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Identity negotiation strategies among Indonesian LGBT diaspora on TikTok amid digital persecution

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ABSTRACT

In Indonesia, the LGBT community remains stigmatized as a threat to national culture. This hostility compels many LGBT Indonesians to migrate, yet their digital presence on platforms like TikTok continues to attract persecution from Indonesian audiences. This study examines how two Indonesian LGBT diaspora members, Kasim (@thereal_indobule, Australia) and Ragil (@ragilmahardika, Germany), negotiate their identities on TikTok and respond strategically to the digital persecution those articulations provoke. Employing critical content analysis of 70 TikTok videos and their accompanying comments, the study draws on Stuart Hall's cultural identity theory, Ponzanesi's digital diaspora framework, and Wijaya's concept of digital homophobia. Findings reveal four thematic strategies of identity negotiation: performative entry and gradual disclosure, everyday domesticity and diaspora narration, familial and relational visibility, and direct audience engagement. Two counter-persecution strategies are identified: gay visibility as strategic normalization and mock impoliteness as discursive resistance. The study contributes to digital diaspora and queer media scholarship by demonstrating how TikTok functions as a contested space where marginalized identities are simultaneously performed, policed, and defended through platform-specific creative practices.

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Introduction

In Indonesia, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community occupies a precarious position. Despite the absence of explicit national legislation criminalizing homosexuality outside Aceh province, the LGBT community is routinely framed as a threat to national culture, religious morality, and even physical safety, with public figures attributing natural disasters to the existence of sexual minorities (Listiorini, 2020). This hostility intensified following the political polarization surrounding the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections, which instrumentalized identity politics in ways that rendered the LGBT community a convenient target for *moral panic* (Rodríguez & Murtagh, 2022). Anti-LGBT discourse proliferated across digital platforms from late 2015 onward (Wieringa, 2019; Wijaya, 2020), and the Indonesian government's complicity in regulatory suppression further compounded the marginalization of sexual minorities (Wijaya, 2022). Even in Northern Aceh, where Sharia-based criminalization of homosexuality is enforced, Thajib (2022) documents how queer subjects practice endurance as a form of world-making, suggesting that creative resilience under hostile conditions is a deeply rooted pattern rather than a recent digital phenomenon. This socio-political climate has made Indonesia one of the most hostile environments for LGBT communities in Southeast Asia and has driven many LGBT Indonesians to seek lives abroad.

The migration of Indonesian LGBT individuals does not, however, sever their connection to the discursive and political landscapes of their home country. Digital technologies, particularly social media platforms, sustain these connections across borders, creating what Ponzanesi (2020) conceptualizes as digital diasporas: communities whose identities, affiliations, and political entanglements are mediated and intensified through digital communication technologies. The concept of digital *diaspora* extends traditional understandings of migration beyond territorial dislocation, recognizing that the coexistence of virtual and embodied selves produces new possibilities for identity negotiation (Ponzanesi, 2020). For Indonesian LGBT *diaspora* members, this means that the legal protections afforded by their host countries coexist with the persistent digital reach of Indonesian homophobic sentiment, creating a condition of simultaneous safety and exposure.

TikTok, as a short-video platform with over one billion monthly active users globally (Kaye, Zeng, & Wikström, 2022), has emerged as a particularly significant site for this negotiation. Its algorithmically curated "For You Page" (FYP) circulates content across national and linguistic boundaries with minimal friction, enabling creators to reach audiences far beyond their immediate social networks (Anderson, 2020; Schellewald, 2021). For Indonesian-speaking creators, this means that content produced in Germany or Australia can appear on the screens of millions of Indonesian users. Simpson and Semaan (2021) have demonstrated that TikTok's algorithmic architecture constructs contradictory identity spaces for LGBTQ+ users: the platform simultaneously enables visibility and subjects marginalized creators to hostile exposure. This algorithmic double bind is compounded by TikTok's content moderation practices, which have been shown to filter keywords associated with LGBT identities in several national contexts (Eckert, Catharina, & Vitlif, 2022; Simpson & Semaan, 2021). Ren, Yang, Zhu, and Majeed (2021) further observe that TikTok users function as both producers and consumers of content, creating value through participatory interactions that the platform's

recommendation system then amplifies or suppresses based on engagement metrics.

