SOCIAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN INSTAGRAM MEMES ON @MYTHERAPISTSAYS ACCOUNT

THESIS

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UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM MALANG

2025

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THESIS

Presented to

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S.)

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2025

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled **"SOCIAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN INSTAGRAM MEMES ON @MYTHERAPISTSAYS ACCOUNT"** is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

Malang, 12 December 2025

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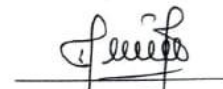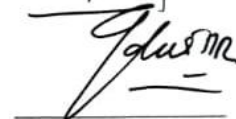
Malang, 18 December 2025

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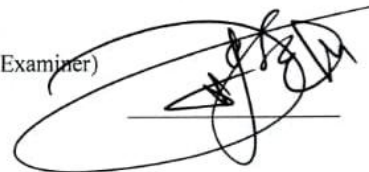
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MOTTO

إِنَّ مَعَ ٱلْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

" Sessungguhnya sesudah kesulitan itu ada kemudahan"

[Q.S Al Insyirah : 6]

"Lelah boleh singgah, namun menyerah bukan pilihan bagi jiwa yang telah berjuang sejauh ini"

" From sprinkler splashes to fireplace ashes. You've got no reason to be afraid"

You're on Your Own, Kid – Taylor Swift

DEDICATION

I lovingly dedicate this thesis to myself, who has persevered through fatigue, fear of failure, and the desire to give up. Thank you for keeping going, learning from every mistake, and believing that I could reach this point. May this page always remind me that I have struggled this far, and that I deserve to dream bigger.

ACKNOWLEDEMENT

I want to say *Alhamdulillahirobbil Alamin* to Allah SWT. I am able to be at this really unique time of my life because of His grace and guidance. I don't forget to send *Shalawat* and greetings to the Prophet Muhammad SAW. I am really appreciative that after much effort, I was able to finish this thesis to obtain a Bachelor of Literature degree in the Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University Malang.

I would also like to thank everyone who has given me encouragement, guidance, and support so that the process of writing this thesis went well. For all who always play a role in the process of writing this thesis :

1. Prof. Dr. Hj. Ilfi Nur Diana, S.Ag., M.Si., The Chancellor of Universitas Islam Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.

2. Dr. M. Faishol, M. Ag., The Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.

3. Dr. Agwin Degaf, M.A., The Chair of English Literature Department, Universitas Islam Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.

4. Dr. Hj. Galuh Nur Rohmah, M.Pd., M.Ed, is my advisor who always gives me advice and motivation so that I can go through everything in working on this thesis well.

5. My beloved my father and my mother, Mr. Supaat and Mrs. Indah Yuli who are always praying for my best. Thank you for being the best role model for me, without both of you I dare that my study will be hard, that's all because of the

ABSTRACT

Amelia, Handria Febri (2025). *Social Identity Construction in Instagram Memes on @Mytherapistsays Account*. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. **Advisor**: Dr. Hj. Galuh Nur Rohmah, M. Pd., M. Ed.

Keywords : *Social Identity Construction, Mental health issues' Memes, Instagram*

This study aims to determine how social identity is constructed through memes on the Instagram account @mytherapistsays. The examined memes address mental health issues that are currently relevant and attracting attention. This study used qualitative methods, collecting data in the form of images, text, and symbols from the @mytherapistsays Instagram account. Of the extensive data on the @mytherapistsays Instagram account, only those related to mental health issues were analyzed using Tajfel & Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory, which divides the social identity construction process into social categorization, social identification, and social comparison.

The results of the study indicate that the 10 memes studied demonstrate a sense of connection and belonging to a "group" with those experiencing similar mental health issues. During the social categorization stage, users see themselves as part of a group experiencing anxiety, depression, or exhaustion. Then, during the social identification stage, these experiences of anxiety and depression become part of their self-perception. During social comparison, users compare themselves to others both within and outside their group. This can make them feel more validated, but it can also exacerbate feelings of isolation. In short, these memes are not just a way to joke about anxiety and depression; they also form a supportive digital community that makes people feel less alone. The researcher recommends that future research may be able to examine different themes but remain within the scope of social identity construction so as to produce more varied findings.

ABSTRAK

Amelia, Handria Febri (2025). *Konstruksi Identitas Sosial dalam Meme Instagram pada Akun @mytherapistsays*. Skripsi Sarjana. Program Studi Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora. Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Pembimbing: Dr. Hj. Galuh Nur Rohmah, M. Pd., M. Ed.

Keywords : *Konstruksi identitas sosial, Meme masalah Kesehatan mental, Instagram*

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan bagaimana identitas sosial dibangun melalui meme di akun Instagram @mytherapistsays. Meme yang dianalisis membahas isu kesehatan mental, yang saat ini relevan dan menarik perhatian. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif, mengumpulkan data berupa gambar, teks, dan simbol dari akun Instagram @mytherapistsays. Dari data yang luas pada akun Instagram @mytherapistsays, hanya data yang berkaitan dengan isu kesehatan mental yang dianalisis menggunakan Teori Identitas Sosial Tajfel & Turner (1979), yang membagi proses pembentukan identitas sosial menjadi kategorisasi sosial, identifikasi sosial, dan perbandingan sosial.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 10 meme yang diteliti menunjukkan rasa keterikatan dan rasa memiliki terhadap "kelompok" dengan mereka yang mengalami masalah kesehatan mental serupa. Pada tahap kategorisasi sosial, pengguna melihat diri mereka sebagai bagian dari kelompok yang mengalami kecemasan, depresi, atau kelelahan. Kemudian, pada tahap identifikasi sosial, pengalaman kecemasan dan depresi ini menjadi bagian dari persepsi diri mereka. Selama perbandingan sosial, pengguna membandingkan diri mereka dengan orang lain baik di dalam maupun di luar kelompok mereka. Hal ini dapat membuat mereka merasa lebih diterima, tetapi juga dapat memperburuk perasaan isolasi. Singkatnya, meme-meme ini bukan hanya cara untuk bercanda tentang kecemasan dan depresi; mereka juga membentuk komunitas digital yang mendukung yang membuat orang merasa kurang sendirian. Peneliti merekomendasikan bahwa penelitian di masa depan dapat mengeksplorasi tema-tema yang berbeda tetapi tetap dalam lingkup konstruksi identitas sosial agar dapat menghasilkan temuan yang lebih beragam.

مستخلص البحث

أميليا, هاندريا فيبري (2025).بناء الهوية الاجتماعية في ميمات الانستغرام علي حساب
@mytherapistdays. رسالة بكالوريوس.برناهج دراسة الأدب الأنجليزي, كلية العلوم الأنسانية. جامعة
مولانا مالك بن أبراهيم مالانج الأسلامية الحكومية. المشرف: د.الحاج جالوه نور رحمة, ماجستير, د كتوراه,
ماجستير.

الكلمات المفتاحية :بناء الهوية الاجتماعية، ميمات مشاكل الصحة النفسية، انستجرام

===

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد كيفية بناء الهويات الاجتماعية من خلال الميمات على حساب انستجرام
@mytherapistsays. تناقش الميمات التي تم تحليلها قضايا الصحة النفسية ذات الصلة في الوقت
الراهن وتجذب الانتباه. يستخدم هذا البحث الأساليب النوعية، حيث يتم جمع البيانات في شكل صور
على إنستغرام. ومن البيانات المستفيضة على حساب @mytherapistsays ونصوص ورموز من حساب
على إنستغرام، تم تحليل البيانات المتعلقة بقضايا الصحة النفسية فقط باستخدام @mytherapistsays
نظرية الهوية الاجتماعية لتاجفل وتيرنر (1979)، التي تقسم عملية تكوين الهوية الاجتماعية إلى التصنيف
الاجتماعي، والتعريف الاجتماعي، والمقارنة الاجتماعية.

أظهرت النتائج أن الميمات العشر التي خضعت للدراسة أظهرت شعوراً بالارتباط والانتماء إلى
"مجموعة" مع أولئك الذين يعانون من مشاكل صحية نفسية مماثلة. في مرحلة التصنيف الاجتماعي، يرى
المستخدمون أنفسهم كجزء من مجموعة تعاني من القلق أو الاكتئاب أو الإرهاق. ثم، في مرحلة التماهي
الاجتماعي، تصبح تجارب القلق والاكتئاب هذه جزءًا من إدراكهم لذاتهم. أثناء المقارنة الاجتماعية، يقارن
المستخدمون أنفسهم بالآخرين داخل مجموعتهم وخارجها. وهذا يمكن أن يجعلهم يشعرون بمزيد من القبول،
ولكن يمكن أن يؤدي أيضًا إلى تفاقم مشاعر العزلة. باختصار، هذه الميمات ليست مجرد وسيلة للمزاح حول
القلق والاكتئاب، بل تشكل أيضًا مجتمعًا رقميًا داعمًا يجعل الناس يشعرون بوحدة أقل. وتوصي الباحثة بأن
تستكشف الدراسات المستقبلية مواضيع مختلفة ولكن مع البقاء في نطاق بناء الهوية الاجتماعية من أجل
التوصل إلى نتائج أكثر تنوعًا.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

In recent years, the meme phenomenon has evolved into a form of digital content dominating social media platforms. Memes are a combination of humorous text, images, or videos that convey a message (Klushina et al., 2025). Memes circulating on social media are usually closely related to everyday life. For young people who are active on social media, memes are understood as a form of social and emotional expression (Mihǎilescu, 2024). Memes are not only entertainment but also a means of conveying anxieties arising from everyday experiences in a practical, easy to understand way (Zhang, 2025).

Memes are widely shared on visual platforms. However, in recent times, many memes have been uploaded to Instagram. In fact, users often create dedicated accounts to upload memes to Instagram. Memes on Instagram vary widely in theme, including memes about romance, everyday humor, social and environmental issues, and even some memes about mental health (Febrianti et al., 2023; Polishchuk et al., 2020; Tewatia & Majumdar, 2022).

Recently, memes about mental health have received particular attention in public spaces. In recent years, mental health has become a topic of concern because it is relevant to today's youth. Young people are now highly aware of mental health issues. Therefore, memes about mental health have become a hot topic on several

social media platforms, especially Instagram (Hendrikse & Limniou, 2024; Jaramillo-Dent, 2022; Mihăilescu, 2024; Taylor & Armes, 2024).

