JOURNAL OF LINGUISTICS, CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION
Vol.4, No.2, 2026: December: 373-396, **E-ISSN:** 2988-1641
https://jolcc.org/index.php/jolcc/index

Negotiating The Visible Self: Identity Regulation on Social Media Among Indonesian Military Wives

Magvira Yuliani[1], Prahastiwi Utari[2] , Ismi Dwi Astuti Nurhaeni[3], Tanti Hermawati[4]

[1,2,3,4] Faculty of Social and Political Science, Communication Study, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia
Email: magvira.yuliani@student.uns.ac.id

Submission Track:
Received: 17-09-2026, Final Revision: 19-11-2026, Available Online: 01-12-2026
Copyright © 2026 Authors



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

ABSTRACT
Social media enables self-expression while bringing personal, professional, and organizational audiences into potentially overlapping communication spaces. This article examines how Indonesian military wives negotiate the visibility of personal, professional, and military-wife identities across these audiences. It presents a focused interpretative analysis of interview material from a broader ethically approved study involving 12 participants. The focal analysis draws on seven cases identified in the available timestamped transcript-segment and participant-summary materials. Three connected patterns are examined: anticipating audiences through relational consequences; separating, withholding, or modifying identity signals; and calibrating visibility for personal and organizational purposes. The analysis suggests that selective visibility is not simply a privacy strategy or an attempt to avoid public attention. It is identity work through which participants manage when particular personal, relational, and communal identities become recognizable. A contrasting account in which a spouse-associated name is incorporated into a social-media identity shows that relational visibility may also be embraced. The article's contribution is a process-level specification of identity boundary work within Communication Theory of Identity: audience anticipation, boundary practices, and role-calibrated visibility describe how communicative responses can manage identity gaps without necessarily resolving them.

Keywords: *Identity Regulation, Social media, military spouses, Communication Theory of Identity, Indonesia*

INTRODUCTION

Social media creates opportunities to express identity while complicating the conditions under which identity is interpreted. A profile, photograph, short video, status update, or comment may be encountered by people who occupy different roles in a person's life. Family members, colleagues, friends, acquaintances, and organizational contacts may therefore encounter the same expression without sharing the same expectations. Research on context collapse shows how networked platforms bring previously distinct social contexts into a single communicative environment, requiring users to anticipate how heterogeneous audiences may interpret the same message (Marwick & boyd, 2011; Davis & Jurgenson, 2014; Brandtzaeg & Lüders, 2018). Digital self-presentation also involves persistent and curated traces that may continue to represent a person beyond the moment of publication (Hogan, 2010). The question is consequently not only what people post, but how they decide which aspects of themselves should become visible, to whom, and under what conditions.

These decisions become especially consequential when identity is evaluated relationally as well as individually. Military spouses are civilians rather than members of the armed forces, yet military employment can shape their everyday lives through mobility, family demands, community participation, and the social status attached to a partner's service position. Research on military-partner identity documents tensions among individual aspirations, family roles, community membership, and expectations associated with military life (Gribble et al., 2026; Hyde, 2017, 2024; Spikol et al., 2024; Ziff & Garland-Jackson, 2020). Military-family scholarship also identifies social media as a source of connection that raises distinctive communication and privacy considerations (Sherman et al., 2016). Research on military couples shows that relational and operational contexts can shape what spouses choose to disclose (Joseph & Afifi, 2010). Recent work on military-spouse social-media content further suggests that online representation can provide community recognition while reproducing normative ideals of wifehood (Johnson & Smith,

2026). Yet these studies leave room to examine how spouses themselves narrate decisions about visibility when an online expression may be interpreted not only as personal communication but also through a husband's institutional position or a military-affiliated social relationship.

The Indonesian context sharpens this question without making it reducible to a single national or military-wife experience. Wives associated with the Army, Navy, and Air Force may participate in different military-affiliated organizations, including Persit Kartika Chandra Kirana, Jalasenastri, and PIA Ardhya Garini. These organizations are not military command units, and wives do not acquire their husbands' formal military rank. Nevertheless, organizational roles and social recognition may be relationally connected to a husband's service position. Research on Persit has examined organizational communication, symbolic interaction, and role negotiation among members (Poerana et al., 2023). Feminist scholarship on militarization and gendered institutions shows that military relations may be reproduced through domestic and social practices as well as formal command structures (Baker et al., 2016; Basham & Catignani, 2018; Enloe, 2000; Mackay et al., 2010; Spanner, 2022).