Scholarship on digital platforms and LGBT identity in the Asia-Pacific region has established important foundations. Mokhtar, Sukeri, and Abd Latiff (2019) investigated hashtag activism on Twitter by Malaysian LGBT communities, demonstrating how digital affordances can be leveraged for identity-based mobilization in hostile national contexts. Cassidy and Wang (2018) explored LINE use among the gay Chinese *diaspora* in Australia, revealing how platform-specific communication practices mediate cultural identity negotiation in migration contexts. In the Indonesian context, Mustangin (2018) documented how specialized gay social media applications facilitate internal community-building, identity affirmation, and social connection. Triastuti (2021) analyzed disidentification strategies employed by Indonesian gay men on social media, identifying four approaches to constructing *queer heterotopia*: providing literacy about queer communities, disclosing gay identity, displaying romantic relationships, and demonstrating queer activism. Ciszek (2017) has further shown how LGBT activism intersects with public communication practices, demonstrating the cultural-economic dimensions of contemporary identity politics in digital environments.

However, these studies exhibit several limitations that the present research addresses. First, most focus on platforms that predate TikTok's ascendancy (Twitter, LINE, specialized gay apps), which differ fundamentally in their affordances, particularly in the centrality of algorithmic recommendation and the primacy of video as a communicative mode. Second, studies of Indonesian LGBT digital presence have primarily examined internal community communication rather than the confrontation with broader, predominantly hostile publics. Third, the specific experience of Indonesian LGBT *diaspora* members, who must navigate the intersection of host-country legal protections and home-country digital hostility, has received limited scholarly attention. Szulc (2020) underscores that queer migrants' digital cultures involve unique negotiations between multiple national contexts, a dynamic that remains underexplored in the Indonesian case. Fourth, existing research has documented the existence of digital persecution but has paid less attention to the creative counter-strategies that marginalized subjects deploy in response, particularly within the specific affordance structures of TikTok.

This study addresses these gaps by examining two Indonesian LGBT *diaspora* TikTok accounts: @ragilmahardika (Ragil Andi Mahardika, based in Germany) and @thereal_indobule (Kasim, based in Australia). Both are gay men of Medanese origin who produce Indonesian-language content on TikTok, attracting large followings: approximately 4.3 million and 910,000 followers respectively as of November 2022. Their deliberate use of Indonesian language, cultural references, and engagement with Indonesian netizens positions their accounts as sites of intense contestation between identity articulation and digital persecution. The study pursues two research questions: (1) What strategies do Indonesian LGBT *diaspora* members employ to negotiate their identities on TikTok? (2) How do they respond to the digital persecution provoked by those identity negotiations? The study's novelty lies in its thematic integration of articulation and counter-persecution as interconnected dimensions of a single process of identity negotiation, examined through the platform-specific lens of TikTok's video-based, algorithmically mediated ecology.

Method

This study employed critical content analysis, a methodological approach rooted in cultural studies that examines the production, distribution, and consumption of mediated texts with sustained attention to the ideological structures operating beneath their surface (Lehtonen, 2000; Hunting, 2021). Following Lehtonen's (2000) formulation, the analysis treated articulation as a process of radical recontextualization, in which texts were loosened from their prior contexts and linked to new ones, thereby exposing the power relations, ideologies, and cultural politics embedded in seemingly personal media content. This approach was selected because it enables the researcher to move beyond surface-level description of video content toward a critical examination of how identity is constructed, contested, and negotiated through TikTok's affordance structures.

