

## **Performing Minority Identity: Storytelling Practices Of Indonesian Migrant Caregivers On Tiktok**

**Jihan Farida Putri**

Program Studi Ilmu Komunikasi, Universitas Telkom, 40257, Bandung, Indonesia,

[jihanfarida@student.telkomuniversity.ac.id](mailto:jihanfarida@student.telkomuniversity.ac.id)

**Maylanny Christin\***

Program Studi Ilmu Komunikasi, Universitas Telkom, 40257, Bandung, Indonesia,

[maylannychristin@telkomuniversity.ac.id](mailto:maylannychristin@telkomuniversity.ac.id)

### **Abstract**

This study aims to analyze how Indonesian migrant caregivers in Japan construct and perform their minority identities through storytelling practices on TikTok. It also explores the extent to which these representations open up opportunities for the emergence of micro-celebrities in the digital space. Previous studies have tended to position migrant workers as objects of structural analysis, thus remaining limited in explaining how they actively encode, negotiate, and represent their lived experiences through self-produced narratives on social media. To address this gap, this study employs a qualitative approach using Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) on ten TikTok videos produced by Indonesian migrant caregivers, with thematic analysis assisted by NVivo software. The findings identify seven main themes: emotional burden, occupational risks, workplace realities, self-regulation, workplace relationship dynamics, communication barriers, and personal growth. Through the lens of Stuart Hall's theory of representation, these narratives reflect dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings. Digital storytelling functions not only as a medium for self-expression but also as a strategic performative practice that generates authenticity capital, reinforces niche identity, and builds parasocial bonds with the audience. This study contributes to expanding communication research on performative minority identity at the intersection of digital storytelling, platform visibility, and migrant workers' self-representation.

***Keywords:** Indonesian Migrant Caregiver, Digital Storytelling, Performative Minority Identity, Tiktok, Microcelebrity*

## 1. Introduction

Population migration is an ongoing social phenomenon that is becoming increasingly multidimensional. As a social reality, migration has played a significant role in shaping human civilization over time (Madaminovich et al., 2025). Migration is generally driven by the desire to move to another region in search of a better life; the primary causes are poverty, a lack of job opportunities, and low wages (Nurhidayati, 2021).

Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Migrant Workers Protection (2025) indicates that the placement of Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) totalled 297,434 people, an increase of 0.11% compared to the previous year. Geographically, PMI placements are distributed across various countries, with five (5) primary destinations.

**Table 1.** Placement of Indonesian Migrant Workers by Country  
Sources: KP2MI (2025)

No	Host Country	2024	2025	Percentage
1.	Taiwan	84.581	89.960	30,29%
2.	Hongkong	99.773	76.157	25,65%
3.	Malaysia	51.723	54.434	18,33%
4.	Jepang	12.719	19.970	6,73%
5.	Singapura	10.819	15.621	5,26%

As shown in Table 1, Japan ranks among the top five destination countries for migrant workers. This is driven by challenges related to the care of the elderly. Demographic shifts marked by a surge in the elderly population and a decline in birth rates, have created a labor shortage (Srimulyani et al., 2022). This phenomenon has created job opportunities for migrant workers.

**Table 2.** Top 5 Jobs of Indonesian Migrant Workers  
Sources: KP2MI (2025)

No	Host Country	2024	2025	Percentage
1.	House Maid	100.096	76.773	25,85%
2.	Caregiver	52.029	53.574	18,04%
3.	Plantation Worker	20.665	27.828	9,37%
4.	Worker	22.527	17.250	5,81%
5.	Domestic Worker	4.669	14.466	4,87%
6.	Other Jobs	97.446	107.057	36,05%

According to Table 2, the caregiver sector is projected to grow by 2,97% by 2025, indicating that it is one of the dominant sectors for the placement of Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) (KP2MI, 2025). The high employment opportunities in the caregiver sector in Japan are driven by various motivations that encourage individuals to choose to become Indonesian migrant workers (PMI).

These motivations create expectations regarding working conditions in the destination country. Migrant workers who depart with strong economic motivations tend to have a higher tolerance for work-related stress in order to maintain their income (Anggara et al., 2024). In reality, these expectations do not always align with the reality faced on the ground. Ladegaard (2025) reveals that migrant workers often face harsh working conditions, ranging from exploitation and verbal abuse to psychological trauma with long-term effects.

Similar challenges are also found more specifically in the context of caregiving. Sever & Tiryaki (2025) explain that female migrant workers in the caregiving sector face complex emotional burdens, including discrimination, loneliness due to being far from family, heavy physical strain, and the demands of emotional labor that are often unrecognized. However, that study covered migrant workers from the Philippines and Mongolia, so the specific experiences of Indonesian migrant workers as a distinct group within the caregiving sector in Japan have not been deeply explored. Research by Asis & Carandang (2020) identified six main themes of stressors: relationships with co-workers, language barriers, work-life balance, health concerns, the physical environment, and relationships with patients.

This workplace challenge was confirmed by one Indonesian migrant caregiver, as follows:

*“The work environment here is shaped by what’s called the *Tatemaie* culture. If you make a mistake, they (native Japanese workers) immediately badmouth you behind your back. Seniority is highly valued, and we’re a minority here. Some things aren’t like how people frame them on TikTok.”*

The experience shared by one Indonesian migrant caregiver reflects a pattern of vulnerability systematically experienced by migrant workers and ethnic minorities. Migrant and Ethnic Minority (MEM) groups face various structural challenges, including uncertain migration status, language and cultural barriers, limited control over working conditions, and fear of superiors that reinforces their marginalized position (van Selm et al., 2025). Minorities themselves are social groups whose presence is

sometimes seen as a contradiction because they differ from the majority group in society (Wibowo & Sukardani, 2023).

Awareness of this minority status is not only felt on a personal level, but is also openly expressed through social media. Nasrullah as cited in (Siregar, 2022) defines social media as a tool or platform for users to form social bonds. Various social media platforms allow users to be not only recipients of information, but also producers of information (user-generated content) capable of shaping public opinion (Syah et al., 2025). A number of Indonesian migrant caregivers in Japan actively share their experiences through social media platforms.