One Instagram account that posts memes about mental health is @mytherapistsays. @mytherapistsays is an account that posts not only about mental health but also about hotly discussed social issues, environmental issues, daily experiences, student life, and romantic relationships. The account has a large following of approximately 8.1 million and has high engagement with each post, as evidenced by the numerous comments, likes, and shares of the memes uploaded. Therefore, the @mytherapistsays account is relevant to the mental health issue currently being discussed in the public sphere (Hartono, 2022; Wagner & Temmann, 2025).

Mental health memes that garner high engagement through comments and shares on Instagram can represent a shared social reality (Fernando, 2021). Through mental health memes, social reality is not only reflected but also negotiated and reproduced repeatedly on Instagram. Therefore, mental health memes contribute to the construction of social identity by strengthening a sense of community and interconnectedness among individuals through comments and reposts for those who relate to the theme (Huang et al., 2024). The construction of social identity formed through mental health memes aligns with Tajfel & Turner (1979) theory of social identity.

In the social identity theory proposed by Tajfel & Turner (1979), social identity is constructed through the processes of social categorization, social

identification, and social comparison. Memes about mental health help users categorize themselves socially by displaying labels, symbols, and narratives that represent specific groups, such as students, workers, or online communities. Through repeated engagement with relevant memes, individuals identify socially by associating themselves with these groups and internalizing the values and characteristics displayed. Furthermore, memes facilitate social comparison by emphasizing differences between in-groups and out-groups, thereby reinforcing group boundaries and individuals' positions within digital social structures. Thus, memes are not only a means of expression but also an important mechanism in the formation of social identity (Mcleod, 2023; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Zakiryanova & Redkina, 2020).

Previous research by Lee et al., (2020) on content analysis of mental health issues on Instagram showed that 758 posts about mental health discussing anxiety and depression were mostly used as a means of conveying experiences, disorders or feelings that are often experienced such as excessive anxiety and deep sadness so that people feel related to it. Another research by Akil et al., (2022) on depression memes on social media showed 32 people felt related to depression-themed memes and the effects felt after seeing the meme. So far, another study conducted by Keye (2021) on Instagram and the Memed Self shows that memes on Instagram are not just humorous content, but can be a way for someone to build a self-image through satirical memes with an aesthetic style, in addition to someone being able to display what identity they want to show in the public space through audience involvement. Yilmaz (2023) research on identity construction on Instagram shows that Instagram

is the most common platform for building self-identity through posts in the form of selfie photos, then the dominance of selfies as a form of identity expression also reflects that identity on Instagram is formed through personal and controllable visuals, so that users can "manage" how they want to be seen and recognized by their audience.

This study fills a gap by analyzing memes from the Instagram account @mytherapistsays, looking at text, visual elements, colors, captions, themes, symbols, and language style. No previous study has specifically discussed the @mytherapistsays account in terms of building social identity through mental health memes, which differs from previous research. Thus, the novelty of this study is specific focus on the @mytherapistsays account. In addition, it attempts to explain how social identity is built through mental health memes on Instagram using Tajfel & Turner's (1979) social identity theory.

This study has a linguistic uniqueness, where memes with mental health themes on the @mytherapistsays account use casual language, humor, irony, and sarcasm to package emotional experiences into short messages that are easy to share. In addition, the use of subtle irony and sarcasm allows for the expression of negative emotions, such as anxiety and emotional exhaustion, without being conveyed directly. Furthermore, the @mytherapistsays account often uses words that can form a collective identity, such as "we/us/people who...". Thus, the linguistic patterns in @mytherapistsays memes not only represent emotional experiences but also play an active role in constructing a collective social identity

in the digital space, making people feel "related" (Adeane & Stasiak, 2024; Huang et al., 2024; Kish Bar-On & Lamm, 2023).

Based on the above background, the researcher aims to innovate by analyzing the construction of social identity formed through mental health-themed memes on the Instagram account @mytherapistsays using Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory. This also addresses the research question in this study.

B. Research Questions

In this study, the researcher describes the social identity construction through the Instagram memes on the @mytherapistsays account. Based on that, the research questions are formulated as follows :

a. What is the process of social identity construction in the Instagram memes @mytherapistsays account?

b. How does the process of social identity construction appear in the data?

C. Significance of this Study

This research has theoretical and practical benefits in understanding Social identity construction in Instagram meme on @mytherapistsays account. Theoretically, this study reinforces the relevance of Social Identity Theory (SIT) within the context of Instagram memes. It further offers theoretical insights into the ways mental health issues can be communicated through quick, lightweight, and easily shared meme formats, while maintaining their social identity function.

In Practice, this research can be used to increase knowledge of social identity construction and better understand context both in general and linguistics in memes for the readers, student, specially student in majoring English literature and educators. In addition, this study can serve as a foundation for designing a more inclusive and effective communication strategy in the digital era. In this study, the writer provide additional details for other researcher who are interested in conducting further research in this field.

D. Scope and Limitations

The scope of this research is the social identity theory of Tajfel & Turner (1979), which has three main process of social identity construction namely social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. The memes analyzed in this study are those that focus on mental health issues from Instagram account @mytherapistsays. This study has several limitations, this study only analyzes the content of one Instagram account, so the results may not fully represent all social media platforms or accounts that discuss mental health issues.

E. Definition of Key Terms

Social Identity Construction

Social identity construction, refers to the process by which individuals define themselves through their affiliation with particular social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In this study, the construction of social identity on Instagram is illustrated through the use of humour and visuals in meme content, which creates a shared identity, particularly by showing everyday experiences in memes from the @mytherapistssays account.

Memes

Memes are described as "a humorous image, video, piece of text, etc., that is copied (often with slight variations) and spread rapidly by internet users", by Oxford Languages. The memes studied here focus on mental health and are analysed using social identity construction theory, with examples from the creator account @mytherapistsays.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter aims to discuss some of the related literature reviews used in this research. The purpose of the discussion is to describe the theories used in this research. The second discussion presents a literary approach, in which the researcher discusses the approach used in the study. The final discussion presents the theory, which explains the application of the theory to solving the research questions.

A. Social Identity Construction

Social identity theory helps explain how people shape social identities through digital content on @mytherapistsays. Recent studies have applied this theory to Instagram, showing that it shapes how social categories are represented in memes through processes such as **social categorization**, **social identification**, and **social comparison** (Soh et al., 2024). This study uses content analysis to explore the meanings behind digital memes on Instagram (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). By analyzing memes from the @mytherapistsays account, we can see how **social categorization**, **social identification**, and **social comparison** are reflected in digital texts and images (Zhang et al., 2024).

The **social categorization** process is when individuals group themselves and others into certain social categories, such as "us" and "them." This process helps individuals understand their position within a group. Through this process, social identity is formed and influences how individuals think and behave in accordance

with the values and norms of their group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In this study, social categorization is observed when users recognize themselves in memes depicting emotional experiences or situations related to their lives. Memes with mental health themes often make users feel that they are part of a group struggling to maintain mental health (Zakiryanova & Redkina, 2020; Zhang et al., 2024).

The meme content on the @mytherapistsays account, which uses social identity theory, is used to interpret how media conveys messages through in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). By analyzing the content of memes on the @mytherapistsays account in relation to the construction of social identity, researcher are expected to map the emotional and social representations inherent in memes that reflect the process of social comparison, as found in social identity theory (Soh et al., 2024).

The process of **social categorization** individuals involves grouping themselves and others into social categories, such as profession, gender, community, and so on. Simply put, individuals label themselves based on the groups they belong to (Mcleod, 2023). Previous research on identity construction on Instagram by Yilmaz (2023) stated that social categorization involves grouping Instagram photos/posts into specific "varieties" so that the researcher can observe the identity patterns displayed by users. Therefore, each post is not read at random; instead, it is placed into a clear category, for example: selfies, travel, food, fashion, animals, politics, memes, and so on. In this way, researcher can calculate and compare which users more frequently display themselves through which categories, thus revealing the tendencies of how they "display their identities" on Instagram.

After that, there is the **social identification** process, which explains how individuals begin to see themselves as part of a particular social group through symbols, language, and representation. The **social identification** process is a state where an individual begins to internalize membership in a particular group. Individuals accept and master the group's values, norms, and communication styles, which become part of their self-identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This process is a continuation of the social categorization process, as reflected in how the @mytherapistsays account often produces memes that express the same collective experiences and feelings among the audience, evident in each post. Producing these memes creates a virtual sense of togetherness that strengthens in-group identity through humor and relatable anxiety with each other (Kyrychenko et al., 2024; Swari, 2024).

Thus, social identity theory is highly relevant for interpreting how the Instagram account @mytherapistsays functions as an arena for expressing social identity, formed through visual language through memes (Keye, 2024). The process of social identification is created through the consumption and production of memes that showcase shared experiences, enabling others to experience similar feelings. For example, anxiety-themed memes on the @mytherapistsays account depict individual emotional experiences, allowing users to feel part of a group of people with similar experiences. Therefore, memes also serve as a medium for explaining individual membership through humor shared on social (Hu & Cheung, 2024)

After going through the two processes of **social categorization and social identification**, the next step is to move on to the next process, namely the **Social Comparison** Process. **Social comparison** is a process where individuals maintain their existing values by comparing their group (in-group) with other groups (out-group). Individuals usually look for differences that can strengthen the positive image maintained in their group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The **Social comparison** process is the final stage, in this process, individuals begin to evaluate and compare their group with other groups to strengthen their social validation (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In the context of social identity construction on the meme account @mytherapistsays, this **social comparison** is depicted through representations of groups that refer to "us" (in-group) and "them" (out-group) (Zhang et al., 2024). This allows researcher to see how the form of social comparison represented through visual memes as the formation of collective identity that appears in digital cultural practices through digital memes on Instagram (Galip, 2024).

This **social comparison** emerges through how users demonstrate their social identity through humor and visual styles shared through memes. For example, memes about mental health that discuss fatigue often emphasize the narrative that "they're fine, even though in reality they're not," thereby strengthening solidarity among group members who share similar feelings (Hu & Cheung, 2024). Research shows that social comparison on social media, especially Instagram, is not just about social status but also a means of conveying each individual's collective feelings and experiences, as well as the need for self-validation (Hu & Cheung, 2024).