State Ibuism is relevant here as a historically sedimented ideological context in which women's social roles have been associated with wifehood, motherhood, service, and support for male institutional actors (Suryakusuma, 2004). It should not, however, be treated as a complete explanation for each participant's choices or as proof that all contemporary organizational expectations derive directly from the authoritarian state. Cultural expectations of wifehood, patriarchal relations, organizational norms, and military institutional arrangements are analytically distinguishable. They may intersect in participants' accounts, but the present study does not independently measure their relative causal influence. The analysis therefore attends to how women describe their own relational positions and anticipated audiences rather than assuming a uniform experience across branches, ranks, organizational roles, or professional circumstances.

Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) provides the principal interpretive framework. CTI conceptualizes identity through interpenetrating personal, enacted, relational, and communal frames (Hecht, 1993). The personal frame concerns how individuals understand themselves; the enacted frame concerns how identity is expressed in communication; the relational frame concerns identities constituted through relationships; and the communal frame concerns group membership and shared meanings. Identity gaps emerge when these frames are experienced as discrepant or misaligned (Jung & Hecht, 2004). Such gaps do not necessarily indicate a fragmented or inauthentic self. They may instead reflect the difficulty of expressing a personally meaningful identity in a context where relational and communal expectations also shape what an expression is taken to mean.

Kuiper's (2023) account of identity bridging is particularly useful because it identifies psychological, behavioral, and communicative responses to identity gaps. The present article does not propose a new CTI construct or claim that selective visibility is a theoretical extension equivalent to identity bridging. Rather, it specifies a process through which bridging may occur in digital settings: participants anticipate how identity signals might be interpreted, manage the circulation of those signals across audiences, and calibrate the visibility of different roles. This specification adds an empirically grounded sequence and relational emphasis to the analysis of identity bridging. It also makes visible a form of communicative action that can be overlooked when identity negotiation is studied primarily through what people say or post: withholding, declining, omitting, and separating are also consequential identity practices.

Research on imagined audiences and context collapse helps explain why users anticipate heterogeneous viewers (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Communication Privacy Management (CPM) theory explains how people develop rules for disclosing and protecting private information (Petronio, 2002). These frameworks are complementary but do not fully answer the specific question addressed here. The present concern is not only who can access information or how audiences converge. It is how a disclosure or omission may make a

person legible as a professional, an individual, a military wife, or a representative of an organization, and how that legibility is shaped by relational ties. Accordingly, the article uses "audience-sensitive identity boundary work" as an analytic description, not a new universal theory for the identity-related work of anticipating interpretation and regulating the circulation of identity cues.

A recent conceptual paper by the authors discussed digital ibuism and the algorithmic panopticon among Indonesian military wives (Yuliani et al., 2026). The present article is distinct in its empirical question and analytic emphasis: it examines interview accounts of everyday visibility decisions and does not treat algorithmic or organizational surveillance as an established mechanism. It also complements research examining publicly available military-spouse social-media content by focusing on narrated decisions that may precede publication or result in non-publication (Johnson & Smith, 2026). The empirical focus is therefore on participants' meaning-making around posting, withholding, account boundaries, and role-specific visibility.

The study addresses one research question: How do Indonesian military wives negotiate the visibility of their personal, professional, and military-wife identities across overlapping social-media audiences? Its central argument is that selective visibility can be understood as audience-sensitive identity boundary work through which participants manage identity gaps without necessarily resolving them. This argument is deliberately bounded: it concerns the accounts examined in this study, not the prevalence of a strategy among Indonesian military wives generally.

Identity Frames, Gaps, and Bridging

CTI treats personal, enacted, relational, and communal identity as interpenetrating frames rather than isolated components (Hecht, 1993). The frames provide a way to examine how a person's self-understanding, communicative performance, relationships, and group memberships inform one another. A person may understand herself primarily as an academic or professional while also being recognized in some settings through a spouse-associated organizational identity. The identity expressed in one setting need not be false

simply because another identity is foregrounded elsewhere. Rather, the salience and recognizability of identity cues can vary with the communicative situation.

Identity gaps refer to discrepancies among identity frames and may affect communication and well-being (Jung & Hecht, 2004). Kuiper (2023) develops identity bridging to describe responses to such gaps. Bridging can involve psychological, behavioral, and communicative processes; it does not require complete integration of identities. In the present analysis, selective visibility is considered one possible communicative and behavioral response. A person may limit a profile cue, separate accounts, avoid a topic, or decline a platform invitation. These actions may make a gap more manageable in a particular situation while leaving the underlying tension intact.

CTI has also been developed to recognize the material frame of identity, including the body and territory (Kuiper, 2021). This matters for the present study because participants' accounts sometimes connect digital visibility to embodied presentation and movement between settings. A clothing change is not itself a social-media action, and it is not treated as direct evidence of online behavior. It can nevertheless illuminate how role-associated identity cues travel across contexts and why participants may attend to the visibility of such cues.