The social media platform used by Indonesian migrant caregivers in Japan to share their stories is TikTok. TikTok is an app launched in September 2016 by Zhang Yiming. It is a social media platform that offers a variety of unique and engaging features, making it easy for users to create creative short videos that have the potential to attract a large audience (Yuliana et al., 2023). TikTok is capable of reaching audiences quickly, interactively, and in line with trends emerging among social media users. TikTok, which was initially popular only among teenagers, has now evolved into an educational platform that appeals to people of all ages (Retnasary & Fitriawati, 2022). This shift in function indicates a change in the use of TikTok as a medium for conveying informative and persuasive messages. The use of TikTok by Indonesian migrant caregivers not only reflects adaptation to developments in digital technology, but also indicates a shift in patterns of self-representation in the virtual public sphere.

To understand how self-representation is constructed and interpreted in a media context. A conceptual framework is needed that can explain the relationship between identity, meaning, and communication practices. In this regard, the ideas of Stuart Hall, a cultural and media theorist, are particularly relevant. Representation theory adopts a constructivist approach, which posits that meaning is constructed through language (Yuwono, 2021). Furthermore, Hall identifies three ways of decoding messages: *dominant reading*, *negotiated reading*, and *oppositional reading* (Iswara & Moerdisuroso, 2022). In the context of Indonesian migrant caregivers, these three reading positions are reflected in how they present themselves to digital audiences.

One of the predominant methods used in this representational process is storytelling. In communication practice, storytelling serves as a narrative approach that enables audiences to express their identities more effectively (Widianingsih & Cahyani, 2020). The development of communication and information technology has also brought changes to storytelling practices, which have now evolved into digital storytelling. Digital storytelling offers

high flexibility in its delivery. The formats used can vary according to the communicator's objectives and the characteristics of the target audience, ranging from educational, argumentative, and narrative approaches to contemplative ones focused on self-reflection (Drajat & Purnama, 2020).

Lambert's Digital Storytelling Cookbook explains how digital storytelling (DST) is applied in the practice of creating short personal narratives using visual and audio elements (Chan & Sage, 2021). Lambert (2010) outlines seven stages in the practice of DST: *owning insights, owning emotions, finding the moment, seeing the story, hearing it, assembling it, and sharing it* (Chan & Sage, 2021).

Various studies have documented the motivations and challenges faced, such as:

- 1) Understanding The Motivations of Being Indonesian Migrant Workers by Anggara et al. (2024) regarding the motivations that drive individuals to work abroad
- 2) Trauma, Extreme Humiliation, and Coping Strategies in Migrant Domestic Workers' Storytelling: Linguistic and Psychological Perspectives by Ladegaard (2025) regarding the challenges of exploitation and psychological trauma in the destination country
- 3) Emotional Labor, Conflicting Caregiving Responsibilities and Resilience Among Foreign Female Caregivers in Japan: A Photovoice Study by Sever & Tiryaki (2025) regarding the emotional burden and discrimination experienced specifically within Japan's caregiving sector
- 4) The Plight of Migrant Care Workers In Japan: A Qualitative Study of Their Stressors on Caregiving by Asis & Carandang, (2020) regarding minority groups within a structurally dominant system
- 5) Occupational Heat Stress Among Migrant and Ethnic Minority Outdoor Workers: A Scoping Review by van Selm et al. (2025) regarding migrant and ethnic minority workers

However, that research treated the experiences of migrant workers as the subject of structural analysis. No research has yet examined how these work experiences are transformed into public performances on social media, particularly TikTok. Based on this gap, this study aims to explore:

- 1) How do Indonesian migrant caregivers in Japan construct and represent their minority identities through digital storytelling practices on TikTok?
- 2) Does this self-representation encourage Indonesian migrant caregivers to transform into microcelebrity in the digital space?

This study adopts a qualitative approach through content analysis of TikTok videos produced by Indonesian migrant caregivers in Japan.

## 2. Method

This study employs Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) as a method for analysing qualitative data at both the manifest and latent levels, enabling researchers to comprehensively understand and identify meaningful patterns within the data (Heydarikhayat et al., 2024; Tremblett et al., 2023). In line with the objectives of QCA described by Tremblett et al. (2023), namely “*to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study*” through the processes of coding, categorization, description, and exploration of patterns in the data. Furthermore, (Heydarikhayat et al., 2024) emphasize that “*the purpose of qualitative research is to understand phenomena and ask ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions,*” enabling QCA to articulate concepts more deeply based on participants’ experiences. Thus, QCA is the appropriate methodological choice for addressing this research question through the identification, categorization, and interpretation of content.

In determining the corpus data, this study uses a mixed-methods framework designed by Andreotta et al. for social media research, which consists of four phases: (1) Harvest social media and compile a corpus, (2) Use data science techniques to compress the corpus along a dimension of relevance, (3) Extract a subset of data from the most relevant parts of the corpus, (4) Perform a qualitative analysis on this corpus of data (Ayton et al., 2023). As for determining an appropriate sample size, this study refers to the principle of information power, whereby sample size is determined not by quantity but by the quality and depth of information obtained from each data unit (Tremblett et al., 2023).

The corpus data was collected based on the criteria set forth in the following table:

**Table 3.** Data Collection Criteria  
Source: Authors’ analysis

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>
Keyword	Caregiver, Caregiver Jepang, Kaigo, PMI Jepang
Hastag	#Kaigo #Caregiver #CaregiverJepang #LifeInJapan
Language	Indonesia
Duration	30 seconds – 5 minutes
Engagement	Receive > 50 likes

Inclusion Criteria	First-person narrative content about work or life experiences as an Indonesian migrant caregiver in Japan
--------------------	---

---

The data analysis process utilized thematic analysis. Braun & Clarke (2006) explain that thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique aimed at exploring patterns and themes (Slamet et al., 2025). The stages of thematic analysis outlined by Braun & Clarke are described in (Slamet et al., 2025) as follows:

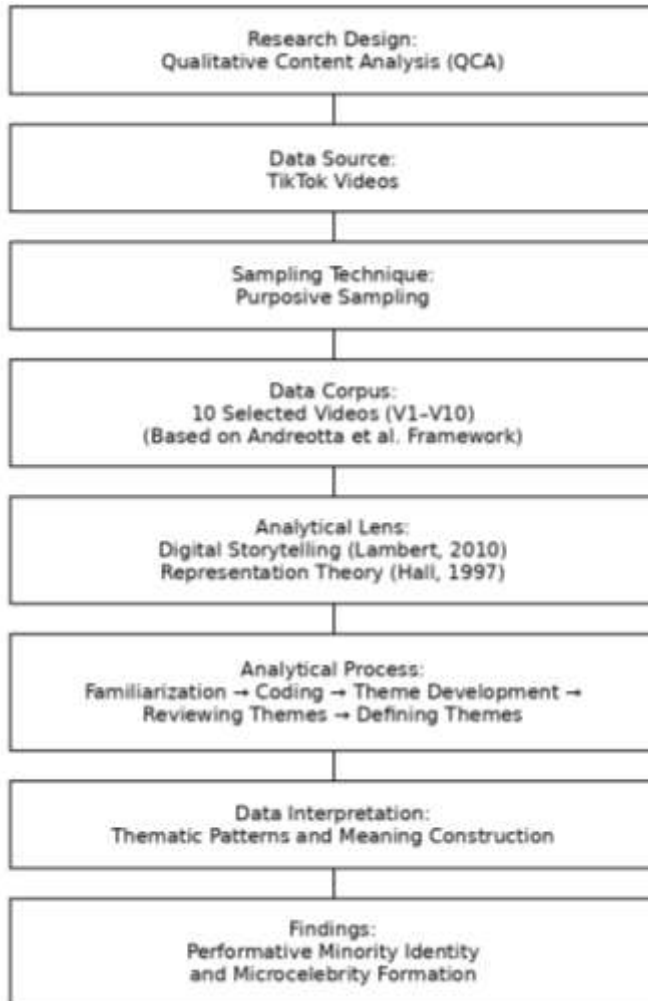
- 1) Familiarization
- 2) Initial Coding
- 3) Searching for Themes
- 4) Reviewing Themes
- 5) Defining and Naming Themes
- 6) Producing the Report

Data analysis in this study was facilitated by NVivo software. NVivo is qualitative data analysis software developed to organize, analyse, and identify patterns and meanings contained in unstructured data (Allsop et al., 2022).

This study analyses TikTok video content publicly posted by Indonesian migrant caregivers in Japan. The data used consists of publicly available user-generated content. Furthermore, this study does not involve direct interaction with participants and does not require formal informed consent. This aligns with the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR) guidelines, which emphasize that ethical decision-making is contextual (case-by-case) and depends on the nature of the platform, user expectations, and the sensitivity of the topic under study (Franzke et al., 2020)

Nevertheless, this study adheres to the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report (1979), namely *respect for persons, beneficence, and justice* (Franzke et al., 2020). First, to protect the subjects' privacy, this study does not identify specific accounts. Quoted content is paraphrased or anonymized to minimize the risk of re-identification (Harrington, 2025). Second, the researcher acknowledges that although videos are publicly uploaded, content creators do not always anticipate that their content will become the subject of academic analysis. Therefore, the researchers must be careful in presenting the findings so as not to harm the subjects (Franzke et al., 2020). Third, the topic under study demands a higher level of sensitivity compared to general topics. Therefore, the researchers are committed to not exploiting or exacerbating narratives that could reinforce stigma against the subjects and the subject matter (Harrington, 2025).

To ensure the validity of this qualitative study, the researcher referred to the four criteria of trustworthiness developed by Lincoln & Guba (1985), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Nowell et al., 2017). In addition to ensuring the validity of the study, the determination of the sample size in this study was not based on statistical representativeness. Rather, it was based on the sufficiency of information to answer the research questions. This study analyzed 10 TikTok videos selected purposively based on the criteria set forth in Table 3. All videos consist of first-person narratives in Indonesian-by-Indonesian migrant caregivers in Japan. Ensuring that each data unit is information-rich and directly relevant to the research focus. The process of adding videos was halted when initial analysis indicated that no new themes or patterns were emerging from subsequent videos; this condition is methodologically known as data saturation (Saunders et al., 2018).



**Figure 1.** Research Flowchart  
Source: Authors' analysis

### 3. Results

The following section presents the findings of the analysis conducted on ten TikTok videos (V1–V10) as outlined in **Table 5**.

**Table 5.** Research Corpus Data  
Source: Authors' analysis

No	Account	Label	Duration	Engagement
1.	@ayosep_ <a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9S6jnNh/">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9S6jnNh/</a>	V1	1:48	710 likes
2.	@lu.qi	V2	2:28	143 likes

	<a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9MtVShd/">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9MtVShd/</a>			
3.	@ayosep_ <a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9S6Jcjf/">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9S6Jcjf/</a>	V3	0:56	52 likes
4.	@romaida.sihombing <a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9S62y1g/">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9S62y1g/</a>	V4	5:14	6.690 likes
5.	@unf00und_ <a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9S6Yen2/">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9S6Yen2/</a>	V5	3:09	477 likes
6.	@luq.mans2_ <a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9RbaJ9g/">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9RbaJ9g/</a>	V6	1:48	2.537 likes
7.	@calvin_karu <a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9RbbyKP/">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9RbbyKP/</a>	V7	1:54	3.333 likes
8.	@calvin_karu <a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9RbGjeW/">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9RbGjeW/</a>	V8	3:11	3.565 likes
9.	@mamamumujp <a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9RbgQ4V/">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS9RbgQ4V/</a>	V9	0:58	3.538 likes
10.	@wawan_siagian <a href="https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS96Vpgsp/">https://vt.tiktok.com/ZS96Vpgsp/</a>	V10	3:17	38.6K likes

The findings of this study were obtained through a thematic Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) of ten TikTok videos (V1–V10) using NVivo software. Through the stages of open coding and categorization, this study identified seven main themes representing Indonesian migrant caregivers. The distribution of the seven themes across V1–V10 is presented in Figure 2 as follows.

	EMOTIONAL BURDEN	OCCUPATIONAL RISK	WORKPLACE REALITIES	SELF REGULATION	WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIP DYNAMIC	COMMUNICATION BARRIERS	PERSONAL GROWTH	TOTAL
V1	33,33%	66,67%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
V10	0%	33,33%	16,67%	16,67%	0%	16,67%	16,67%	100%
V2	14,29%	0%	42,86%	0%	0%	14,29%	28,57%	100%
V3	50%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
V4	0%	11,11%	22,22%	44,44%	11,11%	0%	11,11%	100%
V5	45,45%	0%	0%	0%	54,55%	0%	0%	100%
V6	22,22%	0%	11,11%	33,33%	22,22%	11,11%	0%	100%
V7	0%	0%	0%	40%	0%	40%	20%	100%
V8	33,33%	41,67%	16,67%	0%	0%	0%	8,33%	100%
V9	20%	60%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	100%
TOTAL	22,54%	18,31%	15,49%	14,08%	12,68%	8,45%	8,45%	100%

**Figure 2.** Theme Distribution Based on an NVivo *Crosstab Query*  
Source: Authors' analysis

Based on Figure 2, the seven themes are distributed unevenly across the videos, with an overall total that is not evenly distributed. The theme of Emotional Burden was recorded as the most dominant theme, followed by Occupational Risks, Work Reality, Self-Regulation, and Work Relationship Dynamics. Meanwhile, Communication Barriers and Personal Growth were the themes that appeared least frequently. This pattern indicates that the discourse constructed in the TikTok videos (V1–V10) themed around work experiences touches more on emotional and risk dimensions than on aspects of self-development. The seven themes are discussed in detail below.