B. Social Media

Social media refers to a group of digital platforms that focus on user-generated content. It is not just a means of sharing information, but also a platform for individuals to express themselves and build social connections online (Ajijola, 2023). People with similar interests can connect and share experiences on these platforms. In digital culture, features like likes, comments, and shares help social media shape collective identities through symbolic interactions, such as sharing memes and other forms of virtual humour (Bayinat, 2020). Examples of social media platforms are Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X.

In this study, the author chose Instagram as the platform used. Instagram is a photo and video-based digital platform where users create and share content. Within Instagram's digital space, users inadvertently display and shape their self-image. This process indirectly helps users construct their identities through content-sharing practices (Tewatia & Majumdar, 2022). Instagram has several features, such as reels, feeds, and stories, that facilitate the widespread dissemination of memes on social media. Meme creators use visual style and repetition to spread memes, thus creating specific groups or communities. Memes that are widely shared on Instagram are not only for entertainment but also become a tool to demonstrate one's identity (Mihăilescu, 2024).

This study explores how Instagram enables users to convey social and emotional meanings through memes by combining images, text, and symbols in a single post (Zhang et al., 2024). Instagram also supports the rapid formation of social communities by providing a space for social interaction through comments

and hashtags. These features allow users to share and respond to each other, thus forming shared identity groups (Zhang et al., 2024). Accordingly, this study examines the visual and textual aspects of user social identity formation on the Instagram platform.

In this study, Instagram is used as a place where people shape their social identity construction through memes. It is a space where people can express themselves and showcase what daily life is like. Users create an image of themselves and feel connected to groups with similar experiences (Yilmaz, 2023). By sharing memes on the @mytherapistsays Instagram account, users can show their feelings and point out the importance of mental health with funny and meaningful posts. This matches research that Instagram, by spreading memes, acts as a way for people from different backgrounds to share values, feelings, and symbols of their social groups online (Putri, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024).

Instagram is a useful digital platform for studying identity formation in this research. It supports systematic data collection and image grouping, which is expected to assist researcher in their data collection (Rogers, 2021). Researcher will find it easier to collect data for analysis, facilitated by the presence of hashtags, making it easier to search for data to be collected on Instagram. Thus, by examining memes on Instagram from the account @mytherapistsays, the researcher can explore how images, text, and symbols construct social identity and how group identity narratives are built through posts that reinforce social identity dynamics (Rahman et al., 2022).

C. Memes

A meme is a type of digital content consisting of images and text that shares a message. Memes act as cultural units for conveying social and emotional meaning. Memes are a medium of expression that can convey experiences, humour, or social criticism (Anuar & Yusuf, 2023). In this study, memes are digital messages and texts that help share social experiences and humour, actively impacting group perception and shared understanding. Memes are seen as units of cultural meaning that change over time as people use them (Phillips & Milner, 2021).

The meaning contained in memes emerges from images and text combined to convey feelings often experienced by many people, and sometimes by the users themselves. Previous research by Akil et al., (2022) stated that memes about mental health with a depression theme shared through posts made other users or audiences feel connected to the same thing. Another research by (Keye, 2021) stated that memes on Instagram not only serve as humorous content but can also be used as a medium to shape self-image through aesthetically packaged satirical humor. Through memes, someone can highlight the identity they want to present in the digital public space, and this process is strengthened by audience engagement such as likes, comments, or shares.

In this study, the researcher chose memes with a mental health theme because they relate to the lives of today's youth. The memes used consisted of images, text, and symbols found in memes on the @mytherapistsays account. It is hoped that by choosing memes with a mental health theme, researcher can convey

messages that can construct user identities within them. Memes on Instagram can

convey meaning by combining images, expressions, and short texts to represent a

person's experiences (Swari, 2024)

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter discusses the methods employed by the researcher in this study. This research method comprises the research design, research instrument, data and data source, data collection, and data analysis.

A. Research Design

This study used qualitative methods with content analysis techniques to understand how social identity construction emerges in memes uploaded by the Instagram account @mytherapistsays. Qualitative research methods are essentially a method of interpreting a phenomenon or symptom, both of the perpetrator and the product of their actions. The quality of qualitative research depends on the researcher (Rahardjo, 2020). This method was chosen because the researcher reads, observes, and interprets the messages hidden behind the text, images, and visual elements contained in the meme in depth.

Through this approach, the researcher hopes to understand the symbolic meanings conveyed in the memes through the text, images, and symbols used. The interpretation process is crucial because memes often convey emotional and social experiences concisely and simply. Therefore, their meaning must be interpreted based on the cultural context and the social media users of the account @myterapistsays.

This study uses Social Identity Theory as a theoretical foundation to identify how memes construct and maintain specific social categories. The memes chosen

were themed around mental health issues. This study found that users perceived the humor, complaints, or experiences depicted in the memes as reflecting their membership in a particular community. Memes serve as a tool to strengthen a sense of community and demonstrate the boundaries between "us" and "them" (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

B. Research Instrument

This is qualitative research, with the researcher as the primary instrument. The researcher is not only the data collector throughout the entire study, researcher direct involvement in the analysis process is expected to yield meaningful and valid findings. As the primary instrument, the researcher also plays a role in focusing the research, selecting relevant data sources, and interpreting the meaning behind the collected data. Therefore, the researcher is not only collecting data but also interpreting its meaning. Therefore, the researcher involvement as the primary instrument is crucial, as the researcher plays a role from beginning to end. The researcher is expected to be reflective and critical in their research. The researcher also hopes that the research results will be in-depth and relevant for further research.

C. Data and Data Source

The data collected in this study are memes about mental health issues, as they are highly relevant to today's youth. The data in this study consists of visual content from the @mytherapistsays account, including images, symbols, text, and visual elements such as backgrounds and colors. By analyzing these elements, the

researcher hope to understand how memes shape and represent social identities on social media, especially Instagram.

The data source for this study was taken from the Instagram account @mytherapistsays. This account posts satirical memes about mental health that are relatable to today's youth. With a following of 8.1 million, this account was chosen by the researcher as the subject of this study. Only memes about mental health will be used in the analysis. The researcher found this interesting because mental health issues are so relevant to today's lives.

D. Data Collection

The data collection process had several stages. First, the researcher opened the Instagram account @mytherapistsays as the main data source. Then, the researcher collected data in the form of memes in the form of images, text, or symbols through direct screenshots from the account. The memes used as data focused on memes about mental health, specifically anxiety, depression, and exhaustion, chosen for their relevance to everyday life. The data were collected between August to November 2025, during a period when mental health issues became a hot topic and interested the author. The researcher gathered memes about depression, anxiety, and exhaustion from the @mytherapistsays account.

E. Data Analysis

To answer the research problems, the researcher conducted several data analysis steps. After all the meme data from the @mytherapistsays account was collected, the researcher began analyzing it using Tajfel and Turner's social identity

theory. This theory helps researcher understand how individuals or groups demonstrate, construct, and negotiate their identities through mental health-themed memes on Instagram. Thus, the meme content analysis at this stage uses social identity theory which provides researcher with an overview of how social identity construction is formed through meme humor spread on the @mytherapistsays account.

In this study, the researcher conducted an analysis through several stages, namely: the **social categorization** stage, the researcher carried out this stage by grouping memes based on mental health themes such as anxiety, exhaustion, and depression. The next stage is **social identification**, this stage the researcher aims to see how the meme shows social identity such as how users describe themselves as people experiencing mental health issues. The next stage is social comparison, through this stage, researcher can see how the messages conveyed through memes are not only for entertainment, but also provide an overview of the social and psychological experiences of their users.

In conducting data analysis, the researcher used data triangulation method. Data triangulation method is a method used to test the truth of information so that the information can be truly trusted (Sugiyono, 2006). Data triangulation in this study was carried out through triangulation of sources, methods, and theories. From the source side, the data not only came from the main content in the form of image memes and captions on the Instagram account @mytherapistsays, but also supplemented with audience responses through comments and engagement information in the form of leaving comments, posting dates and number of likes to

see how the audience responded and felt "related". From the method side, the researcher analyzed the content by mapping the process of social identity construction with simple linguistic and visual analysis to strengthen the findings from the aspects of word choice, humor style, language style and visual elements used. The findings were then interpreted using theoretical triangulation, especially Social Identity Theory, to explain the formation of in-groups, out-groups, and audience engagement as an indicator of the formation of a sense of community membership that feels related.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The chapter consists of findings of the research and its discussion. The findings are to answer the research question of this study. Additionally, an analysis of the findings is discussed in a brief explanation.

A. Findings

This study explains how memes about mental health issues from the @mytherapistssays account helps people form a social identity. Many memes show experiences like anxiety, stress, and emotional exhaustion in a relatable way. This helps users feel like they belong to a group of people who face mental health challenges every day. In this study, researcher sorted memes that focus on mental health issues. Some of these memes illustrate how people can recognize their place within a group.

This stage, supported by social identity theory, describes how an individual becomes comfortable and connected to a group due to shared experiences. They see themselves as part of the group through symbols, language, and representation. This is known as the **social identification** process, the second stage following **social categorization**. Here, individuals internalize group membership, accepting its values, norms, and communication styles as part of their identity. After individuals begin to recognize their involvement in a particular group, they typically maintain their existing values by comparing their in-group (the group to which they belong) with other groups (out-groups). In social identity theory, this is referred to as the

social comparison process, the final stage of the process. In this stage, individuals compare their group with others to strengthen social validation. Researcher present data as memes, images, text, and symbols, which are analysed using social identity theory.

The data on the results of the meme analysis are as follows:

Datum 1

Figure 1 Example of first meme

(August 2, 2022). The meme post received 101 likes, 13 comments, and 15 reposts.

The caption in the meme reads, *"getting ready to clock in for my shift at the becoming really anxious over nothing factory."* The meme portrays someone who is "ready to clock in" for a "shift" at a "factory" that produces intense anxiety for no reason, as if anxiety were a daily routine or regular job. The researcher also

conducted data triangulation by incorporating a linguistic analysis focused on language style. The meme uses everyday slang such as "clock in" and "shift," which are commonly used on social media, creating a casual tone. It also relies on ironic humor: the phrase "getting ready to clock in for my shift" sounds like someone preparing to go to work, but in reality it indicates the writer's recurring anxiety. In addition, the meme employs hyperbole by framing anxiety as a "full-time job" and something "produced" in a factory, creating a dramatic effect that audiences may find relatable.