Networked Audiences, Privacy, and Identity Boundary Work

Context collapse describes the convergence of audiences that would ordinarily remain separated (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Users respond by imagining who may encounter a post and adjusting content for audiences whose expectations may differ. Digital traces can also persist beyond the immediate interaction, making identity presentation temporal as well as situational (Hogan, 2010). More recent work has examined the strategies through which users restore or adapt contexts and manage imagined audiences (Li et al., 2024; Yao et al., 2024). These studies demonstrate that audience management is not reducible to a single privacy setting.

CPM offers a vocabulary for understanding disclosure boundaries, ownership, and coordination around private information (Petronio, 2002). The current article draws on CPM

as a supporting lens but retains CTI as the principal framework. A privacy boundary concerns the flow of information; an identity boundary concerns what that information makes recognizable about the self and its relationships. The two overlap when a person limits disclosure to prevent an identity cue from being interpreted in an unwanted way. This distinction allows the analysis to ask not only whether information is shared, but what identity becomes visible through sharing.

Audience-sensitive identity boundary work is used here as a process description with three analytically distinguishable moments. First, audience anticipation: a person considers who may encounter an expression and what relational consequences may follow. Second, boundary practice: the person separates accounts, limits access, withholds content, omits identifiers, or changes presentation. Third, role-calibrated visibility: the person decides which identities to foreground, including cases in which organizational or spouse-associated identity is actively displayed. The moments are analytically distinct but may overlap in practice. This formulation does not claim that all three occur in every case or that the sequence is universal.

Gendered and Institutional Context

Feminist scholarship on militarization emphasizes that military institutions are gendered and that their effects can extend into everyday and intimate relations (Baker et al., 2016; Basham & Catignani, 2018; Enloe, 2000). Research on military wives cautions against viewing spouses either as passive dependants or as wholly autonomous actors untouched by military relations (Hyde, 2017, 2024; Spanner, 2022). Women may negotiate, reproduce, or contest expectations associated with support, respectability, and appropriate public conduct.

In Indonesia, State Ibuism provides historical context for the institutionalization of women's supportive roles, but it is not a proxy for every contemporary organizational norm (Suryakusuma, 2004; Kabullah & Fajri, 2021). The present analysis distinguishes four levels: culturally embedded expectations of wifehood; patriarchal relations that can connect

women's reputations to husbands; norms and practices within particular wives' organizations; and formal military structures that shape the status of service members. The interview material is used to understand participants' accounts of these relations. It cannot establish the formal policy of each organization or demonstrate that every participant experienced the same degree of institutional influence.

RESEARCH METHODS

Design and Interpretive Approach

This article presents a focused reanalysis of semi-structured, in-depth interview material from a broader phenomenological study of identity and adaptive communication among Indonesian military wives. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is appropriate for examining how people make sense of significant lived experiences and for preserving detailed attention to individual cases before cross-case interpretation (Smith et al., 2021). The present question narrows the broader project to accounts concerning digital self-presentation, audience management, disclosure, and identity boundaries.

The epistemological stance is interpretive. Interview accounts are treated as participants' situated descriptions and interpretations, not as transparent records of institutional policy. The analysis therefore distinguishes a participant's report of a rule, a perceived risk, an anticipated consequence, and an independently documented organizational practice. An account that a post might be monitored is evidence of the participant's anticipation; it is not, by itself, evidence that a technical monitoring system operated or that a sanction occurred.

Participants and Focused Case Selection

The broader approved study involved 12 participants, identified by pseudonymous case codes F01–F12. Participants were Indonesian women married to serving or formerly serving personnel and had experience of military-affiliated wives' organizations in Army, Navy, or Air Force contexts. The broader sample was purposive and heterogeneous in service context, organizational participation, and civilian or professional identities.

The submitted analysis identifies seven focal cases (F01–F04, F07, F09, and F12) because the available timestamped segment archive and participant-level analytic summaries contained material relevant to social-media identity, audience selection, account boundaries, online disclosure, or anticipated consequences of publication. The available audit indicates that F01–F04 are the clearest current candidates; F09 and F12 provide potentially important contrasts. This explicit qualification is important for IPA. A larger number of cases does not itself guarantee idiographic depth. The analytic unit is the participant's situated account, and cross-case patterns developed only after the individual case has been examined in context.

Data Analysis

Analysis proceeded through an idiographic-to-cross-case sequence consistent with IPA. First, the relevant interview sections were read in context to identify how each participant described being visible, withholding information, separating roles, or shifting presentation across audiences. Second, descriptive attention was given to the events and practices described; linguistic attention was paid to words indicating obligation, hesitation, discretion, anticipated judgment, and identity; and conceptual notes considered how the account related to identity frames. Third, emergent themes were developed within cases before comparison across cases. Fourth, convergences and divergences were examined, including cases in which participants separated identities and a contrasting account in which a spouse-associated name was incorporated into a social-media identity.