### **3.1 Emotional Burden**

Emotional burden is the most dominant theme in this research corpus. It has a total mean of 22.54% and was identified in seven videos (V1, V2, V3, V5, V6, V8, V9). This theme encompasses expressions of psychological stress, affective exhaustion, and situations that require intensive emotional management in the work of caregivers.

The emotional burden depicted in these videos varies. It ranges from stress stemming from the nature of the work itself to stress caused by interpersonal relationships in the workplace. V1 describes “concerns” felt not only by the workers, but also by family members and 施設 (*Shisetsu*). V2 reveals emotional burdens in a more subtle way, namely feelings of stagnation and lack of growth despite working in a relatively relaxed environment. V3 explicitly states that migrant caregivers require emotional management skills because they deal directly with elderly people who experience “*mood swings*” and emphasizes that an inability to manage this will lead to stress.

In line with this, V5 describes how a heavy workload feels even heavier when coworkers do not contribute fairly, leading to feelings of “*working alone*” and resentment. V6 expresses a sense of helplessness when receiving criticism that cannot be refuted, describing this as “*the hardest part of Kaigo.*” An even heavier burden is evident in V8, who recounts a traumatic experience that caused her body to shake and triggered immediate stress, as well as in V9, who expresses sadness after being bitten by an elderly person under her care.

Overall, the theme of emotional burden illustrates that Kaigo work places Indonesian migrant caregivers under high affective demands. Whether chronic or situational. This theme is part of the performativity of minority identity, where Indonesian migrant caregivers consciously

construct and present their emotional experiences as a form of identity negotiation in digital spaces.

### **3.2 Occupational Risks**

Workplace risks were identified as the second most common theme, with a total mean of 18.31%. They were found in five videos (V1, V4, V8, V9, V10). This theme encompasses various forms of physical and legal risks faced by Indonesian migrant caregivers in carrying out their daily work responsibilities.

The risks emerging in this corpus are divided into two main dimensions. First, physical risks directly related to the safety of both the worker and the patient. V4 depicts the potential for serious injury to a patient due to a minor oversight during patient transfer. Meanwhile, V9 recounts an experience of being pulled and bitten by a patient infected with MRSA. V10 recounts a hygiene-related situation during a patient's diaper change that resulted in contamination.

Second, legal risks arise when a patient's death leads to legal consequences for the worker. V1 and V8 both describe experiences of police interrogation following a patient's death under their care. V8 even details facing pressure from the family to perform an autopsy.

The disclosure of these risks in the public space of TikTok reflects the performativity of minority identities. Indonesian migrant caregivers actively showcase the vulnerabilities and dangers they face. This serves as a strategy to assert their presence and experiences, which are often invisible in society.

### **3.3 Workplace Realities**

Work realities were identified in six videos (V2, V3, V4, V6, V8, V10) with a total mean of 15.49%. This theme encompasses the creators' depictions of actual working conditions, intended to reflect what is truly happening on the ground.

The work realities revealed in this corpus fall into two categories. First, realities related to seniority dynamics in the workplace. V6 depicts how junior workers can only remain silent when lectured by colleagues or superiors who believe they are always right. An unwritten hierarchy that feels very real. V4 and V10 explicitly state that their content is intended as a guide for prospective workers, implicitly positioning them as figures with a responsibility to provide direction. Second, the reality of unexpected situational risks within work routines. V2 mentions the workload stemming from the number of patients in a single shift. Meanwhile, V8 recounts how an ordinary moment like breakfast can lead to a patient's death. This demonstrates that in the field of caregiving (Kaigo), the line between routine and crisis is extremely thin.

This pattern reveals that narratives of work reality are not neutral. Through their construction as experienced insiders, the creators actively negotiate the stigma of a job often viewed with disdain. Simultaneously, they assert their authority as migrant workers who have “*survived*.” This constitutes a form of performative minority identity that uses experience as a source of legitimacy in the digital space.

### **3.4 Self Regulation**

Self-control was identified in four videos (V4, V6, V7, V10) with a total mean of 14.08%. This theme encompasses Kaigo workers’ efforts to manage their emotional responses and behavior amid work situations that trigger frustration, whether stemming from patients or coworkers.

Self-control in this corpus appears in two forms. First, self-control toward patients. V4 describes how an elderly patient twisted his hand and pulled on his shirt. However, he could not resist due to the demands of professionalism, as he stated, “I must be patient; I must be professional.” In V10, a similar situation arises when the caregiver must remain calm while a patient interferes with a care procedure involving a sensitive area. Second, self-control toward coworkers. V6 bluntly states that the hardest part of Kaigo is not the physical labor, but restraining oneself from hitting an annoying coworker. This statement is laden with frustration, yet concludes with an awareness of the consequences. V7 wraps up this theme by emphasizing that extra patience and gratitude are the primary tools for surviving in Kaigo work.

This expression of self-control is not merely a personal reflection. Rather, it is the affective capacity of Indonesian migrant caregivers as an added value. By displaying the ability to exercise self-restraint in public, the creators indirectly construct a self-image as resilient and dignified workers amidst working conditions that are often demeaning.

### **3.5 Workplace Relationship Dynamic**

Dynamics of work relationships were identified in three videos (V4, V5, V6) with a total mean of 12.68%. This theme encompasses the complexity of relationships among workers. Both horizontal relationships among staff members and hierarchical relationships between supervisors and senior staff.

The dynamics of work relationships frequently appearing in this corpus reveal two interrelated patterns. First, the imbalance in workload between Indonesian migrant caregivers and local workers. V5 voiced complaints after working for over a year, highlighting that not all Japanese coworkers were willing to contribute fairly. She notes, “Some just sit around and give orders,” while the team’s work still had to be completed. V6 experienced something similar as a new or junior employee; she was

constantly told to handle tasks that should have been done by two people, while her colleagues merely wandered around without contributing.