According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the meme constructs **social categorization** process by positioning the *in-group as "us,"* namely people who become anxious easily, and the *out-group as "them,"* namely people who do not experience anxiety in the same way. In the **social identification** process, the use of "my shift" indicates that the writer aligns themself with the anxious in-group. Through **social comparison**, the meme encourages audiences who share similar experiences to feel understood and accepted, reinforcing the sense that they are not alone.

Researcher triangulated data from comments on the meme posts. Several comments supported the meme's relevance to people experiencing anxiety.

Picture 1 Example of netizen relatable comments

Four out of thirteen comments indicated that audience members related the meme to their own lives. For example, the account @themadmanski commented: "This is actually me clocking into a shift of trying to sleep that never actually happens because I'm riddled with anxiety and only get shards and splinters." This comment shows that the audience member strongly identified with the meme's depiction of recurring anxiety, particularly in relation to difficulty sleeping. Another comment from @kittysitter88 stated: "I feel so called out right now. Not me over here having a panic attack over having a busy afternoon." Here, the audience member expresses feeling "called out," suggesting that the meme closely mirrors their personal experience and therefore feels relatable. In addition, the meme was reposted by 15 users, which may indicate that they also found the content relatable.

Based on the analysis above, the meme constructs the writer's social identity as someone who frequently experiences anxiety, but frames this experience through humor. As a result, readers are encouraged to relate to the content and to feel part of a group that shares similar anxiety-related experiences. In this way, anxiety is presented as something more normalized and socially accepted among those who experience it, while also fostering a sense of togetherness through shared recognition of recurring anxiety.

Datum 2

Figure 2Example of second meme

(26 October 2025) The meme post received 139 likes, 122 comments, and was reposted 3,576 times.

The caption reads, "*When your social battery ran out but you can't leave yet,*" accompanied by an animation featuring Elmo and friends, with an additional line: "Mentally I've left the chat." The meme focuses on social exhaustion a state in which someone feels drained from interacting but is unable to leave the situation. In terms of language style, it uses metaphor, particularly the phrase "social battery," which frames social energy as something like a phone battery that can be depleted through use. It also uses the slang expression "left the chat," commonly used on social media to describe a person who is no longer mentally engaged in a conversation even though they remain physically present.

The visual elements further reinforce this meaning. Elmo's tense, stiff, and serious expression suggests discomfort and emotional exhausted, which can be interpreted as a person who has run out of social energy. Meanwhile, the other characters appear to be actively conversing, indicated by open-mouth expressions. The bright colors of the characters and the lively surrounding scene create the impression that the environment remains busy and social, while the central figure is already depleted and overwhelmed.

According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the meme constructs **social categorization** by positioning the *in-group ("us")* as individuals whose social battery drains quickly people who become socially tired, require breaks, and are easily overstimulated while the *out-group ("them")* consists of those who can continue chatting, remain energetic, and still enjoy social interaction. This **social categorization** is strengthened by the term "social battery," which

makes the idea of social exhaustion easy for audiences to understand as a shared, recognizable experience.

In the process of **social identification**, the meme uses the word "your" in "When your social battery…" to directly draw the audience into the experience, implicitly inviting them to see themselves in the scenario. The phrase "left the chat" further supports identification by describing a familiar digital behavior that translates well into offline social situations. As a result, audiences who frequently experience social exhausted may more readily identify themselves as people with limited social energy, increasing feelings of relatability and fostering a sense of togetherness.

In terms of **social comparison**, the meme highlights the contrast between the in-group ("us") and the out-group ("them") through the combined use of text and visuals. This comparison contributes to the normalization of social exhaustion by presenting it as common and understandable suggesting that feeling drained is not a personal failure, but simply the result of a depleted "social battery."

To triangulate the findings, the researcher also analyzed audience responses in the comment section. Several comments indicated that viewers related the meme to experiences of exhaustion. Five comments were identified as explicitly expressing relatability (from accounts such as @mariafoxe2024, @truterrance_writes, @m98.p1, @the_mystic_ot_, and @tootiredtocarequotes). Additionally, the high number of reposts (3,576) may suggest that many users found the meme personally relevant and worth sharing.
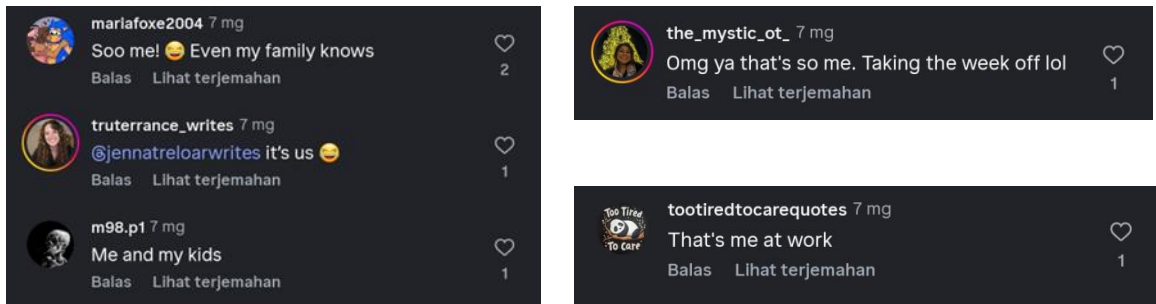
Picture 2 Example of netizen relatable comments

This meme presents a social identity aligned with a group of people who easily "run out of social energy." Through humor, it normalizes that experience and fosters a sense of belonging: mental exhausted in social situations is framed as a collective experience, so audiences who relate to it feel understood and less alone when they experience exhaustion or social burnout.

Datum 3

Figure 3Example of third memes

(13 November 2025) The meme post has 183 likes, 209 comments, and 7,824 reposts.

The caption in the meme is "*when you're exhausted because of depression but awake because of anxiety."* The meme creator also added a note to the post: "Anxiety says Good morning at 11.47 pm." The meme depicts a person's mental condition experiencing anxiety, leading to difficulty sleeping. The meme uses a simple and seemingly relaxed style of language that is easy for readers to understand. Personification is also found in the language style, where "Anxiety said" is portrayed as a disruptive "thing," adding a relatable humorous effect.

The visual element uses the figure of Lisa Simpson as a representation of someone experiencing mental health issues like anxiety. The meme emphasizes two simultaneous conditions: the left image shows a body lying lethargically in a room,

depicting depression that makes someone extremely exhausted, while the right image shows a close-up of open eyes with a tense expression, representing anxiety that triggers overthinking, making it hard to truly rest. The visual colors are dominated by dark pink, giving a warm yet oppressive feel, like the atmosphere of insomnia: dark, silent, but with a busy mind.

According to Social Identity Theory (1979), the **social categorization** process in the meme creates an in-group category as "us," namely people who feel mental exhaustion due to depression while also experiencing difficulty sleeping or overthinking due to anxiety, and an out-group as "them," namely people who are not in that situation, so they can rest normally and do not experience anxiety. The social categorization process is strengthened by the explicit use of terms like "depression" and "anxiety," affirming that what is being discussed is not just ordinary tiredness, but exhaustion directly related to mental health issues.

In the **social identification** process, this meme shows strong identification through the use of the word "you're," which directly invites the audience into the situation. Readers who feel related tend to position themselves as part of the depicted experience, so the meme functions as a marker of in-group membership, where those experiencing the condition are considered part of the same group. Moreover, since the experience is conveyed through a common meme format, the heavy condition feels more "normal" and safe to acknowledge, allowing the audience to express their identity and experiences.

In the **social comparison** process, the meme compares the experiences of "ordinary" people with those of the group experiencing depression and anxiety. Many people, when tired, can sleep and wake up feeling refreshed. But for those with anxiety, even though their bodies are very exhausted, their minds remain active and they have trouble sleeping. As a result, instead of recovering, they become even more drained. This comparison makes those who relate feel that their experiences are indeed different and only truly understood by others who have gone through something similar, thus creating a sense of "shared fate" and solidarity.

The researcher conducted data triangulation sourced from comments on the meme post. Several comments support that the meme relates to people experiencing anxiety. The researcher found 9 comments from the audience who feel related to their lives. Additionally, 7,824 people who reposted likely feel related to the meme. For example, a comment from the account @mrschristinawalls saying "I feel this so much" illustrates that she also feels related to such a mental condition. This is followed by other comments from the audience who also experience the same mental condition.
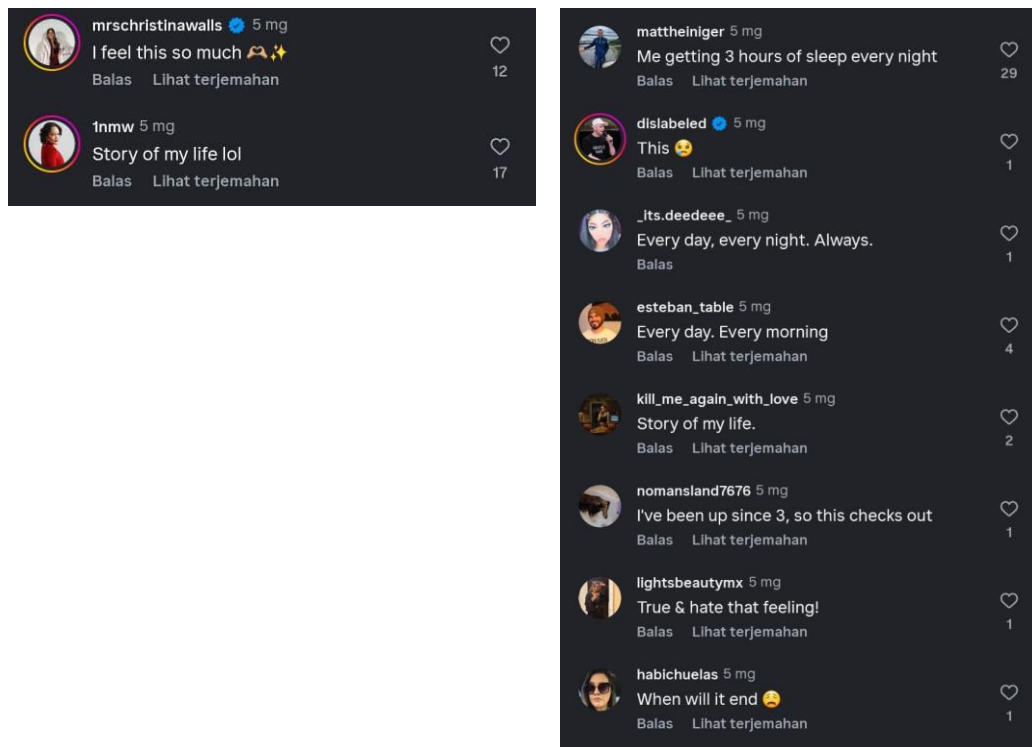
Picture 3Example of netizen relatable comments

The meme portrays a social identity as a member of a group experiencing "mental exhaustion" due to anxiety, where the image shows someone emotionally drained to the point of being unable to sleep. Through humor and the meme format, this identity is framed as a collective, "relatable" experience, thereby fostering a sense of camaraderie among those who share similar experiences.