CTI informed the interpretation of personal, enacted, relational, and communal identity, while identity bridging and privacy boundary management were used as sensitizing concepts. These concepts were not used as a predetermined coding template. The analysis sought to preserve participant-specific meanings and avoid forcing every account into a single story of surveillance or restriction. The resulting themes are interpretive patterns in participants' accounts; they are not claims about the prevalence of a behavior among military wives.

Ethics Statement

The broader study received approval from the Research Ethics Commission, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Sebelas Maret (Approval No. 30/UN27.02/PP/EC/2026, dated 24 June 2026), for the protocol "Identity Construction and Adaptive Communication Competence of TNI Wives: A Phenomenological Study within a Military Social Organization." Participants are identified using case codes, and sensitive unit names, locations, and personally identifying details are omitted from this article. Because the study concerns social relationships in a hierarchical setting, the manuscript does not publish individual-level transcripts or raw recordings.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis identifies three connected patterns in how participants negotiated the visibility of different identities: anticipating audiences through relational consequences; managing identity boundaries through separation, withholding, and changes in presentation; and calibrating visibility differently for personal and organizational purposes. These patterns are analytically distinct but intertwined. They should not be understood as a uniform sequence experienced by every participant.

The Audience Was Relational Before It Was Technical

Participants' accounts suggest that decisions about online expression often began with an anticipated interpretation of the person rather than with a technical question about a platform setting. What mattered was not simply whether a post was public or private, but whether it could make the participant recognizable as a military wife and what this recognition might imply. In F04's account, posting a photograph from an ordinary gathering was treated differently from complaining online about a husband's work schedule or limited availability. The distinction was not between posting and not posting as such; it concerned which kinds of personal expression were considered appropriate for an audience that could connect the post to the husband's military role.

F12 described a similar calculation when civilian colleagues invited her to make TikTok videos. She explained that she understood military-affiliated expectations to require careful conduct, adding that published material could be recorded and potentially monitored. In her words, "Kami harus menjaga attitude kami … karena itu ter-record … mungkin kalau misalnya publish … akan terpantau" ("We have to maintain our conduct … because it is recorded … if it is published, it may be monitored"; F12, 05:45–06:45). The passage records F12's perception of a possible audience and consequence. It does not independently establish whether an organization actually monitored her content or whether a formal rule prohibited the videos.

F07's account also indicates that digital communication carried expectations beyond content itself. She stated, "Kita masih dibatasi untuk bicara di media sosial. Kalau bisa kita ketemu langsung" ("We are still restricted in how we speak on social media. If possible, we should meet directly"; F07, 12:30–13:00). Her account frames face-to-face interaction as preferable within the relevant organizational context and suggests that an online message may be interpreted through norms of hierarchy and etiquette. The meaning of the communication channel therefore becomes part of identity performance: how a woman speaks, and where she speaks, can position her as deferential, inappropriate, or properly situated in the group.

F01 described keeping her social-media account private and avoiding posts about internal organizational activities. This boundary indicates that the organization's life was not treated as ordinary personal content. The analytic summary also suggests that being addressed through a husband-associated name could create a sense of distance, illustrating that relational identity can be experienced as recognition and as a boundary. Considered alongside F04 and F12, the case suggests that audience management is anticipatory: participants make decisions based on what an expression could come to signify within a relational network, not only on who can technically access it.

The pattern is consistent with the concept of imagined audiences (Marwick & boyd, 2011), but it adds a relationally specific dimension. The anticipated audience is not merely a

broad, uncertain public. It may include people who can interpret a post through the participant's connection to a husband's military position or to a military-affiliated women's organization. That connection makes the likely meaning of a post consequential even when the actual audience cannot be fully identified. This is a claim about participants' sense-making, not a claim that each audience member was watching them.

Identity Boundaries Were Managed Through Separation, Withholding, and Changes in Presentation

A second pattern concerned the practical ways participants maintained distinctions among personal, professional, and organizational identities. These distinctions were not always achieved through a single privacy setting. They could involve account architecture, profile choices, selective posting, or changes in the visible signs of role when moving between settings.

F03's account describes maintaining separate Facebook spaces and limiting the personal account to people known to her. The transcript-segment file includes her account that other people rarely recognized her as a Persit member unless she introduced herself that way (F03, 23:41–25:20), alongside discussion of a second account. This presents identity as context-dependent without treating it as inauthentic. Restricting the circulation of organizational identity made it possible for a civilian or professional identity to remain foregrounded in settings where the military-wife role was not necessary to the interaction.