The two subjects, Kasim (@thereal_ indobule) and Ragil (@ragilmahardika), were selected using purposive sampling based on four criteria: (1) self-identification as Indonesian-born gay men currently residing outside Indonesia; (2) active and sustained TikTok presence with regular content production over a period of at least two years (2020–2022); (3) substantial audience reach, operationalized as having more than 500,000 followers, indicating significant public visibility and the potential for intense audience engagement; and (4) consistent use of Indonesian language in captions, subtitles, and spoken narration, ensuring that their content targeted and reached Indonesian-speaking audiences. These criteria ensured that the selected accounts represented prominent cases of Indonesian LGBT *diaspora* identity negotiation on TikTok rather than peripheral or marginal instances. A preliminary scan of TikTok using relevant Indonesian-language search terms (e.g., *"gay Indonesia di luar negeri,"* "LGBT *diaspora* Indonesia") confirmed that Kasim and Ragil were among the most visible and actively engaged Indonesian LGBT *diaspora* creators on the platform during the study period.

The corpus comprised 70 TikTok videos: 35 from each account, selected from their earliest posts (both beginning in early 2020, during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic) through November 2022. From each account's complete video archive (which comprised several hundred videos each), videos were selected based on three operational criteria: (1) identity salience, defined as videos containing explicit or implicit markers of sexual orientation, *diaspora* status, or cultural belonging; (2) engagement intensity, measured by the volume and nature of user comments, with priority given to videos attracting substantial numbers of both supportive and hostile responses; and (3) strategic diversity, ensuring representation across the full range of content types (parody, daily life, family, direct response, milestone events) to capture the breadth of articulation strategies. The analysis also encompassed user comments on each selected video, with particular attention to comments from Indonesian-based accounts, and stitched response videos produced by other TikTok users in reaction to the subjects' content.

The analytical process followed four stages, adapted from Hunting's (2021) framework. In the first stage, each video was viewed multiple times and annotated with descriptive codes capturing its content type, visual and auditory elements, textual overlays, language use, and the presence or absence of partners and family members. In the second stage, comments on each video were read, and those exhibiting clear evaluative stances (positive or negative) toward the subjects' sexual identity were coded thematically. Persecutory comments were further categorized by their

discursive basis (religious invocation, moral condemnation, gendered insult, material accusation). In the third stage, the descriptive codes from stages one and two were grouped into higher-order analytical categories through an iterative process of constant comparison, yielding the four articulation strategy types and two counter-persecution strategy types reported in the findings. In the fourth stage, these empirical categories were brought into sustained dialogue with the study's conceptual framework, examining how the observed strategies related to Hall's (1996, 1997) theory of identity as constructed narrative, Robards, Byron, and D'Souza's (2021) tripartite model of LGBT digital identity (experience, belonging, connection), Ponzanesi's (2020) digital *diaspora* framework, and Olivia, Antonialli, and Gomes' (2021) counter-persecution typology.

Results and Discussion

The findings are organized thematically around two interrelated dimensions of identity negotiation: strategies of articulation and strategies of counter-persecution. Within each dimension, both cases are discussed in dialogue, enabling comparison, synthesis, and theoretical abstraction. This thematic structure reflects the study's core argument that articulation and counter-persecution are not sequential phases but interconnected dimensions of a single, ongoing process of identity negotiation enacted through TikTok's platform-specific affordances.

Strategies of identity articulation

Performative entry and gradual disclosure

A striking commonality across both subjects was the use of indirect, performative content as an entry point into identity articulation. Neither Kasim nor Ragil began their TikTok presence with explicit declarations of their sexuality. Kasim's initial videos, beginning in April 2020, featured parody content mimicking the mannerisms of Indonesian mothers, teenage girls, and flamboyant gay teenagers, none of which disclosed his own sexual orientation. Ragil's first posts, beginning in February 2020, consisted of dance and lip-sync videos set to Bollywood tracks. These performative entries functioned as buffer zones (Cover, 2015), establishing audience relationships through entertainment before introducing more identity-laden content. The gradual nature of this disclosure aligns with Hall's (1996) insistence that identity is never a fixed essence but an ongoing process of positioning and repositioning, shaped by evolving contexts.

