag ani uh ang context kay racism, or homophobic. Mga big social issue gani nga daghan kaayog naga-struggle sa atong society karon tapos nahibal-an nako na kato diayng akong gina-support kay ano diay siya homophobic or ing-ana naturally mawala ang akong support.”* (If it is proven as accurate. It will start as rumors, but if there is concrete evidence and proven as true, I will stop supporting them. No matter how much I like the celebrity or influencer, I will naturally stop supporting the person, especially if it is about racism, homophobic, or significant social issues that many people in the society struggle with.)

Mike has the same observation as Elyza. He pointed out that Gen Z being sensitive to societal issues like racism and homophobia serves as a warning for social media influencer to be careful in delving into such topics.

*“Makita nato that Gen Z are concerned. Concerned about the welfare of human being. ‘Pag kabalo ta nga it affects negatively to the community or sa viewers, sa listeners niya, ‘diba? Isa na siya sa mga maayo kaayo nga kanang ang pagiging sensitive sa Gen Z towards mga racism, kaning homophobic issues. Nakatabang ni siya para at least man lang kahit papaano, ang atoang mga social media influencers, kahit papaano kabalo sila ba, dili mag pataka.”* (We can see that Gen Z are concerned. Concerned about the welfare of human beings, if we know that it affects negatively to the community or to the viewers and listeners, right? This is one of the positive things about it, the sensitivity of Gen Z towards topics such as racism and homophobic issues. It helped to at least let the influencers know about the topic and to be careful.)



Apart from that, Janine became critical of her judgment and implied conducting research before concluding.

*“I think when I became more critical, I tried to research more about that celebrity, and instead of just trying to listen to what other people say.” (I think when I became more critical, I researched more about that celebrity instead of just trying to listen to what other people say.)*

In the same context, Lady Bam pointed out that researching is essential before dropping judgments.

*“This is a judgement. Pero mas madami akong nakita na nag-judge agad sa isang post. Mas madami akong narinig, mas madami akong nabasang comment dahil lang sa isang pagkakamali. So if you ask me how important is it to Gen Z? I don't know. But, it should be an important part that we have to research before you drop all your judgment.” (This is a judgment, but I have seen plenty of those immediately judge a post. Those commented because of a single mistake. So if you ask me how important it is to Gen Z? I do not know. Nevertheless, it should be vital that we research before you drop all your judgements.)*

Mike further explained that research significantly impact people, so it is beneficial to learn history before making decisions. For Dwyer, Ph. D., the notion of cancel culture requires critical thought. He argued that when something concerning has been allegedly said or done. Then, to shed light upon engaging in their wrongdoings is an advisory to people to prioritize reason over emotion.

*“It is very important to research, to know first, to go back muna the history before ka muhimo og decision especially canceling someone, dako kay siya nga impact sa isa ka tao.” (It is crucial to research, to know first, and to go back to the history before having a decision, especially canceling someone. It has a significant impact on a person.)*

The fifth identifying and probing question provided recommendations to reduce the chances of a social media influencer getting canceled. Janine suggested being careful with their actions online.

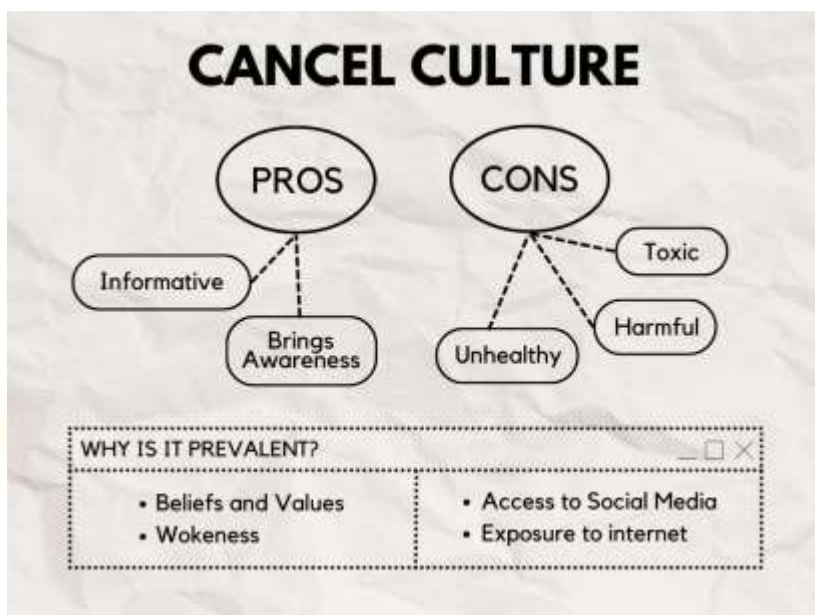


*“So, my recommendation is to just really be careful of what kind of subjects or topics are they gonna support, what kind of behavior they will portray in the internet, or their image. They should be careful what image they will bring and think that is part already of being a social media influencers” (My recommendation is to just really be careful of what content they support or how they behave on the internet. They should be cautious about their image and how they portray themselves since it is part of being a social media influencer.)*