F01's private account and avoidance of internal organizational posts represent a related boundary practice. The significance lies less in the technical act of locking an account than in the distinction between information appropriate for personal networks and information that connects the participant to organizational life. F04 used a more selective strategy: the available account indicates that she rarely identified herself explicitly as a soldier's wife online and avoided a profile image that would disclose this association immediately. She also distinguished ordinary organizational photographs from complaints about her husband's duties or availability. These strategies differ in form, but each makes the identity relationship less automatically legible to an audience.

F12's account extends identity boundary work beyond social-media profiles to embodied presentation. When she had to move from an organizational event to her civilian academic workplace, she described changing out of the organization uniform, keeping replacement clothing in her car, and changing before going to campus. She explained, "Saya biasanya ganti. Makanya di mobil saya selalu sediakan ganti" ("I usually change. That is why I always keep a change of clothes in the car"; F12, 06:45–07:30). The clothing change is not itself a digital act, but it illuminates the same identity problem: the visible sign associated with one role may travel into a context in which another role is more relevant. The digital decisions in the same account, declining TikTok participation and anticipating how published material could be interpreted are part of this broader effort to manage when role identities become visible.

Not all identity boundaries were formed through separation. F02 described the name of her social media account is using her and husband first name has become her social-media identity. The name's combination of personal and spouse-associated elements suggests a different response: rather than hiding relational identity, it was incorporated into a recognizable personal brand. This is a useful counter-case to a simple narrative in which participants uniformly concealed military connections. Identity negotiation could involve separation, selective disclosure, or the incorporation of a relational identity into self-presentation. The relevant process was deciding which configuration of identities to make legible, not always reducing military-wife visibility.

Taken together, these cases show that identity boundaries were enacted through small, repeatable decisions. Participants changed profile cues, limited audiences, separated accounts, chose not to publish some experiences, or changed clothing when moving across roles. In CTI terms, these practices can be read as attempts to manage the relationship between personal identity and its enacted, relational, and communal expressions. They do not necessarily eliminate the gap among frames; instead, they regulate the situations in which that gap becomes publicly visible.

Visibility Was Calibrated by Role Rather Than Simply Avoided

A third pattern complicates any conclusion that participants sought to disappear from public view. The accounts indicate that visibility could be limited in one domain and actively produced in another. The important distinction was between personal disclosure and organizational representation, which may carry different meanings and anticipated consequences.

F09's analytic record describes using Instagram to publicize an organizational program, including members' craft and economic activities, while remaining highly selective about personal disclosure. Her account depicts a strong boundary around personal matters: she describes keeping some matters to herself and being selective about whom she speaks with. This suggests that being visible as an organization can be acceptable or even desirable while being personally exposed remains more tightly managed. Organizational publicity provides recognition to the group and its activities; personal disclosure may carry a different set of relational consequences. This is not a contradiction but a form of role-specific visibility.

F01's account similarly contains discussion of organizational communication boundaries and how members may be reminded about online conduct. Read cautiously, it points toward the possibility that women may participate in reproducing expectations for appropriate visibility, not only experience those expectations themselves. The current segment record interleaves interviewer and participant turns, so the exact attribution of every statement about monitoring others must be checked before this point is used as a quotation or a major claim. As an interpretive possibility, however, it raises an important distinction: the same person may be subject to norms of self-presentation and take part in maintaining those norms in organizational interactions.

F12's experience provides a contrasting example of reduced personal visibility. Colleagues invited her to make TikTok content in a civilian academic environment, but she declined because she anticipated that such content might be inconsistent with military-affiliated expectations. The refusal created friction because her civilian colleagues did not necessarily understand the restriction she perceived. Here selective non-participation was

not simply a matter of personal preference. It required her to explain one role's constraints within another social environment. Her case shows how the burden of identity management can fall on the participant who must reconcile different understandings of what ordinary social-media participation means.

F07's preference for meeting directly rather than speaking on social media adds another variation. The choice of channel itself may mark an appropriate mode of communication within the organizational context. In this sense, calibrated visibility includes more than the content of a post: it also involves deciding whether a matter should be placed on a persistent digital platform or kept within a more bounded interaction.

These examples show that visibility is not a single quantity that participants uniformly minimize. They produce organizational visibility, preserve a personal brand, restrict specific content, and withhold other forms of self-expression. The process is selective because the identities and audiences at stake are not interchangeable. A single person may be visible as an organizational participant while limiting personal exposure, or may embrace a relational identity while withholding other details.