The trajectories of disclosure, however, differed in pace and modality. Kasim's disclosure was protracted: his partner Ian first appeared peripherally in a May 2020 video, but their relationship was not explicitly foregrounded until November 2020, when Kasim engaged with TikTok's viral "Sugar Daddy" trend. The definitive assertion came only with his six-minute wedding video on 19 March 2022, nearly two years after his first post. Ragil's disclosure was comparatively accelerated: his husband Fred appeared as early as February 2020, and by October–November 2020, Ragil was producing direct response videos addressing netizens' questions about his sexuality ("Why did you become gay?") and religious challenges ("God did not create Adam and Bambang"). These divergent pacing strategies can be understood through Ponzanesi's (2020) observation that digital *diaspora* identities are negotiated through the interplay of political context and emotional texture: Kasim's cautious approach reflected a strategy of normalization-before-declaration, while Ragil's earlier confrontational engagement reflected a strategy of declaration-through-

dialogue. Both, nonetheless, illustrate the constructed nature of identity articulation as a managed process of contextual calibration rather than a single moment of revelation.

Everyday domesticity and diaspora narration

Both subjects devoted substantial portions of their content to representations of everyday life that were not overtly related to their sexual orientation: working, cooking, shopping, and navigating the practicalities of life abroad. Kasim produced videos comparing Indonesian and Australian lifestyles, while Ragil documented his experience as a former *au pair* in Germany and his daily routines of gardening, cooking, and market visits. This foregrounding of ordinariness served a double function. First, it enacted what Rogan and Budgeon (2018) describe as the fusion of the personal and the political: by presenting their *diaspora* lives as unremarkable, both subjects implicitly contested the dominant Indonesian framing of LGBT individuals as aberrant or threatening. Second, it established what Joshi (2012) theorizes as "moral de-sexing": a process through which gay subjects claim respectability by foregrounding dimensions of selfhood, such as labor, domesticity, and cultural belonging, that exceed and complicate the reduction of identity to sexual orientation alone.

This strategy also engaged with the broader discourse of Indonesian *diaspora* identity, positioning both subjects within a recognizable narrative of overseas Indonesian workers who strive, sacrifice, and maintain cultural ties. By using Indonesian-language captions, subtitles, and culturally resonant audio, such as dangdut music and trending Indonesian *sounds*, both Kasim and Ragil signaled what Robards, Byron, and D'Souza (2021) term "belonging": an affective attachment to a community from which one is physically separated. This belonging, however, is not uncomplicated. As Andersson (2019) notes, digital *diaspora* practices are always shaped by the tension between identification with the home country and the experience of distance from it. For Kasim and Ragil, the very cultural markers that signaled belonging, such as Indonesian language and trend participation, also functioned as bridges through which persecution travelled, connecting hostile Indonesian audiences directly to their content.

Familial and relational visibility

A third articulation strategy involved making intimate relationships and family connections visible to the public audience. Both subjects featured their partners prominently: Kasim progressively incorporated his partner Ian into his content, culminating in the wedding video, while Ragil included his husband Fred in dance videos, shopping trips, and domestic scenes. More distinctively, Ragil featured his Indonesian family, including his mother and siblings, who visited him in Germany. A video posted on 17 August 2021, Indonesian Independence Day, showing his mother and brother in Germany, carried particular symbolic weight. This familial visibility functioned as a counter-narrative to what Pradhan (2021) identifies as the persistent stereotype that same-sex relationships are "fragile and built on lust" and inevitably sever kinship bonds. By showing his family's acceptance and their willingness to travel to Germany to visit, Ragil contested the Indonesian cultural presumption that homosexuality is incompatible with family life. Kasim similarly featured his wedding celebrations as family events, positioning his marriage within the normative iconography of commitment, ceremony, and communal celebration.

This strategy engages directly with what Boellstorff (2005) documents as the long history of Indonesian gay men navigating the tension between *prestasi* (achievement and social respectability) and sexual identity. By demonstrating that their families accepted them, both subjects disrupted the assumed binary between homosexuality and familial belonging that structures much of Indonesian public discourse about LGBT individuals. The visibility of family acceptance also reconfigured the power dynamics of the persecutory comments they received: insults premised on the assumption of familial rejection were undercut by visual evidence to the contrary, shifting the discursive ground beneath the persecution itself.

