

Copyright Protection for Digital Content on Social Media: A Study of Reuploads and Plagiarism on the TikTok Platform

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyze copyright protection for digital content on social media, specifically regarding the practices of reuploading and plagiarism on the TikTok platform. The method used is a qualitative approach involving a literature review of various sources, including scientific journals, books, and relevant regulations. The results show that reuploading and plagiarism remain widespread due to low digital literacy, easy access to technology, and suboptimal protection mechanisms on the platform. Additionally, there is a gap between existing regulations and their implementation in practice. Therefore, collaborative efforts between the government, platforms, and users are needed to enhance copyright protection and foster digital ethics awareness among the public.*

Keywords: *copyright, digital content, social media, TikTok, plagiarism, reuploading*

Introduction

The rapid development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes to various aspects of human life, including how digital works are produced, distributed, and consumed. Social media has emerged as one of the primary platforms enabling every individual to actively participate in the digital ecosystem, both as content creators and consumers. One platform experiencing particularly rapid growth is TikTok, which offers ease in creating and sharing short-form video content. With its interactive features and algorithms that promote virality, TikTok has become a space for

creative expression that is highly sought after by various groups, particularly the younger generation. However, behind this ease of use lie various legal issues related to copyright protection. One of the most prominent issues is the practice of reuploading and plagiarizing content without permission from the original owner. Reuploading refers to the act of uploading someone else's content without consent, whether modified or not, while plagiarism involves passing off another person's work as one's own. This phenomenon has become increasingly complex due to the nature of social media, which allows content to spread widely in a short amount of time, making it difficult to control the distribution and reuse of digital works.

Copyright, as part of intellectual property, plays a vital role in protecting creators' moral and economic rights. Moral rights pertain to the recognition of a creator's identity, while economic rights grant creators the authority to derive financial benefits from their works. In the context of digital content on social media, these two aspects are often overlooked. Many creators do not receive recognition or profit from their work because their content is taken and used by others without permission. This clearly contradicts the fundamental principle of copyright protection, which aims to encourage creativity and innovation. The issues of reuploading and plagiarism on TikTok are also influenced by the evolving digital culture in society. The "sharing culture" is often misinterpreted as the freedom to reuse others' content without restrictions. Furthermore, low levels of legal awareness among social media users exacerbate this situation. Many users do not understand that reuploading content without permission can be classified as copyright infringement. In fact, in some cases, such actions are considered acceptable as long as they do not cause any immediately apparent harm.

On the other hand, the TikTok platform itself has provided various features and policies to protect copyright, such as a system for reporting violations and the use of technology to detect infringing content. However, the effectiveness of these mechanisms remains in question. Many creators feel that the protection provided is not yet optimal, especially when it comes to addressing cases of mass reuploads. Furthermore, features such as "duet" and "stitch" also create ambiguity regarding the limits on the use of others' content, because while these features encourage collaboration, they can also be misused for personal gain without providing proper credit. From a legal perspective, copyright protection for digital content in Indonesia is governed by applicable laws and regulations.

However, the enforcement of these laws in the context of social media faces various challenges. One of these is the difficulty in identifying infringers, especially if the accounts used are anonymous or located outside the country's legal jurisdiction. Furthermore, the legal enforcement process which tends to be time-consuming and costly also poses a barrier for creators seeking to assert their rights. As a result, many cases of copyright infringement are not seriously pursued.

The phenomenon of plagiarism on TikTok affects not only individual creators but also the digital ecosystem as a whole. When plagiarism is allowed to go unchecked, it can lower the quality of content circulating on the platform. Creators who feel their work is not valued may lose the motivation to continue creating, thereby hindering the development of the digital creative industry. Additionally, content consumers may also be harmed because they do not receive accurate information about the original source of a work. Furthermore, this issue is also related to digital ethics, which should serve as the foundation for interactions in the digital world. Digital ethics emphasize the importance of respecting others' work, maintaining integrity, and taking responsibility for one's online actions. In this context, education on copyright and the ethical use of digital content becomes crucial. Without adequate understanding, legal enforcement efforts alone will not be sufficient to address the existing problems.