Discussion

Selective Visibility as Identity Boundary Work

This study asked how Indonesian military wives negotiate the visibility of their personal, professional, and military-wife identities across overlapping social-media audiences. The findings suggest that identity regulation takes the form of audience-sensitive boundary work. Participants anticipate how identity signals may be interpreted, regulate the passage of those signals between contexts, and calibrate visibility differently for personal and organizational purposes. These processes are more specific than a general observation that social media complicates self-presentation: the anticipated interpretation of a digital expression is shaped by the participant's relational position in military-affiliated social life.

The findings extend CTI by specifying one communicative route through which identity gaps may be managed. Research on CTI has shown that discrepancies between personal, enacted, and relational frames can have communication consequences (Hecht, 1993; Jung &

Hecht, 2004). Kuiper's (2023) concept of identity bridging directs attention to responses to such gaps. In this dataset, bridging did not necessarily mean integration or reconciliation. A participant might preserve a professional identity by limiting military identifiers, distinguish organizational activity from personal content, or change clothing when moving into a civilian workplace. These actions manage the circumstances in which a mismatch among identity frames becomes visible, while the mismatch itself may remain.

This is a modest but important refinement. Identity theory often treats communication as a route through which identities are expressed, recognized, or negotiated. The present analysis indicates that selective non-expression can also be an identity practice. The choice not to post, to omit a profile cue, or to decline short-form video participation is not an absence of identity work. It is a communicative decision about which parts of the self should become available for interpretation in a particular setting. This finding does not require a new universal construct; it suggests that identity bridging should be examined not only through what people communicate but also through the boundaries they place around the circulation of identity-relevant information.

The findings also qualify a privacy-centered explanation. Communication Privacy Management theory helps explain decisions about disclosure and boundary permeability (Petronio, 2002), but the accounts show that access to information and the meaning of identity cannot be separated. Participants were not only trying to control who could see information. They were also trying to control whether a particular expression would make them legible primarily as a professional, an individual, a military wife, or a representative of an organization. Privacy was therefore one means through which identity was enacted and differentiated.

Beyond Context Collapse: Relationally Situated Audiences

The analysis also adds context to networked-audience research. Marwick and boyd (2011) show that users manage imagined audiences in conditions where distinct social contexts converge. Johnson and Smith (2026) similarly demonstrate that social-media

content by military spouses can challenge invisibility while reproducing normative ideals. The current study complements those approaches by focusing on narrated decisions around content that may not be posted, roles that are not made visible, and platform invitations that are declined. Public posts reveal performed identity; interviews can reveal participants' own accounts of the decisions and tensions that precede, accompany, or prevent a performance.

The Indonesian military-wife setting makes the relational dimension especially salient. Participants describe contexts in which their own conduct is understood to be connected to their husbands' reputation or to organizational expectations. This does not mean that all audiences are military audiences or that every post is interpreted institutionally. Instead, military affiliation becomes one salient possibility within the audience a participant imagines. In such circumstances, a single online expression can be understood as both personal communication and a representation of a relational tie. That possibility increases the need for role-sensitive decisions about visibility.

This contextual argument should not be overstated as an exclusively Indonesian or military mechanism. Context collapse, role-governed identity, and reputational self-presentation are not unique to this setting. The contribution lies in showing how these familiar identity processes are inflected when organizational membership and a spouse's military position are intertwined. Indonesian history and organizational arrangements provide context for the meaning of identity signals, but the data do not establish that one national culture explains all participants' choices.

Agency, Constraint, and the Costs of Self-Regulation

Selective visibility contains both agentic and constraining features. Account privacy, identity separation, and selective posting can allow a woman to sustain a professional or personal identity that would otherwise be overshadowed by her military-wife role. The incorporation of a spouse-associated name into a social-media identity shows that participants can also embrace relational identity as part of self-presentation. These

variations caution against treating privacy as resistance or visibility as compliance by definition.

At the same time, some choices are made under anticipated negative consequences. F12 describes a perceived possibility of reprimand and the practical difficulty of explaining her refusal to civilian colleagues. F04's distinction between ordinary organizational photographs and complaints about a husband's work similarly suggests that some forms of everyday expression are experienced as more-risky than others. In these accounts, women shoulder the interpretive labor of predicting how an expression might be read and adjusting it before any identifiable intervention. Gendered institutional expectations may thereby be reproduced through ordinary identity decisions, even when a participant also preserves meaningful space for herself. This ambivalence is consistent with feminist scholarship cautioning against interpreting resilience and adaptation as purely individual solutions to structurally organized burdens (Hyde, 2024; Spanner, 2022).