Direct audience engagement

The fourth strategy involved direct, substantive engagement with audiences, particularly Indonesian netizens who posed questions or made accusations about the subjects' sexuality. This strategy manifested differently for each subject. Ragil regularly produced stitched response videos that directly quoted and addressed hostile or curious comments. In a series of videos in late 2020, he responded to questions such as "Why did you become gay?", challenges invoking Qur'anic scripture, and mocking suggestions about his desirability to women. In these response videos, Ragil combined a casual, often humorous tone with substantive explanations, performing what Triastuti (2021) identifies as a form of public literacy about queer subjectivity. Kasim's audience engagement was more selective and indirect: rather than responding to specific comments through stitched videos, he aggregated recurring themes from negative comments and addressed them through original content that incorporated the themes without directly citing individual commenters.

This divergence in engagement style reflects different negotiations of what Simpson and Semaan (2021) describe as TikTok's contradictory identity spaces. Ragil's direct engagement treated TikTok as a dialogic space, leveraging the platform's stitch feature to create explicit back-and-forth exchanges that performed the negotiation of identity in real time. Kasim's aggregative approach treated the platform as a broadcast space where the creator maintains discursive control by choosing which themes to address without elevating individual persecutors. Both approaches, however, exploited TikTok's entertainment-driven algorithmic logic: by converting hostile interactions into engaging content, both subjects ensured that their counter-narratives circulated at least as widely as the attacks that prompted them. This observation resonates with Ren, Yang, Zhu, and Majeed's (2021) analysis of value co-creation on TikTok, where user participation, including hostile participation, generates engagement metrics that the platform's recommendation system amplifies.

Counter-persecution strategies

The identity articulations described above predictably attracted persecution from Indonesian TikTok users. Drawing on Wijaya's (2022) concept of digital homophobia as an accumulation of anti-LGBT discourses amplified through technology, the persecution observed in the comment sections of both accounts was categorized into four discursive types: religious invocation (citing Qur'anic or Biblical passages to condemn homosexuality), moral condemnation (expressing disgust or shame), gendered insults (mocking the subjects' masculinity or sexual roles), and material accusations (claiming the relationships were motivated by financial gain rather than love). These categories resonate with Rodríguez

and Murtagh's (2022) framing of Indonesian anti-LGBT sentiment as a *moral panic* institutionalized through the convergence of religious, political, and media forces. Two counter-persecution strategies, drawn from Olivia, Antonialli, and Gomes' (2021) framework, were identified across both subjects' content.

Gay visibility as strategic normalization

Heisterkamp and Alberts (2000, in Olivia, Antonialli, & Gomes, 2021) describe gay visibility as the deliberate public display of behaviors and appearances that dominant culture marks as "strange," reclaimed by LGBT subjects as constitutive of selfhood. Both subjects deployed this strategy, but its most concentrated expression was Kasim's wedding video: a six-minute document of his marriage ceremony in Australia, posted on 19 March 2022. This video attracted the most concentrated wave of persecutory comments from Indonesian netizens, including religious denunciations and expressions of disgust. Kasim's response was not to engage with these comments directly but to continue posting content as usual, folding his married life with Ian into the normalcy of his daily routine. The refusal to treat his marriage as requiring defense or explanation constituted a strategic deployment of visibility that forced the "strangeness" back onto the persecutors rather than absorbing it.

This strategy resonates with Joshi's (2012) analysis of "respectable queerness," in which marriage functions as a performance that contributes to the respectability of gay and lesbian subjects by enacting a recognizable ritual of commitment. By presenting his wedding with the same ordinariness that characterizes heterosexual marriage content on TikTok, Kasim implicitly challenged the premise that gay relationships require special justification. Ragil similarly employed visibility by featuring his husband Fred across content genres, from shopping trips to dance videos to cooking scenes, ensuring that Fred's presence was normalized rather than marked as exceptional. This consistent, unapologetic visibility across both subjects' accounts constitutes what Li (2019) would recognize as an everyday politics of presence: a form of resistance enacted not through confrontation but through the persistent refusal to disappear. This refusal echoes Thajib's (2022) concept of endurance as queer world-making, wherein queer subjects in hostile Indonesian contexts sustain themselves not through dramatic acts of defiance but through the quiet, cumulative labor of continuing to exist publicly. The visibility strategy also carried risks, however, confirming what Simpson and Semaan (2021) document as TikTok's visibility-vulnerability paradox: the same algorithmic amplification that enabled their content to reach large audiences also exposed them to correspondingly large volumes of hostile engagement.