Datum 4

Figure 4 Example of fourth of meme

(September 26, 2025) The meme post has 284 likes, 115 comments, and 1,824 reposts.

The caption in the meme is *"Me to my anxiety: People are focused on themselves. They're not thinking about you. Depression: ever. Me: that's not what I meant."* The meme creator also added a note to the post: *"me, a full-time hostage of my brain."* The meme contains a brief conversation between oneself, anxiety, and depression. The character "me" tries to calm anxiety by saying that most people are actually busy with their own affairs and don't think too much about us. However, depression responds as if affirming that no one will ever think about or care. The researcher found a casual language style with short sentences in the

meme. The personification style depicts "my anxiety" and "depression" as if they are an internal conflict that is easy to understand. The researcher also found visual elements with a white background and black text, emphasizing the focus on the dialogue content.

According to Social Identity Theory (1979), the **social categorization** process in the meme creates an in-group category as "us," namely people who live with a combination of anxiety and depression, often trapped in overthinking, internal dialogue, and clashing negative thoughts. The out-group is "them," people who do not experience this pattern and can usually calm themselves. The social categorization process is reinforced by the use of terms like "my anxiety" and "depression," which affirm that what is discussed is not just ordinary sadness or worry, but a distinctive mental experience within a specific group.

The **social identification** process in the meme is evident in: First, the word "me" appears repeatedly, so the creator portrays themselves as someone who is "chatting" and trying to manage their own thoughts. Second, anxiety and depression are depicted as characters that can be talked to, as if there are two voices in the head that interfere and create many thoughts. Thus, since this experience is often felt by many people, the meme makes readers who relate feel, "I've been there too," and ultimately feel they have a "group" with similar experiences.

The **social comparison** process in the meme shows two opposing voices: anxiety makes someone afraid of being judged and feel as if others are constantly thinking about them, while depression fosters the belief that they are insignificant,

so no one will care. This social comparison affirms the distinctive experience of the in-group, which not only faces one problem but two conflicting thought drives that often mess things up. Therefore, this meme evokes a sense of solidarity with those who have experienced similar thought patterns.

The researcher conducted data triangulation sourced from comments on the meme post. Several comments support that the meme is relatable to people experiencing anxiety and depression. The researcher found 6 comments from the audience who felt it related to their lives. Additionally, 1,824 people who reposted it likely felt relatable to the meme. For example, a comment from the account @cupcakesandcarryon: "Hello welcome to my brain," illustrates that they also feel relatable to the same mental condition, as turmoil in their thoughts often occurs. This is followed by other comments from the audience who also experience the same mental condition. The meme creator also added a post note with "me, a full-time hostage of my brain," which supports that the condition is also felt by the creator, so they posted it because they felt related.
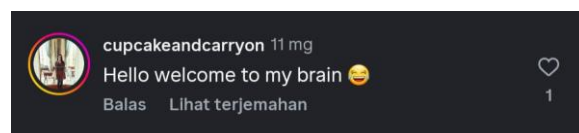
Picture 4 Example of netizen relatable comments
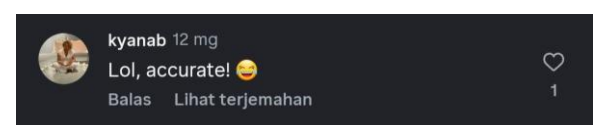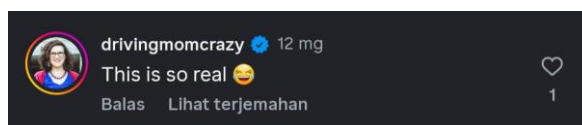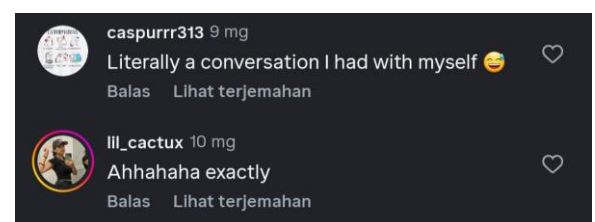
By triangulating the data, researcher concluded that this meme constructs a social identity as someone struggling with anxiety and depression, to the point of feeling "trapped" by their own thoughts. Through humor, this experience is made lighter and more relatable, fostering a sense of community among those who grasp the meaning, likely because they have experienced similar experiences.

Datum 5

Figure 5Example of fifth meme

(September 21, 2025) The meme post has 151 likes, 114 comments, and 1,187 reposts.

The caption in the meme is "*Is it my intuition or My anxiety? A memoir.*" The meme creator also added a note to the post: *"could go either way, but I'll spiral about it regardless."* The meme depicts a common dilemma experienced by

someone who is often confused about whether the "bad feeling" that arises is truly trustworthy intuition or just anxiety triggering overthinking and fear. The phrase "A Memoir" makes it funny because it portrays this confusion as if it has become a recurring experience. The Instagram caption also affirms that whether the answer is intuition or anxiety, in the end, thoughts will still "loop" and keep thinking about the worst possibilities.

The researcher found the language style in the meme to be ironic humor with "A Memoir" exaggerating (hyperbole) the experience as if it were long and exhausting, but funny because it's relatable. The concise and short language style makes it easy for the audience to understand quickly. The researcher found visual elements; this meme is made very minimalist with a white background and black text, so readers' attention is directly focused on the message content, like a voice in the mind. Its form, resembling a tweet screenshot, gives the impression of an honest, spontaneous, and typical online rant.

According to Social Identity Theory (1979), the **social categorization** process in the meme creates an in-group category as "us," namely people who often overthink, are easily doubtful, and experience anxiety, thus constantly questioning whether the feelings that arise are real or just excessive thoughts. The out-group is "them," depicted as people who are more trusting of their feelings and can make decisions. The social categorization process is reinforced by the use of terms like "intuition vs anxiety," which become a hallmark of the distinctive experience of the group that often struggles with anxiety.

The **social identification** process in the meme is evident in the use of the word "My," which shows that the creator associates the experience with themselves, thus placing themselves as part of the group that often experiences confusion between intuition and anxiety. "A Memoir" also gives the impression that this issue is not a one-time occurrence but a recurring experience that has become like a "life story." As a result, readers who feel relatable will more easily identify themselves and think, "I also often can't distinguish if this is intuition or anxiety."

The **social comparison** process in the meme shows the comparison that occurs in the meme creator: on one side, there is intuition that feels like a "correct" signal or a reasonable warning, but on the other side, there is anxiety that feels like a "danger" signal and triggers overthinking. Because these two signals often feel similar, an internal conflict arises that makes someone even more confused about which one to trust. Ultimately, this meme builds a sense of camaraderie because such dilemmas are usually truly understood only by those who have also experienced the same thought patterns.

The researcher conducted data triangulation sourced from comments on the meme post. Several comments support that the meme is relatable to people experiencing anxiety and depression. The researcher found 4 comments from the audience who felt it related to their lives and representative of the many comments. Additionally, 1,187 people who reposted it likely felt relatable to the meme. For example, comments from accounts @maureen419, @navetta_c, @wildspun_fibers, @dianedavis2813 say that it's true like what they experience in their daily lives.
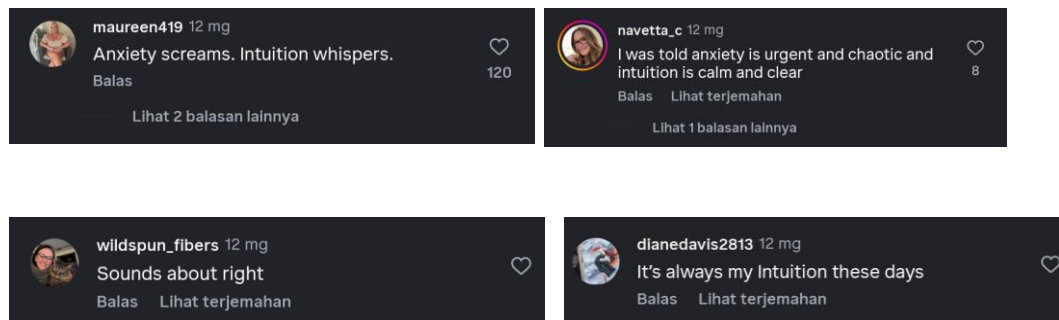
Picture 5Example of netizen relatable comments

The meme "Is it my intuition or my anxiety?" constructs a social identity of someone who is frequently anxious yet self-aware, because they openly acknowledge a thought pattern that keeps looping until it becomes difficult to tell what is a reasonable gut feeling (intuition) and what is an excessive fear-driven reaction (anxiety). By framing this dilemma through humor, the meme makes the experience of overthinking feel safer and more acceptable to admit, so people who relate can feel less alone, knowing that many others struggle with the same uncertainty.

Datum 6

Figure 6 Example of sixth meme

(25 November 2025) The meme post received 205 likes, 919 comments, and was reposted 15.2K times.

The caption reads: *"When he still loves me even though I complain about everything, never know what I want to eat, am always tired, always anxious, and have 12 different personalities."* The creator also adds: *"Peaceful? No. Entertaining? Always."* This meme suggests that the "I" persona sees themselves as "complicated"—someone who complains often, gets tired easily, feels anxious, and experiences fluctuating emotions yet their partner still loves and accepts them.

The researcher identifies a language style characterized by hyperbole and self-deprecating humor, especially in the phrase "12 different personalities," which is clearly exaggerated for comedic effect and to represent rapidly shifting moods.

The line "Peaceful? No. Entertaining? Always." further emphasizes that this "complicated" state is not framed as damage or dysfunction, but as something with a unique side that can still be accepted.

