

# Aura Magrib: A Discourse Of Colorism In Social Media Conversations on TikTok

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## Abstract

The increasing circulation of the term “aura magrib” on TikTok reflects a growing trend of subtle discriminatory expressions toward darker skin tones (colorism) in Indonesian digital spaces, yet discourse-based studies examining this phenomenon remain limited. This study aims to analyze how the term “aura magrib” functions as a form of colorist discourse and how it is constructed, reproduced, and contested within TikTok content and user interactions. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach within a critical paradigm, using Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis framework that focuses on text, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice. Primary data were collected through content analysis of seven TikTok videos containing the term “aura magrib” and were further validated through interviews with individuals who have relevant personal experiences. The findings indicate that “aura magrib” operates as a symbolic and humorous expression that subtly reinforces stigma against darker skin tones through everyday language and TikTok’s creative features. Although often framed as a joke, the term carries implicit discriminatory meanings and perpetuates a hierarchy of skin color. The discourse surrounding “aura magrib” contributes to the normalization of colorism in digital culture despite instances of user resistance. Implications: The study highlights the need for greater critical awareness of discriminatory humor in social media and contributes theoretically to digital discourse studies and practically to anti-colorism advocacy efforts.

**Keywords:** TikTok, colorism, aura magrib, critical discourse analysis, digital discourse.

## INTRODUCTION

Colorism against darker skin tones remains embedded in everyday social experiences in Indonesia, shaping perceptions of beauty, self-worth, and social status. Studies have shown that individuals with darker skin are often subjected to stigmatizing labels and discriminatory treatment (Saraswati, 2017), while preferences for lighter skin continue to influence body satisfaction and self-esteem, particularly among women (Andytaputri, 2016; Sukisman & Utami, 2021). Historically, the construction of white or light skin as an ideal has

been reinforced through colonial legacies, mass media, and the global beauty industry (Saraswati, 2013; Jha, 2016). In contemporary Indonesia, social media platforms amplify these standards by circulating visual ideals and persuasive beauty narratives (Listyani et al., 2023; Izzati et al., 2025).

Recently, the viral use of the term “aura magrib” on TikTok has emerged as a new form of digital expression associated with mocking darker skin tones (Ayu, 2024). Although one study has examined the term “magrib” within offline educational contexts using a linguistic metaphor approach (Lakamau & Husein, 2025), there remains limited research analyzing how “aura magrib” operates as a discourse of colorism within digital interactions. This gap highlights the need to investigate how discriminatory meanings are produced, circulated, and contested on social media platforms with high user engagement, such as TikTok.

Accordingly, this study asks: How is the term “aura magrib” constructed and reproduced as a discourse of colorism on TikTok? How do TikTok users participate in sustaining or resisting this discourse? The objective of this research is to critically examine the textual features, discursive practices, and socio-cultural contexts surrounding the use of “aura magrib” in TikTok content. By applying Critical Discourse Analysis, this study contributes to the scholarship on digital media, colorism, and Indonesian socio-cultural studies, offering a contextualized understanding of how local terminology reflects and normalizes broader structures of inequality in online spaces.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using critical discourse analysis to examine the phenomenon of colorism in the use of the term “aura magrib” on TikTok in Indonesia. The object of the study consisted of TikTok content that explicitly used the term “aura magrib” and represented dark skin within particular narrative contexts. Content was selected based on three criteria: (1) direct relevance to colorism-related discourse, (2) high engagement levels (likes, comments, and shares), and (3) publication within the period of May 1, 2024 to May 23, 2025. Seven primary TikTok posts were determined as the main units of analysis, supported by additional posts that reflected different patterns of usage, including mockery, beauty promotion, resistance narratives, and self-deprecating expressions. As shown in Table 1, the selected contents represent variation in context and engagement levels, ensuring that the analysis captures different discursive patterns related to the term ‘aura magrib’.

**Table 1. List of Analyzed TikTok Contents**

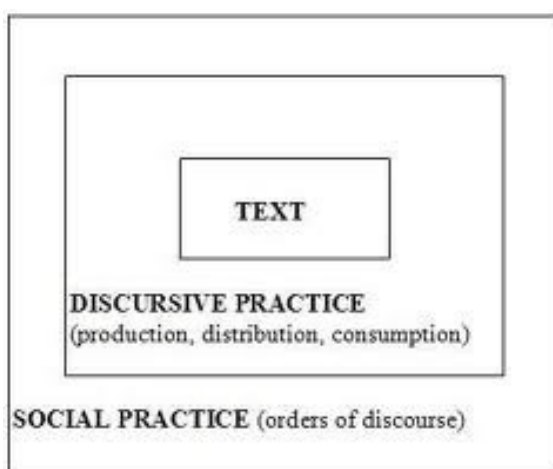
Content Code	Context of Usage
C1	Mockery toward dark skin
C2	Beauty comparison
C3	Self-labeling humor
C4	Comment-driven stigma

C5	Viral meme usage
C6	Counter-narrative/resistance
C7	

Source: Compiled by the author based on TikTok observation (2024–2025)

The subjects of the research were Indonesian TikTok users who produced and consumed content containing the term “aura magrib,” including content creators and audiences participating in the comment sections. Primary data were collected through direct observation on TikTok by searching specific keywords and monitoring the researcher’s For You Page (FYP). Documentation techniques were used to capture screenshots of videos, captions, comments, and visual-audio elements embedded in the posts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a linguistics expert and an active TikTok content creator to verify interpretations and enrich the analysis. Secondary data were gathered from academic literature, online media articles, and relevant digital content to contextualize the broader social dynamics surrounding the discourse.