Moreover, Vielle has the same sentiments as Janine about planning their content before releasing it on social media and for the social media influencers to stand firm with their objectives in favor of pursuing the craft. According to Nierman (n.p.), the cause-and-effect relationship between social media and cancel culture is permanently co-existing. Even if you deleted the post from your social media platforms, the content may be screenshot and repeatedly reposted, so the fallout continues to multiply instead of fade. Reflecting on actions to take in the wake of such situations is fundamental to creating a business and can make a tricky dynamic with indefinite responses. Hence, social media influencers are becoming warier about how their behavior and words inflict harm. Otherwise, their fear of losing their jobs, social status, and wealth are all at stake (Erkic, n.p.).

*“Be clear with your purpose ngano ka ga- produce ani nga content kasi if you are doing it for clout, you’re doing it for audience, you’re doing it para kanang maka-gain kag subscribers, or for money, diba kung unsa mana... You have teams naman na kanang nagawork bitaw with you, so before posting online, you really have to think before you click kay miskan pag madelete na and masking idelete nimo imong content, wala man gud kay control kinsay nakascreenshot ana, kinsay nagstory, pwede na irepost balik, kinsay nagstory about ana, unsa ilang maingon, so dapat kanang bahalag gamay lang o daghan imong audience, dapat kuan jud ka kanang careful ka saimong actions online” (Be clear with your purpose. Think about why you are producing content- is it for clout? for your audience? to gain subscribers? or for money? Whatever the reason is, you have to think before you click or post online because there are people who work with you. Even if the post is no longer available or existing in the platform, you have no control on who might have saved a copy of the post. No matter how wide or limited your audience is, you should always be careful with your actions.)*

Upon weighing the participants' responses deliberately, Gen Z participants shared the same narrative that cancel culture is an act of calling out influencers for their inappropriate or problematic behavior on social media. In contrast, differences in beliefs and values, wokeness, accessibility of social media, and internet exposure contribute to why cancel culture is prevalent among younger generations. Gen Z participants arrived at the common ground that cancel culture is toxic, harmful, and unhealthy. But it can also be informative and bring awareness. On the other hand, media professionals emphasized the importance of correcting but understanding our differences. Canceled social media influencers are viewed as pitiful while their journey towards self-redemption requires an apology and hiatus from social media. While the decision to still or not to support canceled influencers vary, the importance of fact-checking or researching before dropping judgments was given emphasis. Hence, carefully planning their content may reduce chances of getting canceled.

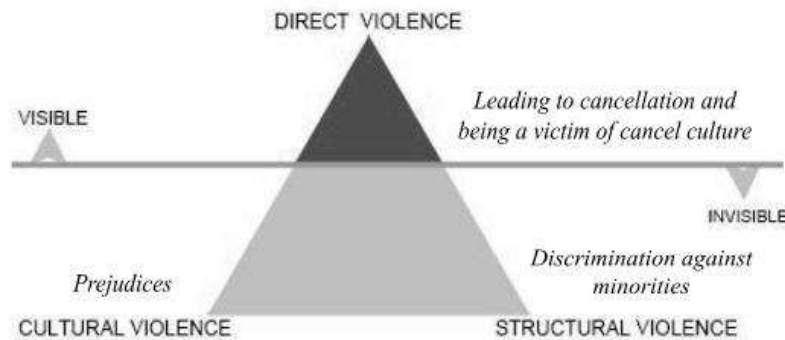


**Figure 13.** Graphic Organizer of Results and Discussion

The diagram presents the pros and cons of cancel culture drawn out from the responses of Gen Z participants. Cancel culture is deemed informative and also brings awareness to people. However, it is also viewed as toxic, harmful, and unhealthy. On the other hand, the prevalence of cancel culture is elicited from Gen Z's beliefs and values, wokeness, access to social media, and exposure to internet. Pulling Out One's Support, Call Out, Baseless Judgements, Expressing Feelings Online, Informative, Awareness, Being Critical, Losing Their Careers, Public Apology, Hiatus, and Being Careful Online Judging, Hearsays.



## VIOLENCE TRIANGLE GALTUNG



**Figure 14.** CSJ Tool Based on Results and Discussion

The diagram illustrates Gen Z's perceptions, actions, and behaviors toward cancel culture. Moreover, Galtung's Violence of Triangle presents how the three forms of violence are applied. As the researchers examined the participants' responses, they found that Gen Z tends to have prejudices towards canceled social media influencers, which lies in the invisible realm of Cultural Violence. These prejudices include judging, hearsays, misinterpretation, past mistakes, and opposing views. Meanwhile, discrimination against minorities lies on the invisible realm of Structural Violence such as violating human rights, evidence, racism, and homophobia.