Visually, the meme shows two clay/stop-motion characters hugging. Their gentle body language where the green character appears to embrace, while the brown character leans in comfortably turns the hug into a symbol of safety, support, and acceptance. The color choices also reinforce this mood: teal-green and brown against a neutral background create a warm, calm, and "soft" atmosphere.

According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the meme's **social categorization** process constructs an **in-group** as "us": people who feel they are "too much"—often complaining, struggling to decide small things like what to eat, getting tired easily, feeling anxious, and experiencing rapidly changing emotions. The **out-group** is constructed as "them": people who are more stable and calm, who do not feel as complicated, or who do not see those traits as part of their identity.

The meme's **social identification** process appears in how the "I" persona describes themself openly. The phrase **"he still loves me"** positions this identity not as something shameful, but as a condition that remains deserving of acceptance and love. As a result, readers who share similar experiences can easily *relate*, and the meme functions as a marker of membership helping people with similar mental and emotional experiences recognize one another and feel like part of the same group.

Finally, the memes **social comparison** process indirectly contrasts the "I" persona with an idealized image of a person or partner who is expected to be calm, not complain too much, make decisions easily, and not feel anxious. However, by listing the complaints and struggles, the meme highlights that the "I" persona feels they fall on the opposite side of that standard appearing "not a good fit" or as if they do not meet "perfect" expectations.

Researcher triangulated data sourced from comments on the meme post. Several comments were found that supported the meme's relevance to people experiencing anxiety. Researcher found three comments from audiences who felt it related to their lives and represented many of the comments. Furthermore, as many as 15.2K people who reposted it likely felt it related to the meme. For example, comments from the accounts @itsjinhee_ @kristinonthefritz @taaner.gaan said it was true, as was their experience in their daily lives, while others expressed gratitude for having such a partner and felt it was real love.

Picture 6 Example of netizen relatable comments

The meme builds a social identity as someone who is often anxious, easily tired, and feels that they are "complicated" or messy, but still wants to be understood as a relatable and lovable person. The meme conveys a message of togetherness that even people who feel "chaotic" can still find a safe space, because there are still people who are willing to accept and love them for who they are.

Datum 7

Figure 7 Example of seventh meme

(31 August 2025) The meme post received 62 likes, 110 comments, and 753 reposts.

The caption reads: "*Me watching my husband sleep soundly at 2 am instead of being wide awake with anxiety like me.*" The meme creator also adds the text

"Must be nice." This meme depicts a situation at 2 a.m. where the husband can sleep peacefully, while the "I" persona remains awake due to anxiety. The emotions conveyed feel mixed exhaustion, a hint of envy, and a sense of disbelief.

In terms of language style, the meme uses casual, conversational phrasing ("Me watching…"), which reads like a short, quick narrative. There is also an ironic tone, especially through the line "Must be nice," so the complaint about anxiety is framed as relatable humor rather than a heavy confession. The visual elements show a male figure with a sarcastic, irritated expression as if saying, "Seriously?" which effectively represents the jealousy and frustration of watching someone else sleep soundly. The warm, homey background creates a sense of comfort, yet it contrasts with the anxious text, suggesting that even in a calm environment, the mind can remain unsettled. The composition is simple and emphasizes facial expression, making the emotional message immediately clear.

According to Social Identity Theory (1979), the process of **social categorization** in memes creates an in-group category as "us," people who often overthink or experience anxiety to the point of difficulty sleeping and staying awake at night, and an out-group as "them," people who can sleep soundly without being burdened by thoughts. In the process of **social identification**, the use of the phrases "Me..." and "like me" shows that the author directly includes himself in the group of people who lie awake at night due to anxiety. In this way, what was initially a personal experience becomes a shared experience, as readers can relate to it. Ultimately, it serves as a sign of membership: people with similar experiences can recognize each other and feel that they belong to the same group. In the process of

social comparison, the meme relates to everyday situations where one person can truly rest, while another is trapped in their own thoughts. As a result of this comparison, mixed emotions such as envy, annoyance, or resignation arise. At the same time, the meme provides a sense of validation because the people who understand this condition best are usually those who have also experienced insomnia due to anxiety.

Researcher triangulated data sourced from comments on these meme posts. Several comments were found that supported the idea that these memes relate to people who experience anxiety. Researcher found three comments from audiences who felt that the memes related to their lives, representing many of the comments. In addition, as many as 15,200 people who reposted the memes likely felt that they related to them. For example, comments from accounts such as @loveyourselfmorre, @bekahkereld, and @pattytime stated that the meme was relatable to what they experience in their daily lives. There were also comments indicating that the audience had just experienced it the previous night and that every night felt the same way.
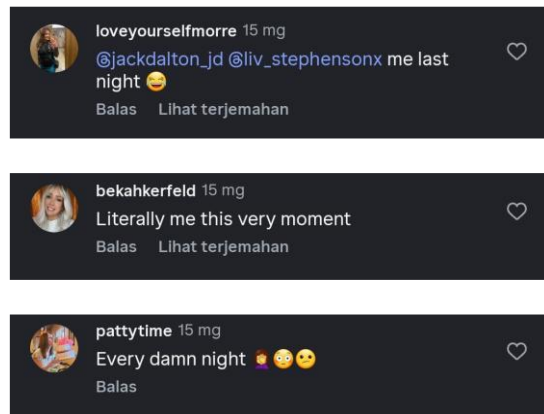
Picture 7Example of netizen relatable comments

This meme shapes social identity as someone who lives with anxiety to the point of frequently staying awake at night, making them feel "different" from people who can sleep normally, even from their own partner. Through humor and lighthearted reactions, the experience of anxiety feels safer to share. Ultimately, this meme also builds a sense of togetherness through shared experiences.

Datum 8

Figure 8 Example of eighth meme

(October 26, 2025). The meme post received 175 likes, 124 comments, and was reposted 2,916 times.

The meme's caption reads: *"Winter is coming, get ready for seasonal depression." followed by "Me who has been depressed the entire year:"*

The meme uses a sarcastic and ironic language style, shown through the contrast between the serious warning in "get ready for seasonal depression" and the resigned response. It also includes dark humor as a coping mechanism. In the post, the creator adds the line "It's my time to shine," which further strengthens the irony because the phrase is usually associated with happiness or success, while the text and visuals instead convey emotional exhaustion. Visually, the meme features an image of a female figure that represents deep inner suffering. The image is

dominated by dull brown tones, which suggest sadness and silence, supporting the message of depression conveyed in the text.

The process of **social categorization** in this meme creates two main groups: the **in-group**, consisting of individuals who experience seasonal depression, and the **out-group**, consisting of individuals who experience depression throughout the entire year. In this context, the meme creator and the audience who relate to it implicitly position themselves within the group that has been depressed all year, distinguishing themselves from those who are "just getting ready" for seasonal depression.

In the stage of **social identification**, the phrase *"Me who has been depressed the entire year"* suggests that depression is no longer framed as a temporary condition, but as an ongoing experience that becomes part of one's self-definition. The use of the pronoun *"me"* strengthens both the personal and collective dimensions, because it invites audiences with similar experiences to see themselves reflected in the meme's narrative. In this way, the meme functions as a form of recognition of a shared social identity: individuals who continuously struggle with depression as a mental health issue.

Finally, through **social comparison**, the meme contrasts people who are preparing for seasonal depression with those who have already been living in that condition for a long time. This comparison does not merely highlight differences; it also builds **emotional solidarity** among those who identify with the "depressed all year" group, because the meme's humor and irony reinforce a sense of togetherness through a shared experience of ongoing distress.
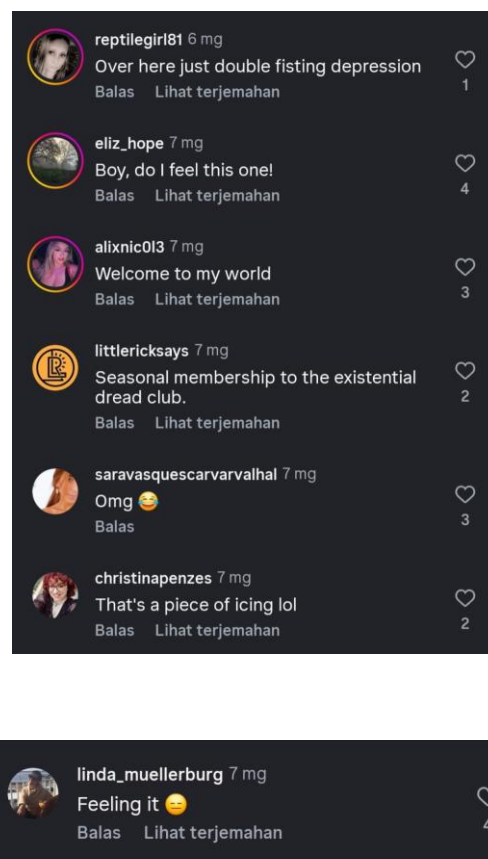
Picture 8 Example of netizen relatable comments

From several comments on the post, some audience members expressed that they could relate, as shown by comments that validated and supported their experiences. Comments from the accounts @eliz_hope, @alixnic013,

@christinapenzes, and @linda_muellerburg indicate that they also feel the same condition experiencing depression throughout the year rather than only during certain seasons. In this way, some viewers perceived the meme as representing them and felt that it reflected a part of who they are.

Datum 9
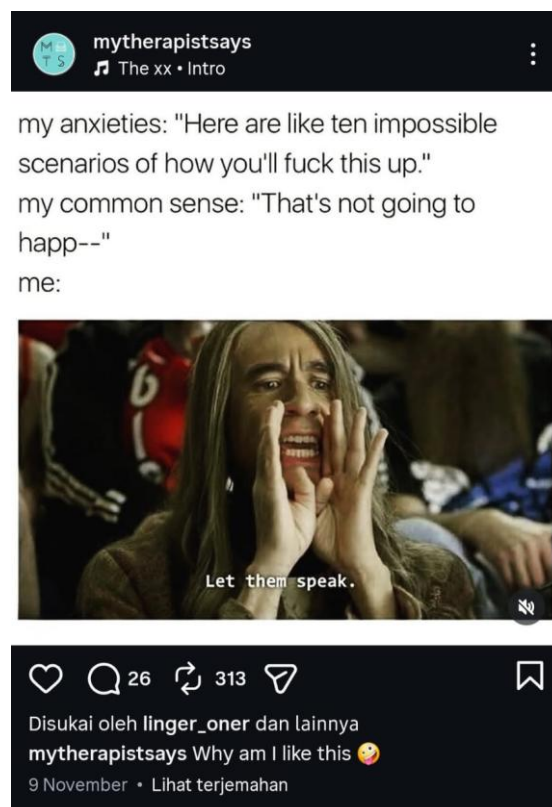
Figure 9 Example of ninth meme

(November 9, 2025). The meme post received 105 likes, 26 comments, and was reposted 313 times.