The analysis does not establish that differences in branch, rank, organizational position, or professional autonomy cause particular visibility strategies. The sample is heterogeneous, but the available material does not support a systematic comparison across these dimensions. However, it does show that the freedom to present the self-online is experienced as context-dependent. A restricted profile can be empowering in one sense and a sign of the burden of anticipated judgment in another. Such ambiguity is central to identity negotiation and should not be reduced to a binary opposition between agency and control. The manuscript therefore avoids generalizing one pattern to all Indonesian military wives. Future comparative work should examine how branch-specific organizational arrangements, leadership roles, husbands' positions, and women's professional autonomy shape the conditions of visibility.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined how Indonesian military wives negotiate the visibility of personal, professional, and military-wife identities across overlapping social-media audiences. The analysis suggests that identity regulation involves more than deciding

whether a post should be public or private. Participants' accounts point to the anticipation of relational consequences, the management of identity boundaries, and the calibration of visibility across personal and organizational roles. The contrasting possibility of incorporating a spouse-associated name demonstrates that selective visibility can involve embracing relational identity as well as withholding it.

The accounts suggest that women manage identity not only through what they post, but also through the identity cues they omit, audiences they restrict, roles they separate, and opportunities for visibility they decline. These practices are audience-sensitive forms of identity boundary work. They can preserve space for a personal or professional self while allowing organizational identity to be made visible where it is expected or valued. Their meaning is therefore neither simply privacy nor simple compliance. Rather, selective visibility can manage identity gaps without necessarily resolving them.

The article's principal contribution is to specify audience-sensitive identity boundary work as a process-level account of how communicative responses may manage identity gaps. By distinguishing audience anticipation, boundary practices, and role-calibrated visibility, it shows how identity bridging can occur through both expression and selective non-expression. This is a refinement of CTI-informed analysis, not a claim to have established a new universal theory. It also differentiates identity boundary work from privacy management by asking what an act of disclosure or withholding makes recognizable about the self and its relationships.

Implications for Identity Research

Three implications follow. First, studies of digital identity should analyze withholding and refusal alongside visible performances. A person who declines to publish may be actively regulating identity rather than simply remaining outside digital culture. Second, identity boundary work should be examined as relational: individuals manage not only what is disclosed but what a disclosure could signify about people, roles, and affiliations beyond the self. Third, identity bridging may preserve rather than resolve identity gaps. Researchers

should therefore avoid assuming that successful self-presentation produces a unified identity; selective separation may be the practical way a person inhabits multiple roles.

These implications are particularly relevant to interdisciplinary identity research because they connect self-regulation to social relationships and institutional context. The analysis is not intended to establish a standardized model that applies to all military families. Instead, it offers a process interpretation that may be investigated in other settings where personal identity is relationally evaluated, such as political families, diplomatic households, religious organizations, or professions with strong expectations about public conduct.

Limitations and Future Research

The study has several limitations. The sample is purposive, small, and drawn from one national context; the findings are interpretive rather than representative. The amount of directly relevant digital material varies by participant, so the themes should not be taken to imply that all 12 women engaged in every practice described. The analysis relies on self-reported accounts and does not independently establish whether monitoring occurred, how organizational leaders interpreted particular posts, or whether anticipated consequences would have happened. The study did not systematically collect or analyze participants' actual social-media profiles or platform data.

The interviews also provide accounts shaped by the interview situation and by participants' willingness to discuss potentially sensitive organizational relationships. Future research could compare narrated privacy decisions with longitudinal interviews, participant-led digital diaries, or carefully consented analysis of posts. Comparative research across military branches, ranks, generations, and civilian professional settings could examine when identity separation is most useful and when relational identity is instead embraced. Such research should maintain strict protections against exposing participants or military-sensitive details.

AI Declaration

The authors used ChatGPT and Grammarly as assistive tools for language clarity, grammar, and formatting during manuscript preparation. These tools were not used to generate,

fabricate, or alter interview data, research findings, interpretations, or bibliographic sources. The authors reviewed and edited the outputs and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript. This declaration should be checked against the journal's current AI policy and the actual use of these tools by all authors.

Acknowledgments

The researchers would like to gratefully acknowledge the promoters for their support on this research.

REFERENCES

Baker, C., Basham, V., Bulmer, S., Gray, H., & Hyde, A. (2016). Encounters with the military. International Feminist Journal of Politics, 18(1), 140–154. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2015.1106102

Basham, V. M., & Catignani, S. (2018). War is where the hearth is: Gendered labor and the everyday reproduction of the geopolitical in the army reserves. International Feminist Journal of Politics, 20(2), 153–171. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2018.1442736

boyd, d. (2014). It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens. Yale University Press.

Brandtzaeg, P. B., & Lüders, M. (2018). Time collapse in social media: Extending the context collapse. Social Media + Society, 4(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118763349

Davis, J. L., & Jurgenson, N. (2014). Context collapse: Theorizing context collusions and collisions. Information, Communication & Society, 17(4), 476–485. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2014.888458

Enloe, C. (2000). Maneuvers: The international politics of militarizing women's lives. University of California Press.