Consequently, the two mentioned violence results in Direct Violence, which is Gen Z's behavior to cancel social media influencers. Among these are pulling out one's support, call out, baseless judgements, expressing feelings online, informative, spread awareness, being critical, losing their careers, public apology, hiatus, and being careful online. These connections are anchored on a CSJ tool based on the results and discussion of the study.

## IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Implications

The cancel culture has crept into contemporary society and become a familiar pattern among Gen Z. The term "Cancelled" refers to a slang word used by younger generations to ostracize influencers that are canceled or called out on social media for their allegedly problematic behavior. This phenomenon can either pose a positive or negative impact on society. However, in most cases, it negatively affects the victims of this practice. Conducting this research is deemed necessary as it addresses the issue of cancel culture by delving into the perspectives of Gen Z about cancel culture. This way, it can help people understand this matter better and be aware of the consequences of withdrawing someone.



As younger generations become more immersed in social media, they are more exposed to cancel culture, enabling them to become contributors to this practice. The study's findings revealed that the younger generation views cancel culture negatively. More so, this study paved the way to satisfy the curiosity of the researchers on how Gen Z views canceled social media influencers and the cancel culture. As this study has gone through a careful process, it can be helpful to future researchers because it can support future studies with topics related to cancel culture. Aspiring social media influencers can also benefit from this study since it can enlighten them on how Gen Z participants reacted to this social phenomenon. Based on the results, cancel culture is prevalent among Gen Z, which views it negatively. With its negative impact on society, everyone, not only Gen Z, should be careful about their actions, especially dealing with sensitive issues, as it can complicate things and create more problems.

### Recommendations

This study primarily focused on cancel culture from the viewpoints of Generation Z in the Philippine setting to completely understand this socio-cultural phenomenon in a time that is heavily reliant on social media. We recommend that future scholars and researchers study and investigate the areas of cancel culture not only limited to one perspective. Moreover, we recommend that future researchers seek out viewpoints from other generations (such as Millennials, Boomers, etc.) on cancel culture, as only Gen Z's perspectives were examined in this study. Aside from that, they can conduct a study that focuses more on the victims, not only limited to canceled Social Media Influencers, where it tackles more on the factors that might help aid their reputation and the restoration of their image. The information or data they uncover may help close any research gaps and would be beneficial for other related studies. Moreover, future researchers can comprehensively identify and demonstrate this culture's parameters using various methodological approaches that can give diverse information for future research.

Knowing this study followed Creative Research, future researchers can incorporate other methodological approaches most suitable for their study. Also, the researchers recommend that future researchers provide a framework and link theories most appropriate for their research. Furthermore, they should delve further into the cancel culture in the context of separating the art from the artist because this crucial area must be uncovered carefully and intently. Thus, future researchers can provide meaningful and substantial information helpful to this variety of research.

For canceled social media influencers, this study will motivate them to be careful with their actions, be mindful of the content they produce, and be cautious of the behavior they project on social media. Students can get essential information from this study that will help them better understand the cancel culture. This study has included recommendations from Gen Z and Media Professionals that can be applied in their daily lives.



For the community, this study may serve as a stepping stone to understanding the mind and behavior of an individual concerning this matter. For international and national social media users, this study can bring awareness to cancel culture as it discusses the viewpoints of Gen Z on canceled social media influencers.

For media professionals, the information they can get from this study will give them an idea of how to handle cancel culture. For individuals and future researchers, all the essential information from this study can help open their minds and encourage them to seek further information from other related studies.

### Insights

Given that we are still amid a pandemic and lots of us are still picking up where we left off, the pursuit of this research symbolizes our unshakable resilience and undying perseverance to fill in the gaps of this research endeavor. We, as the researchers, felt the urgency to delve into the basics and complexities of cancel culture as it is a relevant socio-psychological concern we face today. We recognize that social media influencers are the most vulnerable to experiencing the rage of cancel culture. We have heard their stories and delved into the labyrinth of their minds. However, we are close yet so far to explore the perceptions of their viewers, Gen Z. As we still have to observe safety measures to conduct the study, the researchers considered the time availability of the participants for online interviews. The results showed that Gen Z is mindful of the consequences of the actions of social media influencers and appreciates the learnings they can grasp from participating in the cancel culture. Although they have a broad understanding of how the cancel culture works, they still set boundaries, mainly if it involves their morals and principles as individuals. They are confident that social media influencers should be held accountable for their actions and take their cancellation as a lesson for their character development.

The researchers have found that although the participants are from the Gen Z population, they all have different takes on cancel culture, canceled social media influencers, and how they participate in this phenomenon. The researchers' insights included an understanding that Gen Z feels responsible for correcting what they think and see as wrong through social media platforms. Significantly, the participants' responses have aided the researchers' curiosity on how the said generation view canceled social media influencers.



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