The caption in the meme is: "my anxieties: Here are like ten impossible scenarios of how you'll fuck this up. my common sense: That's not going to happ--

. me: Let them speak." This meme uses a sarcastic, humorous language style, especially when the voice of "common sense" is abruptly cut off and overridden by the final response. It also employs internal dialogue, imitating a conversation inside one's mind, which makes the message feel personal and relatable. In addition, the visual element shows a woman screaming with an anxious and emotional expression. This figure represents a noisy mind and anxiety that dominates rational thinking. The meme is also dominated by dark and dull colors, creating a tense and uncomfortable atmosphere that aligns with the psychological experience of anxiety one characterized by pressure, distress, and restlessness.

In the process of **social categorization**, this meme positions the individual as part of a group of people who live with excessive anxiety and overthinking those who are familiar with an inner dialogue between logic and anxious thoughts. This category is highly recognizable to social media audiences, especially those who experience anxiety. In the process of **social identification**, anxiety is portrayed as part of the self rather than something separate. By liking, commenting on, or sharing the meme, users affirm their affiliation with a social group that experiences anxious thinking patterns and everyday overthinking.In **social comparison**, individuals compare their condition to what is considered "normal." This comparison is not meant to demean other groups, but rather to highlight the gap between common sense and anxiety, emphasizing how rational thinking can be overshadowed by anxious thoughts.
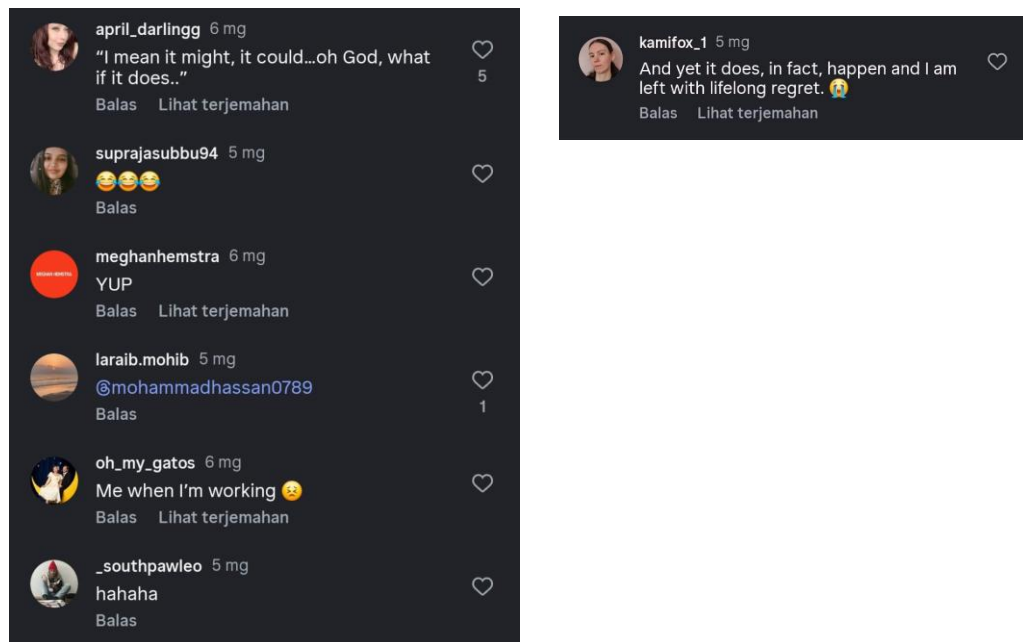
Picture 9 Example of netizen relatable comments

From several comments on the post, some audience members expressed that they could relate, as shown by comments that validated and supported their experiences. Comments from accounts such as @oh_my_gatos, @southpawleo, @april_darlingg, and @kamifox_1 indicate that they are in a similar situation and that the meme represents their personal feelings. Based on the analysis and these audience responses, this meme functions not only as entertainment, but also as a medium of validation and social solidarity for a community of people experiencing anxiety.

Datum 10

Figure 10 Example of tenth meme

(10 September 2025). The meme post received 105 likes, 373 comments, and 4,486 reposts.

The caption in the meme is: "*Anxiety Disorders Now Only $45.00.*" The meme suggests that for some people, anxiety is not something that appears only because of a diagnosis or paid therapy; instead, it has become part of everyday life and can even feel like something "inherited." The language style is sarcastic and ironic, as shown by the use of a "bragging" tone typically used for something positive—to describe something that is actually negative. The meme also uses an economic metaphor, framing anxiety as a discounted product to criticize the reality that access to mental health care can be expensive. This style makes a serious issue

feel lighter and more approachable for the audience.In this meme, there is no human figure; it focuses entirely on text and the social context, which reinforces the idea that anxiety is a collective experience rather than something belonging to any specific individual. The visual colors are mostly neutral, muted, and lacking bright tones, which aligns with the theme of anxiety disorders and the association with medical or institutional settings.

In the process of **social categorization**, this meme groups individuals into the social category of people with anxiety disorders. This is stated explicitly through the visual text "Anxiety Disorders Now Only $45.00," which frames anxiety as if it were a product that can be "purchased." The process of **social identification** appears when individuals who experience anxiety feel that the meme reflects their own lives. The phrase "mine was for free" suggests an internalization of anxiety as part of the self almost as if it has been inherited or has been present for a long time. In **social comparison**, the meme makes an implicit and sarcastic comparison. People with anxiety are contrasted with those who must pay high costs for mental health services or professional diagnosis, emphasizing the idea that many anxious individuals feel their anxiety existed long before any medical intervention or therapy.
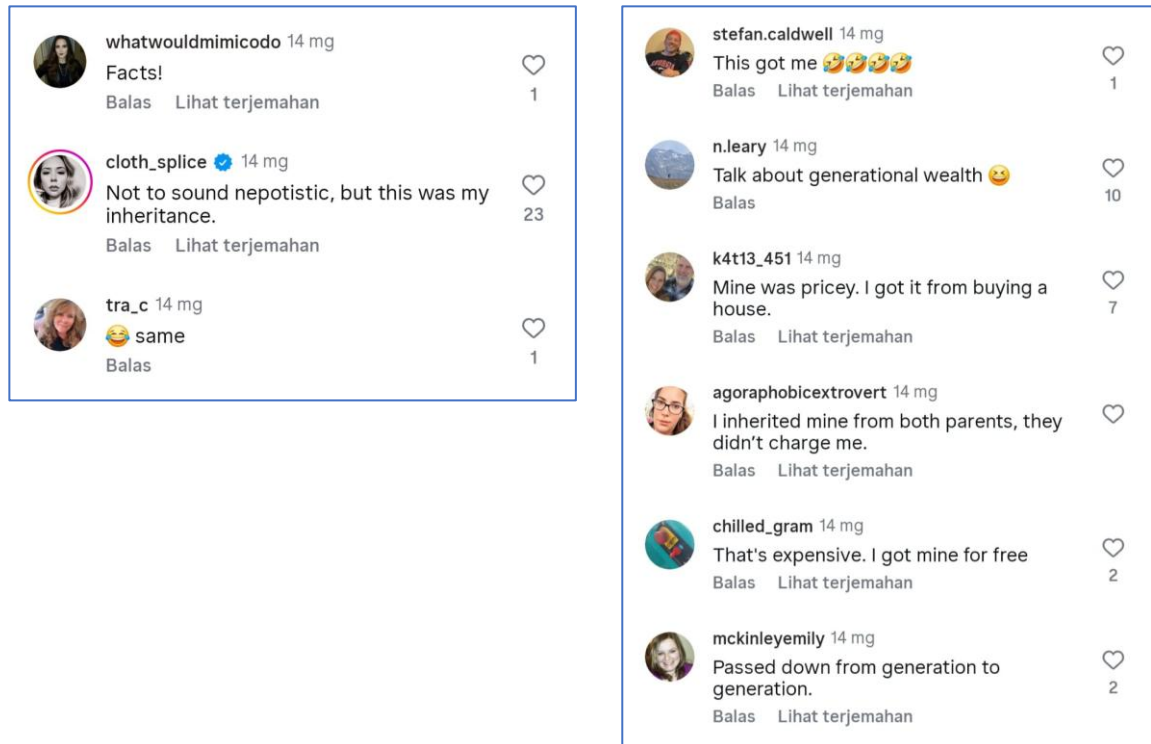
Picture 10 Example of netizen relatable comments

Several comments indicated that the audience related to the post. For example, @whatwouldmimicodo commented, "Facts!" and @tra_c commented, "same," indicating that the audience agreed with the meme. Other comments from @k4t13_45, @agoraphobicextrovert, @chilled_gram, and @mckinleyemily demonstrated that anxiety has become a part of everyday life, even feeling like a "heritage" from generation to generation.

B. Discussion

Based on data findings of the 10 data points, the most frequently occurring theme is anxiety: it appears in data 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10, and it is also present in data 4 ("anxiety & depression"). This indicates that most of the memes you collected highlight the experience of being "anxious" as the most relatable and most frequently discussed issue. Meanwhile, depression appears in data 4 and data 8, and exhausted appears only once (data 2). This pattern makes sense because on social media especially Instagram anxiety and depression are often major themes in discussions about mental health. This is consistent with the findings of Lee et al. (2020), which show that mental health content on Instagram frequently addresses anxiety and depression and is often used to express personal experiences and to seek responses or support from audiences.

In the social identity construction conveyed through mental health memes, the dominance of anxiety suggests that the meme creator is building a social identity as part of a group of people who frequently experience anxiety. The mechanism is straightforward: when memes repeatedly portray anxiety, audiences who have felt the same way are likely to think, "That's so me," which then fosters a sense of "us" (an in-group). In this way, memes function not only as entertainment but also as markers of belonging as if there is an informal community that understands one another through humor and shared experiences. From Yilmaz (2023) research, social media identities are often formed through repeated patterns of representation (the same themes, the same style, the same kinds of complaints), making the account or author appear "consistent" in embodying a particular character most

prominently "the anxious one," and at times "the anxious one who is also depressed."