Mock impoliteness as discursive resistance

McKinnon (2017, in Olivia, Antonialli, & Gomes, 2021) defines mock impoliteness as interaction, whether verbal or behavioral, that would be evaluated as rude by at least one party, deployed strategically by LGBT subjects to disarm hostile interlocutors through humor, irony, and performative excess. Both subjects employed this strategy, but with markedly different modalities that illuminate the range of creative practices available within TikTok's affordance structure.

Kasim's mock impoliteness was predominantly non-verbal and relied on TikTok's multimodal resources. In a video posted on 24 June 2022, responding to a comment accusing him of depending

financially on his husband ("It must be nice living overseas, brought by a *bule*!!"), Kasim produced a short video using a viral *jedag-jedug* sound, a rapid, percussive TikTok audio format typically used for clap backs. He lowered his sunglasses with a mocking glance, placed a finger to his lips in a shushing gesture, and included the text: "Ssst!! Don't invite the ones who *ngelontong*," using Indonesian slang for sex work as a cutting retort. He enlisted a fellow Indonesian *diaspora* colleague to appear in the video, visually reinforcing that Indonesian migrants in Australia sustain themselves through their own labor. The combination of gesture, viral audio, vernacular wordplay, and collaborative performance exemplifies the "ludicrous, humorous, and creative self-evaluation" that Olivia, Antonialli, and Gomes (2021) identify as characteristic of mock impoliteness. Kasim's response also reconfigured the terms of the accusation: by shifting the frame from sexual orientation to *diaspora* labor, he refused to engage on the ground chosen by the persecutor.

Ragil's mock impoliteness was verbal, extended, and relied on TikTok's stitch feature. Responding to a comment claiming his marriage was motivated by material gain, Ragil created a stitched video in which he addressed the camera while applying a face mask, signaling that the accusation warranted no more gravity than a skincare routine. He narrated at length: "If I only wanted wealth, I wouldn't have married my husband, you know. I'd find a rich old man who's about to die, have him sign everything over, and I wouldn't bother working, going to school, going to university." The performative casualness (face mask, relaxed tone) combined with sharp satirical content, contrasting his own trajectory of education and employment with the stereotype of the gold-digging young gay migrant, enacted what Olivia, Antonialli, and Gomes (2021) describe as the strategic mixing of literal and metaphorical registers. Ragil closed by invoking *perjuangan* (struggle), reframing the conversation from sexuality to class and labor and thereby refusing the discursive terms on which the persecution was mounted.

The contrasting modalities of Kasim's gestural brevity and Ragil's verbal elaboration share a structural logic: both refuse the persecutor's frame, redirect the narrative onto the subjects' own terms, and deploy humor as a weapon that simultaneously disarms hostility and entertains the broader audience. This dual function is crucial to the strategies' effectiveness on TikTok, where entertainment value determines algorithmic reach. By transforming persecution into content, both subjects leveraged what could be understood as a form of discursive judo: using the force of hostile engagement to propel their own counter-narratives further. The strategic conversion of persecution into creative content also illustrates the broader implications of platform dynamics for marginalized communities: TikTok's engagement-driven algorithms do not distinguish between positive and negative interaction, meaning that persecutory comments can inadvertently amplify the very content they seek to suppress (Simpson & Semaan, 2021).

Visibility, vulnerability, and platform power

The findings of this study illuminate a fundamental tension in digital identity negotiation for marginalized *diaspora* subjects: the inseparability of visibility and vulnerability. The four articulation strategies and two counter-persecution strategies documented above demonstrate that identity negotiation on TikTok is not merely a matter of "coming out" or "being visible" but involves ongoing, strategic management of how, when, and to whom identity is disclosed, performed, and defended.