Second, power dynamics that have the potential to trigger open conflict. V4 recounts a moment when he lost control and slapped the leg of a disrespectful patient. An action that marked the boundary between professionalism and a human response to treatment that crossed the line. V6 also revealed that behind daily interactions, there is a culture of gossip among Japanese coworkers. This, of course, creates its own form of pressure that isn't immediately apparent.

The revelation of these workplace dynamics reflects a performative minority identity that is confrontational in nature. The creators do not merely recount the injustices they have experienced. They also openly position themselves as agents capable of recognizing, naming, and even challenging the unequal power structures in their workplaces.

### **3.6 Communication Barriers**

Communication barriers were identified in five videos (V2, V6, V7, V9, V10), with a total mean of 8.45%. This theme encompasses the challenges faced by Indonesian migrant caregivers in communicating. Both with patients and coworkers, which stem primarily from limited Japanese language proficiency.

Communication barriers in this corpus manifest in two dimensions. First, language barriers in daily work interactions. V7 openly admits that at the beginning of her employment, she did not understand the language. This was a significant challenge, given that the role of a caregiver (Kaigo) relies heavily on verbal communication. V6 highlights another aspect of this barrier: her inability to speak the language left her powerless to defend herself when being scolded. Thus, they chose to remain silent, not because they agreed but due to language limitations. Conversely, V2 views this obstacle as an opportunity. They mention that working in Kaigo actually serves as a means to develop communication skills.

Second, communication barriers stemming from the patients' conditions. V9 and V10 faced situations where communication with patients could not proceed normally due to the patients' declining cognitive abilities. Consequently, workers had to rely on coordination with other colleagues to complete care tasks.

The articulation of these communication barriers reveals how language limitations serve as a tangible marker of minority status. However, by openly sharing these experiences in digital spaces, the creators transform this weakness into a narrative that strengthens their identity. Becoming figures of Indonesian migrant caregivers who continue to adapt and grow.

### **3.7 Personal Growth**

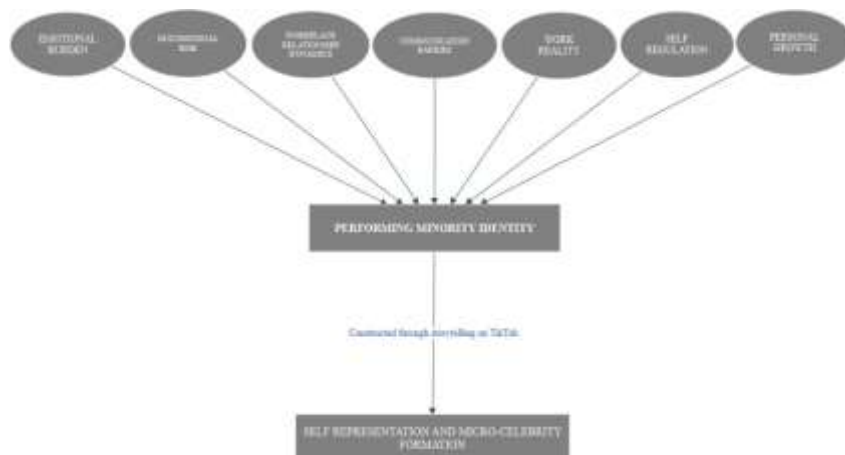
Personal growth was identified in five videos (V2, V4, V7, V8, V10) with a total mean of 8.45%. This makes it the theme with the fewest occurrences, alongside communication barriers. This theme encompasses the reflections of Indonesian migrant caregivers on the development they have experienced while working, both professionally and personally.

The personal growth expressed in this corpus takes several forms. V2 mentions that the move to the “Rouken” facility opened up many new things to learn and provided a space to enhance their potential as Kaigo workers. V7 observes that their Japanese language skills improved naturally alongside the intensity of communication in their daily work. V10 describes growth that is more psychological in nature. This creator mentions that unpleasant situations, such as changing a patient’s diaper, are now accepted as “routine.” This normalization marks the adaptation process they have undergone while working in Kaigo. V4 encourages viewers to learn from others’ experiences before deciding whether to continue or not. Meanwhile, V8 concludes their traumatic story by opening a space for sharing among fellow workers who have experienced similar situations.

The narratives of personal growth in these videos are not merely reflective. This is a storytelling strategy used to represent minority identities. By presenting themselves as individuals who have undergone a real transformation, the creators stage their life experiences as narratives worthy of being shared and heard in the digital space.

## **4. Discussion**

The findings of this study cannot be interpreted merely as workplace grievances. The seven identified themes reflect the active process by which Indonesian migrant caregivers encode their experiences into TikTok content. Stuart Hall’s theory of representation asserts that meaning is not naturally inherent in an object but is actively constructed through language and practices of signification (Iswara & Moerdisuroso, 2022; Yuwono, 2021). Through this framework, the encoding process carried out by Indonesian migrant caregivers on TikTok can be analyzed through three interpretive positions. Namely, dominant reading, negotiated reading, and oppositional reading (Iswara & Moerdisuroso, 2022).



**Figure 3.** Concept Map Codes  
Source: Authors' analysis (NVivo)

Dominant reading is evident in narratives that confirm the general perception of caregiver work as arduous and high-risk. V4 explicitly warns prospective workers about serious physical risks. This narrative operates within a dominant logic that portrays Indonesian migrant caregivers as a vulnerable group. This is consistent with Ladegaard (2025) findings that migrant workers often face working conditions that are physically and psychologically high-risk. However, analytically speaking, V4 does not merely reproduce victim narratives. The creator of V4 positions themselves as an experienced insider who has the right to correct the framing of the narrative on TikTok. This is an action that demonstrates meta-narrative awareness regarding the construction of representation itself.