Methode

This study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method to conduct an in-depth examination of the phenomenon of copyright protection for digital content on social media, specifically regarding the practices of reuploading and plagiarism on the TikTok platform. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on understanding social and legal phenomena that are complex, contextual, and cannot be measured quantitatively. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to explore the meanings, interpretations, and dynamics involved in the practice of reusing digital content, including how copyright protection regulations and their implementation are carried out within the social media ecosystem. The review analysis method in this study was conducted by collecting and examining various relevant literature sources, such as scientific journals, academic books, laws and regulations, and policy documents related to copyright and digital media. In addition, secondary sources such as research reports,

scientific articles, and official publications from relevant institutions were also used to enrich the analytical perspective. Sources were selected carefully, taking into account the credibility, relevance, and timeliness of the information, ensuring that the data used in this study is scientifically sound.

The data collection method used in this study was a literature review, in which the researcher identified, classified, and organized various references related to the research topic. This process involved searching for data through academic databases, digital libraries, and other online sources that provide access to scientific literature. After the data was collected, the researcher conducted data reduction by selecting the information most relevant to the research focus, namely copyright protection, reupload practices, and plagiarism on TikTok. The reduced data was then systematically organized to facilitate further analysis. Data analysis in this study employed descriptive qualitative analysis techniques with an interpretive approach. The researcher examined the content of the collected literature to identify patterns, themes, and relationships among concepts related to copyright protection on social media. Subsequently, the researcher interpreted these findings by relating them to the applicable theoretical and regulatory frameworks. This analysis process also involved comparing various sources to gain a more comprehensive understanding and avoid bias in data interpretation.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the researcher applied source triangulation, which involves comparing information from various types of literature and different perspectives. In addition, the researcher also conducted a critical evaluation of each source used, including an assessment of the methods, arguments, and conclusions presented by previous authors. Consequently, the results of this study are expected to have a high level of reliability and to provide an accurate picture of copyright protection for digital content on TikTok. This approach also allows the researcher to identify research gaps that can serve as a basis for further studies in the fields of intellectual property law and digital media.

Result and Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the practice of reuploading and plagiarizing content on the TikTok platform is a fairly widespread and complex phenomenon. Based on an analysis of various literature and previous studies, it was found that the ease of

access and sharing features provided by the platform are among the main factors driving copyright infringement. TikTok allows users to quickly download, edit, and reupload content, either through official features or third-party applications. This situation creates a vast space for the unauthorized distribution of content, thereby blurring the line between inspiration, adaptation, and plagiarism. The practice of reuploading is not always carried out with malicious intent, but in many cases, such actions still violate fundamental principles of copyright. Many users assume that as long as content is publicly available on social media, it is free to be reused. This perception highlights a knowledge gap regarding the concept of ownership of digital works. In practice, reuploads are often done without crediting the original creator, and it is not uncommon for the person reuploading the content to even claim ownership. This, of course, harms the original creator, both morally and economically.

In the context of plagiarism, research findings show that these violations are not limited to reposting content in its entirety, but also include minor modifications to the original content, such as changing the music, adding filters, or other minor edits. Although the content may appear visually different, its substance still originates from someone else's work. Such practices are often difficult to detect, both by platform systems and by other users. Furthermore, TikTok's algorithm which prioritizes engagement over originality exacerbates this issue, as visually appealing content can still go viral even if it is not an original creation. From a regulatory perspective, the study's findings indicate that copyright protection for digital content is actually quite comprehensively addressed in various laws and regulations. However, implementation on the ground still faces various obstacles. One of the main obstacles is the borderless nature of social media, which makes legal jurisdiction unclear. Content uploaded to TikTok can be accessed by users from various countries, so when a violation occurs, the law enforcement process becomes more complex. Furthermore, the often unclear identity of the violators also poses a barrier to enforcement.

The study's findings also show that the protective mechanisms provided by TikTok such as the reporting feature and content moderation system have not been fully effective in addressing cases of reuploads and plagiarism. Many creators have complained that the reporting process takes a long time and does not always result in satisfactory action. In

some cases, reported content continues to circulate widely before it is finally removed, meaning the original creator has already suffered harm. Additionally, a lack of transparency in the report-handling process has led to dissatisfaction among users. On the other hand, collaborative features like “duet” and “stitch” also contribute to an increased risk of copyright infringement. Although these features are designed to encourage creativity and interaction among users, in practice they are often misused. Many users take advantage of these features to incorporate parts of others’ content without providing significant added value, making it closer to plagiarism than collaboration. This indicates that the line between legitimate use and copyright infringement is still not clearly understood by most users.