This resonates with Hall's (1996, 1997) understanding of identity as a positioning within discourse rather than a stable essence, and extends it into the specific affordance ecology of algorithmic media.

The cases of Kasim and Ragil also reveal that the power relations between *diaspora* subjects and their home-country audiences are not unidirectional. While Indonesian netizens wielded the discursive power of religious and moral normativity to persecute both subjects, Kasim and Ragil were not passive recipients of this hostility. Their creative use of TikTok's features, including parody formats, sound libraries, stitch functions, and multimodal composition, constituted forms of agency that restructured the terms of engagement. This finding contributes to the growing recognition in digital *diaspora* scholarship (Andersson, 2019; Ponzanesi, 2020; Szulc, 2020) that digital platforms are not merely channels through which pre-existing identities are transmitted but arenas in which identities are actively negotiated, contested, and reconstructed.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the personal-political boundary, long theorized in feminist scholarship (Rogan & Budgeon, 2018), operates with particular intensity in the digital *diaspora* context. For Kasim and Ragil, every personal act shared on TikTok, from a cooking video to a wedding ceremony, became an irreducibly political statement by virtue of their position as openly gay Indonesian men addressing Indonesian audiences. This inversion, in which the political becomes personal and the personal becomes political simultaneously, is enabled by TikTok's collapse of the boundaries between intimate self-representation and public platform, and between diasporic private life and home-country political contestation.

Conclusion

This study has mapped the identity negotiation strategies and counter-persecution tactics employed by two Indonesian LGBT *diaspora* members on TikTok. Across 70 videos, the analysis identified four thematic strategies of identity articulation, namely performative entry and gradual disclosure, everyday domesticity and *diaspora* narration, familial and relational visibility, and direct audience engagement, as well as two counter-persecution strategies: gay visibility as strategic normalization and mock impoliteness as discursive resistance. The findings demonstrate that TikTok operates as a contested arena in which Indonesian LGBT *diaspora* subjects simultaneously construct, perform, and defend their identities against a digitally connected home-country public whose hostility is rooted in the intersecting forces of religion, heteronormative ideology, and political polarization.

The study makes three contributions. First, it extends digital *diaspora* scholarship by demonstrating that for marginalized subjects, digital media do not merely facilitate transnational connection but also extend the reach of domestic persecution into diasporic space, creating conditions of simultaneous protection and exposure. Second, it contributes to queer media studies by showing that counter-persecution on TikTok is inseparable from the platform's entertainment logic: both subjects converted hostile comments into engaging content, weaponizing humor and performativity in ways that aligned with TikTok's algorithmic incentive structures. Third, it advances methodological practice by demonstrating how critical content analysis can be operationalized for the study of short-form video platforms, attending to multimodal elements (gesture, sound, text overlay, stitch

mechanics) that purely textual analytical frameworks would overlook.

Several recommendations emerge from these findings. For future research, scholars should investigate TikTok's algorithmic moderation of LGBT content, examining how recommendation and suppression mechanisms shape the visibility and vulnerability of marginalized creators across different national contexts. Cross-referencing supportive and hostile audiences would help determine whether solidarity with persecuted LGBT *diaspora* creators extends beyond the LGBT community itself. Comparisons with other marginalized *diaspora* communities, such as religious or ethnic minorities, would illuminate whether the negotiation strategies identified here are specific to queer subjects or characteristic of digital marginalization more broadly.

In practical terms, the findings suggest that digital literacy programs for *diaspora* and LGBT communities should attend not only to self-presentation strategies but also to the development of counter-persecution repertoires suited to the affordance structures of specific platforms. Platform developers and policymakers should recognize that algorithmic amplification is indiscriminate with respect to intent: systems designed to maximize engagement inevitably amplify both creative self-expression and the hostile responses it attracts, placing disproportionate burdens on marginalized users who cannot retreat from visibility without forfeiting the very platforms through which they sustain community, connection, and identity.

Declaration of Ownership

This article is my original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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