However, the dominance of anxiety, depression themes also needs to be discussed critically in terms of their potential impact. Akil et al., (2022) research that exposure to depression memes on social media can increase depressive mood, and that this effect is influenced by self-regulation factors like difficulties with impulse control or goal-directed behavior when experiencing distress. This suggests that although mental health memes are often understood as spaces for "relatability" and peer support, depression-themed content may also intensify negative affect for some audience members. Therefore, in your discussion, memes can be positioned as an ambivalent communication practice: they can simultaneously entertain and normalize shared experiences, yet also potentially trigger a worsening of negative emotions.

Meanwhile, the category "exhausted," which appears only once, can be interpreted as a signal of burnout/social exhaustion that emerges as a consequence of prolonged anxiety. A protective perspective can be linked to the findings of Keye (2021), which suggest that mindfulness and academic self-efficacy contribute as predictors of resilience. Conceptually, this helps explain why some individuals are more vulnerable to mental exhaustion when their coping resources are limited.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter is structured into two parts. The initial section comprises conclusions that provide a summary of the research findings that have been proposed. The subsequent section offers recommendations to provide further insights for future research endeavour's focused on analysing the given topic

A. Conclusion

An analysis of 10 memes uploaded by the Instagram account @mytherapistssays indicates that these memes effectively depict everyday experiences associated with mental health issues, particularly anxiety, depression, and exhaustion. The memes use humour and sarcasm or irony to articulate emotions that are often considered taboo or challenging to discuss openly. Consequently, memes serve as a medium to normalize mental health conversations, foster understanding among individuals, and facilitate the development of social identity among those with shared experiences.

Applying Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), these memes help individuals identify with groups that experience similar mental health challenges. During the **social categorization** stage, users perceive themselves as members of groups facing anxiety, depression, and exhausted. The **social identification** stage further consolidates this identity, as experiences of anxiety and depression become

integral to their social self-concept. In the **social comparison** stage, users compare themselves to others, both within and outside these groups, which can

enhance social validation but may also intensify feelings of isolation and perceived limitations in managing mental health issues. Overall, these memes not only provide a humorous coping mechanism for anxiety and depression but also foster a digital community grounded in shared experiences. This underscores the significant role of social media in establishing a supportive environment for individuals to share, find humor, and feel understood.

B. Suggestion

After conducting this research, the researcher realizes that there are several limitations that need to be considered. Next research could also examine other themes, such as workplace contexts, romantic relationships, college student life, and other themes. Future studies could explore additional social media platforms such as TikTok, X, Threads, or YouTube, and broaden the timeframe for data collection and the range of participants, so the results become more detailed, varied, and representative of social identity construction.

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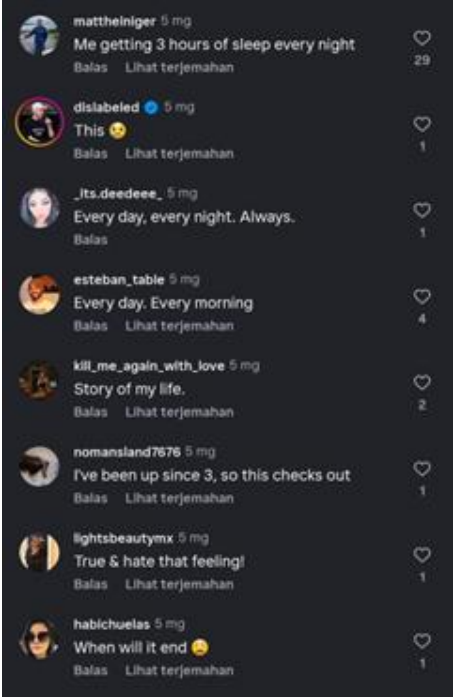
APPENDICES

TABLE: THE SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

No.	Memes	Types	Proccess	Comment
1.		**Anxiety**	**Social Comparison** : in-group as "us" (people who get anxious easily) and the out-group as "them" (people who do not experience anxiety in the same way) **Social Identification** : "my shift" signals that the writer aligns themself with the anxious in-group. **Social comparison** : reinforces solidarity by making audiences with similar experiences feel	

		understood, accepted, and less alone.	

| 2. | | Exhausted | **Social Cateegorization** : in-group ("us") as people whose "social battery" drains quickly and the out-group ("them") as those who can stay energetic and keep socializing

Social identification : by addressing the audience directly ("your social battery") and using familiar digital language ("left the chat") that makes the experience feel shared and relatable.

Social comparison : it contrasts both groups to normalize social exhaustion, framing it as a common condition rather than a personal failure. | |

| 3. | | Anxiety | Social Categorization : The in-group ("us") as people experiencing depression-related mental exhaustion and anxiety, while the out-group ("them") can rest normally without anxiety.

Social Identification : addressing the audience ("you're"), inviting those who relate to see themselves as part of the same in-group and making the experience feel safer

Social Comparison : it contrasts "ordinary" tiredness with anxiety–depression exhaustion to highlight a | |

			distinct shared experience, strengthening solidarity and a sense of shared fate.	
4.		**Anxiety & Depresision**	Social Categorization : the in-group ("us") as people living with anxiety and depression—caught in overthinking and conflicting negative thoughts—while the out-group ("them") can typically calm themselves. Social Identification : repeated use of "me" and by personifying "my anxiety" and "depression" as voices, making relatable readers feel included in the same shared experience Social comparison : it contrasts the two opposing thought	

			patterns (fear of judgment vs. feeling insignificant), highlighting the in-group's distinctive struggle and reinforcing solidarity.	

5.		**Anxiety**	Social categorization : the in-group ("us") as anxious overthinkers who constantly question whether their feelings are intuition or anxiety, while the out-group ("them") can trust their feelings and make decisions more easily Social Identification : "My" and "A Memoir," framing the confusion as a personal and recurring life experience that relatable readers can claim as their own Social Comparison : it highlights the internal conflict between "intuition" and "anxiety" as competing signals, reinforcing camaraderie among	

mytherapistsays
Pixies • Where Is My Mind? (2007 Remaster)

@MsPackyetti

Is It My Intuition or My Anxiety?
A Memoir.

♡ Q 114 ⇄ 1.187 ▽ 🔖

Disukai oleh fanzeepantz dan lainnya
mytherapistsays Could go either way, but I'll spiral about it regardless.

(@mspackyetti)
21 September • Lihat terjemahan

wildspun_fibers 12 mg
Sounds about right
Balas   Lihat terjemahan

dianedavis2813 12 mg
It's always my Intuition these days
Balas   Lihat terjemahan

navetta_c 12 mg
I was told anxiety is urgent and chaotic and intuition is calm and clear
Balas   Lihat terjemahan
♡ 8
Lihat 1 balasan lainnya

maureen419 12 mg
Anxiety screams. Intuition whispers.
Balas
♡ 120
Lihat 2 balasan lainnya

75

| | | | those who share the same thought pattern. | |
| | | | | |

| 6. | | **Anxiety** | Social Categorization : the in-group ("us") as people who feel they are "too much"—easily tired, anxious, emotionally reactive, and prone to overthinking everyday decisions—while the out-group ("them") is portrayed as calm, stable, and uncomplicated Social Identification: the "I" persona's honest self-description and the line "he still loves me," which frames this identity as worthy of acceptance rather than shame, inviting relatable readers to see themselves as part of the same group | |
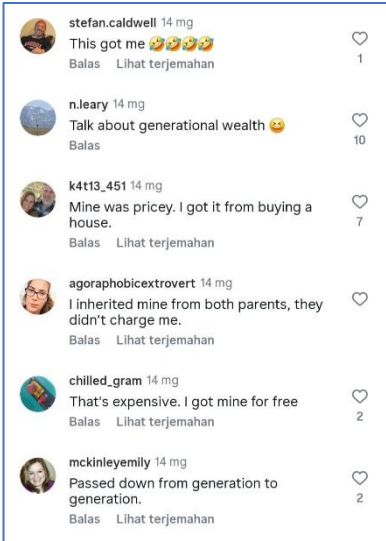
			Social Comparison : contrasts the "I" persona with an idealized standard of being calm and effortless, highlighting a perceived gap from that expectation while also validating shared struggles.	

| 7. | | Anxiety | Social Categorization : the in-group ("us") as people whose anxiety and overthinking keep them awake at night, while the out-group ("them") can sleep peacefully without intrusive thoughts

Social Identification: "Me…" and "like me," explicitly placing the creator inside the anxious, sleepless group and inviting relatable readers to share that membership

Social Comparison :contrasts restful sleep with anxious insomnia, evoking emotions like envy or frustration while also validating the in-group | |

			because only those with similar experiences fully understand it.	
8.		Depression	Social Categorization : the in-group as people who experience depression all year and the out-group as those who only face seasonal depression Social Identification:Me who has been depressed the entire year," framing long-term depression as part of one's self-definition and inviting relatable audiences to see themselves in the meme. Social Comparison : contrasts "getting ready" with "already living it," using humor and irony to strengthen solidarity	

			among those who share ongoing distress.	
9.		Anxiety	Social Categorization : the in-group as people who live with excessive anxiety and overthinking, especially those familiar with an inner dialogue between logic and anxious thoughts Social Identification: portraying anxiety as part of the self and allowing users to signal belonging through interactions like liking, commenting, or sharing Social Comparison : contrasts anxious thinking with what is seen as "normal," highlighting	

			how anxious thoughts can override rational reasoning.	
10.		Anxiety	Social Categorization : grouping people into the category of "anxiety disorders," humorously framing anxiety as something that can be "purchased" through the text "Anxiety Disorders Now Only $45.00." Social Identification:appears in the line "mine was for free," which suggests that those who experience anxiety internalize it as a long-standing part of the self, almost as if it has always been there.	

| | | Social Comparison : contrasts anxious individuals with those who must pay for mental health services or diagnoses, implying that many people feel their anxiety predates any formal treatment or professional intervention. | |

CURRICULUM VITAE

Handria Febri Amelia was born in Malang on February 12 2001. She graduated from the Mathematics and Natural Science departement class at MAN Kota Batu in 2019. In the same year, she continued her education at a higher level at Malik Ibrahim Malang State Islamic University in the English department. Literature and successfully completed her studies in 2025. During her studies, she also worked as a PoundFit Instructor in Malang, she worked hard and passionate at it.