Gribble, R., Crowe-Urbaniak, D. L., Cree, A., Senior, E., & Huddlestone, E. (2026). Broadening understandings of "identity" among military partners: A multidisciplinary reflection from the United Kingdom; A research note. Armed Forces & Society, 52(2), 803–825. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X251393469

Hecht, M. L. (1993). 2002—a research odyssey: Toward the development of a communication theory of identity. Communication Monographs, 60(1), 76–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759309376297

Hogan, B. (2010). The presentation of self in the age of social media: Distinguishing performances and exhibitions online. Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society, 30(6), 377–386. https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467610385893

Hyde, A. (2017). The civilian wives of military personnel: Mobile subjects or agents of militarisation? In R. Woodward & C. Duncanson (Eds.), The Palgrave international handbook of gender and the military (pp. 195–209). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-51677-0_12

Hyde, A. (2024). Regimented life: An ethnography of army wives. Edinburgh University Press.

Johnson, A., & Smith, N. (2026). How to be a military spouse: Short-form video and the new genre of wife content. Television & New Media. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/15274764261415820

Joseph, A. L., & Afifi, T. D. (2010). Military wives' stressful disclosures to their deployed husbands: The role of protective buffering. Journal of Applied Communication Research, 38(4), 412–434. https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2010.513997

Jung, E., & Hecht, M. L. (2004). Elaborating the communication theory of identity: Identity gaps and communication outcomes. Communication Quarterly, 52(3), 265–283. https://doi.org/10.1080/01463370409370197

Kabullah, M. I., & Fajri, M. N. (2021). Neo-ibuism in Indonesian politics: Election campaigns of wives of regional heads in West Sumatra in 2019. Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs, 40(1), 57–78. https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103421989069

Kuiper, K. (2021). Communication theory of identity: A fifth frame. Annals of the International Communication Association, 45(3), 175–187. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2021.1976069

Kuiper, K. (2023). Bridging the gaps: Advancing the communication theory of identity. Communication Studies, 74(4), 302–321. https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2023.2201463

Li, P., Cho, H., Shen, C., & Kong, H. (2024). From context adaptation to context restoration: Strategies, motivations, and decision rules of managing context collapse on WeChat. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 29(1), zmad043. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmad043

Mackay, F., Kenny, M., & Chappell, L. (2010). New institutionalism through a gender lens: Towards a feminist institutionalism? International Political Science Review, 31(5), 573–588. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512110388788

Marwick, A. E., & boyd, d. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. New Media & Society, 13(1), 114–133. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313

Petronio, S. (2002). Boundaries of privacy: Dialectics of disclosure. State University of New York Press.

Poerana, A. F., Suminar, J. R., Hadisiwi, P., & Rizal, E. (2023). Symbolic interactionism and communication patterns: Insights from Army Wives Union Organizations (Persit-KCK), Indonesia. Social Sciences, 12(3), Article 172. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12030172

Papacharissi, Z. (2010). A private sphere: Democracy in a digital age. Polity Press.

Sherman, M. D., Rudi, J. H., Westerhof, L., & Borden, L. M. (2016). Social media communication among military spouses: Review of research and recommendations for moving forward. Military Behavioral Health, 4(4), 325–333. https://doi.org/10.1080/21635781.2016.1181581

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2021). Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Spanner, L. (2022). Resilient and entrepreneurial military spouses: Neoliberalization meets militarization. Critical Military Studies, 8(3), 233–253. https://doi.org/10.1080/23337486.2020.1815385

Spikol, E., McGlinchey, E., Fear, N. T., Armour, C., & Gribble, R. (2024). Who am I? A qualitative exploration of the identities of spouses/partners of UK Armed Forces veterans. Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health, 10(2), 22–36. https://doi.org/10.3138/jmvfh-2023-0068

Suryakusuma, J. I. (2004). Sex, power, and nation: An anthology of writings, 1979–2003. Metafor Publishing.

Yao, Y., Taylor, S. H., & Ransom, S. L. (2024). Who's viewing my post? Extending the imagined audience process model toward affordances and self-disclosure goals on social media. Social Media + Society. https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051231224271

Yuliani, M., Utari, P., Astuti N., I. D., & Hermawati, T. (2026). Digital ibuism and the algorithmic panopticon: Identity negotiation and privacy management among Indonesian military wives. In Proceedings of the International Conference on Communication, Digital Ecosystem, and Society (ICODES 2026) (pp. 66–80). Atlantis Press. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-622-2_5

Ziff, E., & Garland-Jackson, F. (2020). "I'm not your 'typical' military wife": The construction of gender and agency through stereotypes. Armed Forces & Society, 46(3), 376–396. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X19875488