From the creators’ perspective, the research findings indicate a fairly strong sense of injustice regarding copyright protection on TikTok. Many creators feel that the platform prioritizes user growth and engagement over the protection of original works. This is evident in the lack of effective preventive mechanisms to stop reuploads from the outset. As a result, creators must actively monitor and report violations, which naturally requires additional time and effort. Furthermore, the economic impact of reuploading and plagiarism is also a key concern in this study. Content reuploaded by others has the potential to garner a larger number of views, likes, and followers compared to the original content. This results in a loss of monetization opportunities for the original creators, especially for those who rely on social media as a source of income. In the long term, this situation could hinder the growth of the digital creative industry by reducing incentives for individuals to produce original work.

The study’s findings also reveal that low digital literacy is one of the main factors contributing to the prevalence of copyright infringement on TikTok. Many users do not understand the difference between fair use and copyright infringement. Furthermore, a lack of education regarding the importance of respecting others’ work also exacerbates this issue. Therefore, efforts to improve digital literacy are crucial not only by the government and educational institutions but also by the platform itself. In further discussion, this study emphasizes the importance of a multidimensional approach to addressing copyright protection issues on social media. It is not enough to rely solely on legal regulations; an active role from both the platform and users is also necessary.

Platforms like TikTok need to develop more advanced technology to automatically detect and prevent copyright infringement. Furthermore, transparency in the process of handling reports must be improved to build trust among users.

From the users' perspective, a paradigm shift is needed in how digital content is viewed. Content can no longer be regarded as something that can be used freely and without limits, but rather as a work that holds value and is subject to ownership rights. Users need to understand that every piece of content produced by a creator is the result of a creative process that requires time and effort. Therefore, the use of others' content must be done with proper permission and recognition, such as by providing credit or engaging in formal collaboration. Furthermore, the government's role is also crucial in creating regulations that adapt to technological advancements. Existing regulations must be continuously updated to accommodate the dynamics of social media. Additionally, law enforcement must be strengthened to serve as a deterrent for violators. International cooperation is also key to addressing cross-border issues, ensuring that copyright protection can be enforced more effectively.

This study also found that there is a gap between existing regulations and practices on the ground. Although copyright protection is well-regulated in theory, in practice, many infringements still occur without significant consequences. This highlights the need to evaluate the effectiveness of existing regulations and to develop new mechanisms better suited to the characteristics of social media. Furthermore, it is important to foster a culture of appreciation for digital works. This culture can be built through education, campaigns, and real-life examples set by creators and influencers. As users become accustomed to valuing others' work, instances of plagiarism and unauthorized reuploads can be minimized. In this regard, the community also plays a vital role as an agent of change in creating a healthier digital environment.

Overall, the findings and discussion in this study indicate that copyright protection for digital content on TikTok still faces various challenges technical, legal, and social. Therefore, integrated efforts from various stakeholders are needed to address these issues. Through synergy among regulation, technology, and user awareness, it is hoped that copyright protection on social media can be more effective and support the sustainable development of the digital creative industry.

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that copyright protection for digital content on social media, particularly on the TikTok platform, still faces various significant challenges. The practices of reuploading and plagiarism have proven to be widespread and difficult to control, given the ease of access to technology and the nature of social media, which enables rapid and massive content distribution. Although copyright protection is normatively regulated by applicable laws, its implementation in practice has not been optimal. This indicates a gap between legal provisions and actual practices in the digital ecosystem. Furthermore, this study also confirms that low digital literacy and the public's limited understanding of copyright are major factors driving copyright infringement. Many users are unaware that reposting or modifying others' content without permission constitutes a form of copyright infringement. On the other hand, the culture of sharing on social media is often misinterpreted as unlimited freedom to use digital works. This situation is further exacerbated by a lack of education and minimal awareness of the importance of respecting others' work as part of digital ethics.

From the platform's perspective, the available protection mechanisms such as reporting systems and content moderation have not been fully effective in preventing or addressing violations. Features that encourage interaction and creativity, such as "duets" and "stitches," on the one hand provide opportunities for collaboration, but on the other hand also open the door to content misuse. Therefore, the development of more advanced technology, as well as stricter and more transparent policies, is needed to ensure that copyright protection can function more effectively in the social media environment. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive and collaborative approach to addressing copyright protection issues in the digital age. The government, platforms, and users all play equally important roles in creating a fair and sustainable digital ecosystem. Efforts to improve digital literacy, strengthen regulations, and ensure consistent law enforcement must be carried out simultaneously. In this way, it is hoped that the protection of digital works can be effectively realized, while also fostering the growth of creativity and innovation amid increasingly rapid technological advancements.

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