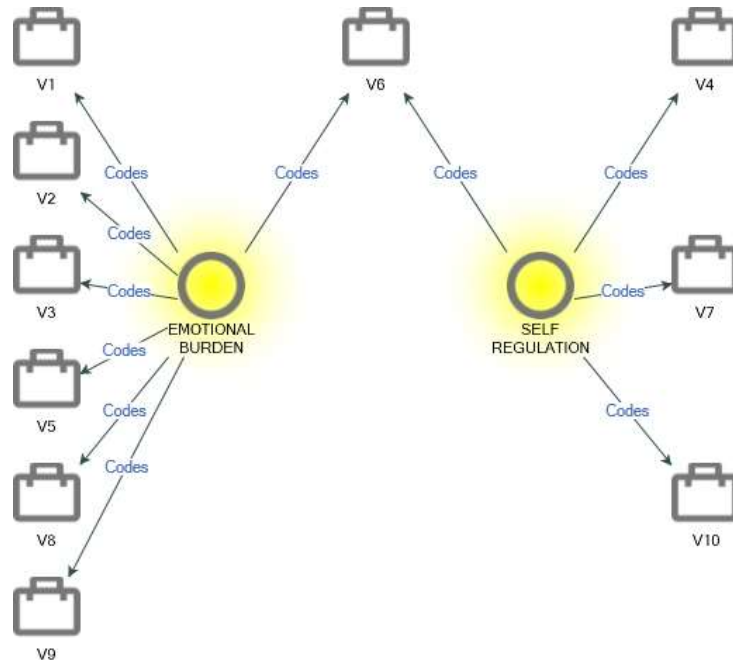
More analytically complex is the position of “negotiated reading,” in which the creator neither fully rejects nor accepts the dominant narrative, but rather negotiates between the two. V2 explicitly acknowledges the burden of work, including feelings of stagnation and hindered personal growth. However, this narrative does not stop at merely acknowledging these difficulties. Simultaneously, the creator positions the move to the *Rouken* facility as a concrete opportunity to enhance their capabilities. This type of narrative construction indicates a dual awareness within the creator, acknowledging their marginal position while simultaneously rejecting the internalization of an identity as a victim. Hall identifies that in a negotiated reading position, communicators operate with adaptive logic. In this framework, the dominant framework is generally accepted, but exceptions are made to accommodate their specific social conditions. (Iswara & Moerdisuroso, 2022).

A similar pattern emerges when V2 frames language barriers not as a limiting factor, but rather as a means of developing communication skills. Yet structurally, language barriers are one of the most consistent variables weakening migrant workers' bargaining power in the destination country (van Selm et al., 2025). It is this transformation that analytically distinguishes negotiated reading from simple optimism. The creators recognize the structural inequalities surrounding their position, yet actively refuse to let them become the endpoint of their identity construction.

The most explicit oppositional reading is evident in V6, who directly identifies the "*Tatema*" culture and the practice of gossiping among Japanese coworkers as sources of hidden stress. V6 states that the hardest part of being a caregiver is not the physical labor. Rather, it is restraining oneself from confronting annoying coworkers. Within Hall's framework, this constitutes a form of resistance against the hegemonic code that requires migrant workers to be compliant and non-confrontational (Iswara & Moerdisuroso, 2022). By publicizing this resistance through TikTok, V6 is not merely telling a story but actively positioning itself as a subject capable of recognizing and naming unequal relational structures. This aligns with the argument that social media enables marginalized groups to transition from information recipients to narrative producers who shape public opinion (Syah et al., 2025).

#### **4.1 Storytelling as a Representation Practice of Indonesian Migrant Caregivers**

Lambert (2010) describes the seven elements of digital storytelling (DST) as overlapping processes within a single narrative production (Chan & Sage, 2021). Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of codes across videos in this corpus, revealing two dominant clusters. Namely, Emotional Burden and Self-Regulation, which serve as the primary analytical entry points for understanding how DST elements manifest within the TikTok format.



**Figure 4.** Comparison Map Codes  
Source: Authors' analysis (NVivo)

The comparison map in Figure 4 reveals two dominant clusters emerging from the corpus: Emotional Burden and Self-Regulation. These clusters reflect not only what creators feel, but also how they strategically manage and represent those feelings within the constraints of the TikTok platform.

The DST element of owning emotions is the most dominant in this corpus, as reflected in the high frequency of the “Emotional Burden” theme (22.54%), identified in seven out of ten videos. V8, who described her body trembling after a traumatic experience, and V9, who expressed sadness after being bitten by a patient with MRSA, are explicit examples of this element. This kind of affective burden is consistent with the findings of Sever & Tiryaki (2025) Female migrant workers in the caregiving sector bear emotional labor demands that are often not formally recognized. However, in the context of TikTok, owning emotions is not synonymous with complete vulnerability. The short-video format compels creators to package emotions into rapidly consumable narratives (Retnasary & Fitriawati, 2022). Making emotional expression inherently selective and curated, not an honest mirror of the whole experience. But a representation that has already passed through a process of personal editorial judgment.

This curatorial process is directly tied to the second cluster, Self-Regulation. Within Lambert's DST framework, this element reflects having a point of view. This refers to the creator's conscious awareness of positioning themselves as a subject in control of their own narrative (Chan & Sage, 2021). Creators do not merely vent their emotions; they actively decide which parts of their experience are worthy of display and which should remain private. Through Stuart Hall's lens (1997), this practice constitutes a form of negotiated reading, where creators accept certain dominant structures, such as the expectation that migrant workers must appear resilient and professional, yet simultaneously negotiate them by displaying measured vulnerability. This is evident in V3 and V6, which explicitly depict grueling work routines yet conclude with affirmative messages about personal resilience, reflecting what Lambert terms economy, the ability to package complex experiences into brief durations without losing depth of meaning (Chan & Sage, 2021).

The element of finding the moment is apparent in the way creators select a single event as the narrative epicentre. V8 chose the specific moment of "a patient dying during an ordinary breakfast hour" as the entry point for a narrative about occupational risk, while V10 used the experience of changing a contaminated patient's diaper as its narrative anchor. As Chan & Sage (2021) explain, this element encourages storytellers to identify the most significant moment that encapsulates their entire experience, transforming raw reality into narratives with a clear dramatic arc.

The element of sharing it in the TikTok context carries dimensions fundamentally different from the community workshop model of DST envisioned by Lambert (Chan & Sage, 2021). TikTok's distribution features, including the For You Page mechanism, duet, and stitch, enable narratives to undergo re-circulation that extends far beyond the creator's personal network. V10, with 38.600 likes, demonstrates that certain narratives are not merely shared but actively amplified by the platform's algorithm (Yuliana et al., 2023). This transforms DST from a personal practice into a semi-viral public one, where the reach of a narrative is no longer entirely in the creator's hands.

#### **4.2 Toward Microcelebrity Through Authenticity and Audience Engagement**

The digital storytelling practices identified in the preceding section. Particularly, self-regulation, curated authenticity, and algorithmic amplification. Do not merely function as expensive tools. Through Hall's (1997) lens of representations, these practices collectively produce a strategic representational position that is legible, relatable, and affectively resonant to platform audiences. It is precisely this combination that creates

the structural conditions for Microcelebrity to emerge. This section identifies three interconnected mechanisms through which that process unfolds: authenticity capital, niche identity, and parasocial bonds.