Data analysis was conducted in three stages. First, textual analysis examined word choices, sentence structures, symbolic elements, visual presentation (including lighting and filters), audio components, and interaction patterns in captions and comments. Second, discourse practice analysis explored how the term “aura magrib” was produced, circulated, and consumed through TikTok’s interactive features such as comments, replies, stitches, and shares. Third, socio-cultural analysis interpreted the findings in relation to broader social contexts, including beauty standards, power relations, and digital cultural practices in Indonesia. The analysis was conducted inductively to generate a comprehensive understanding of how colorism discourse is constructed and reproduced within Indonesian TikTok environments.



Source: Norman Fairclough, 2001

**Figure 1. Three Dimensional Model (Norman Fairclough)**

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that the term “aura magrib” operates as a coded linguistic expression that implicitly refers to dark skin tone while avoiding explicit racial labeling. Across the analyzed TikTok contents, the term appeared in captions, spoken dialogue, and particularly in comment sections as a humorous yet evaluative label. Although the word “aura” conventionally relates to personality or atmosphere, in practice the expression consistently pointed to physical appearance, especially darker skin complexion. This indicates a discursive transformation in which overt derogatory references are replaced by indirect, socially camouflaged language. Humor functions as a protective frame that allows discriminatory meaning to circulate while maintaining plausible deniability. Rather than eliminating color-based hierarchy, the platform environment reshapes it into subtle aesthetic judgment embedded in everyday digital interaction. This finding suggests that contemporary colorism in Indonesian TikTok culture is reproduced through euphemistic and memetic language that appears playful but carries hierarchical implications.

The circulation of the term is closely intertwined with TikTok’s participatory and algorithmic structure. High engagement levels, including repeated comments, replies, and stitches, contributed to the stabilization and normalization of the expression within shared digital vocabulary. Repetition in comment sections functioned not merely as interaction but as collective validation, reinforcing a common understanding of the term’s implied meaning. The algorithmic visibility system intensified this process by amplifying content that generated emotional and social reaction. Although the platform does not independently create discriminatory discourse, its engagement-driven architecture facilitates the rapid diffusion of socially resonant narratives. As a result, colorism becomes embedded not only in individual expression but also in technological mediation. The findings therefore highlight the interplay between user practices and platform infrastructure in sustaining discriminatory discourse within digital environments.

User responses reveal a dynamic process of reinforcement, internalization, and resistance. Many comments reproduced negative associations between dark skin and reduced attractiveness, reinforcing dominant beauty standards that privilege lighter complexions. In several instances, users adopted self-deprecating humor by labeling themselves with the term, illustrating internalized colorism. While such practices may function as coping strategies within a socially evaluative environment, they simultaneously reproduce the hierarchy they appear to mock. This pattern aligns with existing research on colorism, which argues that marginalized individuals may unconsciously adopt dominant aesthetic norms as a strategy of adaptation. However, the data also show instances of counter-discourse in which creators reframed dark skin as confident, aesthetically valuable, and culturally meaningful. These responses demonstrate that digital space is not solely a site of oppression but also a space of negotiation where dominant narratives can be contested.

Overall, the findings indicate that “aura magrib” functions as a contemporary discursive mechanism through which colorism is reproduced and negotiated within Indonesian TikTok culture. The term operates simultaneously as symbolic language, memetic practice, and algorithmically amplified discourse. By situating colorism within platform-mediated interaction, this study contributes to communication and digital culture scholarship by demonstrating how discriminatory ideology adapts linguistically within participatory media environments. The research underscores that inequality persists not only through explicit hostility but also through normalized humor, aesthetic evaluation, and repeated digital circulation. At the same time, the presence of resistance suggests emerging critical awareness, indicating that the digital sphere remains a contested terrain in which beauty standards and racialized hierarchies are continuously reconstructed.

## CONCLUSION

This study finds that the use of the term “aura magrib” in TikTok content in Indonesia reflects a contemporary form of colorism that is reproduced and normalized through digital interaction. Using Fairclough’s three-dimensional critical discourse analysis, the findings show that linguistic choices, visual elements, audio, and humorous presentation on TikTok work together to frame dark skin as an inferior identity, even when expressed through irony or entertainment. At the level of discursive practice, the spread of this term is closely linked to TikTok’s algorithm, viral culture, and user participation. At the socio-cultural level, the discourse is shaped by long-standing colorist values, gender bias, and the influence of popular media and the beauty industry. These findings directly address the research objective and research questions by explaining how colorism is produced, circulated, and contested through the use of “aura magrib” on TikTok.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the relevance of critical discourse analysis for examining discriminatory practices in digital media and highlights the role of social media platforms in sustaining power relations related to skin color. Practically, the findings point to the need for greater critical awareness among social media users and content creators regarding the impact of seemingly humorous but discriminatory expressions. This study is limited by its focus on content analysis without incorporating the lived experiences of creators and audiences, as well as its concentration on a single platform. Future research may address these limitations by involving interviews or group discussions, expanding analysis to other platforms, and examining how colorism is experienced across different social and cultural contexts. The content of the conclusion should be the answer to the question and research objectives. Conclusions are presented in one paragraph, without bullet and alphabetical points. The conclusion chapter should not be expressed in statistical sentences and give suggestion for the future research.

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