Authenticity capital is most evident in videos with the highest engagement. V10 (38.600 likes) and V4 (6.690 likes) are the most analytically rich in terms of occupational risk and emotional burden. This pattern suggests that authenticity operates not merely as a personal value, but as an algorithmically rewarded currency on the platform. As Abidin (2020) argues, visibility on TikTok is inseparable from attention economies, where creators who narrate their experiences with specificity and emotional honesty generate stronger audience responses, which in turn increases their reach within the platform's recommendation system.

Niche identity emerges from the consistency with which certain creators frame their content around the Kaigo experience and their position as minority workers in Japan. While not all creators in this corpus do so systematically, those who do construct a recognizable personal brand rooted in their migratory and occupational specificity. This is consistent with findings on immigrant influencers on TikTok, where creative practices shaped around lived migratory experiences produce multidimensional Microcelebrity identities that extend beyond mere documentation of displacement (Jaramillo-Dent et al., 2022).

Parasocial bonds are reflected in the affective responses visible in the comment sections and engagement metrics across the corpus. Audiences do not merely consume these narratives passively. They respond, empathize and return. Smith & Mendelson (2025) Specifically demonstrate that comment sections on TikTok serve as a critical site where parasocial intimacy is actively constructed and reinforced, as audiences publicly express identification and emotional attachment to creators. This dynamic is directly enabled by the sharing element of DST, which in the TikTok context transforms personal narratives into semi-public encounters between creator and audience (Chan & Sage, 2021). Stein et al. (2024) Further note that self-disclosure on platforms such as TikTok, which is a defining feature of the narratives, is among the strongest predictors of intense parasocial responses from audiences.

However, these three mechanisms have not yet coalesced into a fully realized microcelebrity across the entire corpus. Their presence remains uneven, concentrated in a small number of videos and creators rather than distributed consistently. This study, therefore, positions microcelebrity not as an established outcome but as an emergent trajectory shaped by the intersection of strategic self-representation, platform logic, and audience engagement. Whether this trajectory ultimately consolidates into sustained

microcelebrity among Indonesian migrant caregivers remains an open question for future research.

## 5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Indonesian migrant caregivers in Japan do not merely document their experiences on TikTok. They actively construct and perform their minority identities through strategically curated digital storytelling. Analyzed through Stuart Hall's theory of representation, the seven identified themes, namely emotional burden, occupational risks, workplace realities, self-regulation, workplace relationship dynamics, communication barriers, and personal growth, collectively reflect a dynamic process of dominant, negotiated, and oppositional encoding. This finding makes three interrelated theoretical contributions. It repositions Hall's framework from a model of audience reception toward one of active self-encoding by marginalized content producers. It introduces and operationalizes the concept of performative minority identity at the intersection of digital storytelling and platform visibility, and it extends Lambert's DST framework beyond its original community workshop model into algorithmically governed, short-video spaces where emotional expression is editorially constrained by platform logic. Together, these mechanisms produce the structural conditions for an emergent, if uneven, microcelebrity trajectory among Indonesian migrant caregivers.

These findings carry concrete practical implications for migrant workers, advocacy organizations, and pre-departure training programs. This study affirms that digital literacy, specifically the capacity to produce, curate, and strategically frame self-narratives, constitutes a form of psychosocial and professional capital that deserves formal recognition and cultivation. For policymakers and labor protection agencies such as the KP2MI. The themes surfacing in this corpus represent conditions, including legal exposure following patient death, emotional exhaustion, and covert workplace discrimination through *Tatema* culture. That formal oversight mechanisms have yet to adequately address, suggesting that user-generated content may serve as an underutilized source of field intelligence for labor policy evaluation. For platform governance, the finding that algorithmic amplification disproportionately rewards emotionally intense and risk-laden narratives raises critical questions about whether recommendation systems structurally incentivize minority creators to overperform vulnerability as the price of visibility.

This study is not without limitations. The corpus of ten videos was selected for information richness and to reach data saturation. Remains

small and cannot be considered representative of Indonesian migrant caregivers as a population. The non-reactive design, which involved analyzing publicly available content without direct creator engagement, means that interpretations of encoding intent remain inferential and unvalidated by the creators themselves. Furthermore, audience reception analysis was limited to engagement metrics, leaving the formation of parasocial bonds as an empirically undemonstrated claim, and the absence of longitudinal tracking makes it impossible to assess how narrative strategies evolve over time or in response to algorithmic shifts.

Future research should address these gaps through longitudinal creator tracking, systematic comment-section analysis combined with creator interviews, and comparative studies across source countries and platforms. Most critically, algorithm auditing methodologies are needed to empirically measure how TikTok's recommendation system differentially amplifies or suppresses minority caregiver content, a structural question whose answer would substantially reframe our understanding of who gets to perform, and who gets to be heard, in the digital public sphere.

## References

- Abidin, C. (2020). Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok: Exploring Attention Economies and Visibility Labors. *Cultural Science Journal*, 12(1), 77–103. <https://doi.org/10.5334/csci.140>
- Allsop, D. B., Chelladurai, J. M., Kimball, E. R., Marks, L. D., & Hendricks, J. J. (2022). Qualitative Methods with Nvivo Software : A Practical Guide for Analyzing Qualitative Data. *Psych*, 142–159.
- Anggara, R., Mulyana, S., Gayatri, G., & Hafiar, H. (2024). Understanding the motivations of being Indonesian migrant workers. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2333968>
- Asis, E., & Carandang, R. R. (2020). The plight of migrant care workers in Japan: A qualitative study of their stressors on caregiving. *Journal of Migration and Health*, 1–2(September), 100001. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmh.2020.100001>
- Ayton, D., Tsindos, T., & Berkovic, D. (2023). *Qualitative Research – a practical guide for health and social care researchers and practitioners* (D. Ayton, T. Tsindos, & D. Berkovic (eds.)). Monash University.
- Chan, C., & Sage, M. (2021). A narrative review of digital storytelling for social work practice. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 35(1), 63–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650533.2019.1692804>
- Drajat, H., & Purnama, H. (2020). Efektivitas Penggunaan Digital

- Storytelling Kanal Youtube “Kok Bisa?” dalam Meningkatkan Minat Belajar. *Jurnal Komunikasi Universitas Garut: Hasil Pemikiran Dan Penelitian*, 6(1), 382–390. <https://www.komunikasipraktis.com/>
- Franzke, A. S., Bechmann, A., Zimmer, M., & Ess, C. M. (2020). *Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0 Association of Internet Researchers Unanimously approved by the AoIR membership October 6, 2019*.
- Harrington, C. (2025). Making ethical judgement calls about qualitative social media research on sensitive issues research on sensitive issues. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 28(4), 397–410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2024.2393796>
- Heydarikhayat, N., Ghanbarzahi, N., & Sabagh, K. (2024). Strategies to prevent medical errors by nursing interns: a qualitative content analysis. *BMC Nursing*, 1–13.
- Iswara, N. R., & Moerdisuroso, I. (2022). *Analisis Teori Representasi Stuart Hall Pada “The Old Guitarist” Karya Pablo Picasso*.
- Jaramillo-Dent, D., Contreras-Pulido, P., & Pérez-Rodríguez, A. (2022). Immigrant Influencers on TikTok: Diverse Microcelebrity Profiles and Algorithmic (In)Visibility. *Media and Communication*, 10(1), 208–221. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v10i1.4743>
- Kementerian Perlindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia. (2025). *Data Penempatan dan Perlindungan Pekerja Migran Indonesia Tahun 2025*.
- Ladegaard, H. J. (2025). Trauma, Extreme Humiliation, and Coping Strategies in Migrant Domestic Workers’ Storytelling: Linguistic and Psychological Perspectives. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X251326290>
- Madaminovich, S. A., Avazovich, M. M., Mehmonboyevich, A. A., & Avazovna, Q. M. (2025). *The demographic composition of migration and its impact on family institutions and social relations*. 20(2). <https://doi.org/https://cgscopus.com/index.php/journals> THE
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Nurhidayati. (2021). IMIGRASI DAN PERKEMBANGAN POLITIK, EKONOMI, SOSIAL DAN BUDAYA. In *Nuta Media* (Vol. 1, Issue 1). <http://scioteca.caf.com/bitstream/handle/123456789/1091/RED2017-Eng-8ene.pdf?sequence=12&isAllowed=y%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2008.06.005%0Ahttps://www.researchgate.net/publ>

ication/305320484\_SISTEM\_PEMBETUNGAN\_TERPUSAT\_ST  
RATEGI\_MELESTARI

- Retnasary, M., & Fitriawati, D. (2022). Analisis akun TikTok @Iramira sebagai media pembelajaran edukasi. *AGUNA: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 3(2), 1. <http://ejournal.amikompurwokerto.ac.id/index.php/AGUNA>
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research : exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality & Quantity*, 52(4), 1893–1907. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-017-0574-8>
- Sever, M., & Tiryaki, A. (2025). Emotional labor, conflicting caregiving responsibilities, and resilience among foreign female caregivers in Japan: A photovoice study. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 32(3), 949–976. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13195>
- Siregar, H. (2022). Analisis Pemanfaatan Media Sosial Sebagai Sarana Sosialisasi Pancasila. *Pancasila: Jurnal Keindonesiaan*, 02(1), 71–82.
- Slamet, S., Hendriana, B., & Supiat. (2025). Mengungkap Perspektif Siswa: Peran Deep Learning dalam Visualisasi Konsep dan Pemecahan Masalah Matematika. *International Journal of Progressive Mathematics Education*, 5(1), 225–237. <https://doi.org/10.22236/ijopme.v5i1.19310>
- Smith, J. K., & Mendelson, E. A. (2025). Parasocial parenting, adoption, and monetization of the “internet parent” with the Griswolds on TikTok. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 28(5 Special Issue: TikTok and Children), 907–926. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13678779241288619>
- Srimulyani, N. E., Elsy, P., Muhalla, N. H. I., & Rasyid, R. H. (2022). PERSEPSI MAHASISWA STIKES NGUDIA HUSADA MADURA TERHADAP PEKERJAAN PERAWAT DI JEPANG. *Journal of Public Service*, 6(2), 1–12.
- Stein, J. P., Linda Breves, P., & Anders, N. (2024). Parasocial interactions with real and virtual influencers: The role of perceived similarity and human-likeness. *New Media and Society*, 26(6), 3433–3453. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221102900>
- Syah, R. F., Ekawati, E., Azanda, S. H., Syafarani, T. R., Ayunda, W. A., Zulkifli, M. Y., Rahma, N. M., & Kusumawardani, A. (2025). Hoax and Election: The Role of Social Media and Challenges for Indonesian Government Policy. *Studies in Media and Communication*, 13(2), 294–305. <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v13i2.7486>

- Tremblett, M., Poon, A. Y. X., Aveyard, P., & Albury, C. (2023). What advice do general practitioners give to people living with obesity to lose weight? A qualitative content analysis of recorded interactions. *Oxford University Press, December 2022*, 789–795.
- van Selm, L., Williams, S., de'Donato, F., Briones-Vozmediano, E., Stratil, J., Sroczynski, G., Tonne, C., De Sario, M., & Requena-Méndez, A. (2025). Occupational Heat Stress Among Migrant and Ethnic Minority Outdoor Workers: A Scoping Review. *Current Environmental Health Reports*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-025-00481-y>
- Wibowo, S., & Sukardani, P. S. (2023). Motif Keterbukaan Kelompok Minoritas Lgbt (Lesbian, Gay, Biseksual, Dan Transgender) Di Surabaya Pada Media Sosial Tiktok. *The Commercium*, 7(3), 77–86. <https://doi.org/10.26740/tc.v7i3.56730>
- Widianingsih, Y., & Cahyani, I. P. (2020). Digital Storytelling Melalui Media Sosial dalam Aktivitas Kehumasan pada Perguruan Tinggi Alih Status. *CHANNEL: Jurnal Komunikasi*, 8(2), 109. <https://doi.org/10.12928/channel.v8i2.16446>
- Yuliana, M. E., Saputro, A., & Sutomo, E. (2023). Implementasi Peranan Advertising Untuk Meningkatkan Penjualan Pada Media Sosial Tiktok. *Jurnal Ekonomi Manajemen dan Bisnis (JEMB)*, 2(2), 412–421. <https://doi.org/10.47233/jemb.v2i2.1374>
- Yuwono, I. T. (2021). Representasi Nilai-Nilai Esoteris Etnisitas Dalam Film Sargede Kumandang. *Intelektiva*, 4(6), 33–37.

