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https://doi.org/10.62159/dawuh.v7i3

DAWUH: Islamic Communication Journal Vol . 7 No. 3 (2026)

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Research Article

Ethical Communication and Cultural Guilt: A Social-Phenomenological Study of Rural Generation Z Migrant Workers at Metro TV Jakarta

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Received: August 13, 2026	Revised: September 25, 2026	Accepted: October 25, 2026

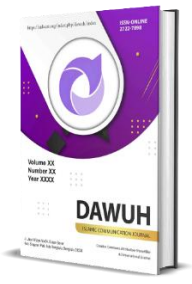
Abstract

This study explores how rural-origin Generation Z workers at Metro TV, Jakarta, practice ethical communication while adapting to a fast-paced, low-context organisational culture. Drawing on Arnett, Fritz, and Bell's (2009) ethical communication framework and Alfred Schutz's (1967) social phenomenology, the study examines how workers negotiate cultural values, professional expectations, and workplace relationships. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected in July 2026 through semi-structured interviews involving 29 participants: 19 workers and 10 supervisors and peers across 11 triangulation interviews. Data were analysed through phenomenological coding informed by Schutz's concepts of typification, motive, and reflective meaning. Findings reveal that ethical communication involves acknowledging mistakes, maintaining selected traditional values, and negotiating cultural identities without abandoning personal integrity. A distinctive finding is *cultural guilt*, experienced by workers from hierarchical backgrounds who perceive adaptation to egalitarian workplace norms as a betrayal of their cultural origins. The study also identifies reciprocal communication accommodation, as supervisors adjust their leadership approaches to younger employees, influenced by organisational strategies and Generation Z's labour-market position. These findings challenge the assumption that cultural adaptation is exclusively the responsibility of newcomers. The study concludes that ethical communication in culturally diverse workplaces constitutes a dynamic, intersubjective negotiation of values, identities, and organisational expectations.

Keywords: Ethical Communication; Cultural Guilt; Generation Z; Rural-Urban Migration; Social Phenomenology; Workplace Diversity.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's cities continue to draw young workers away from rural regions. National labour-mobility data confirm that rural-to-urban migration remains a persistent feature of Indonesia's demographic transition, with Statistics Indonesia reporting continued net migration toward metropolitan labour markets such as Jakarta (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, 2024a); in the capital alone, the working population reached 5.11 million by August 2024, an increase of 35,000 over the previous year (BPS-Statistics Indonesia DKI Jakarta Province, 2024). Generation Z (born 1997–2012) forms a substantial share of this migration stream, entering the workforce in the same years that BPS's data show net migration toward Jakarta continuing unabated. Unlike earlier generations of migrant labour, these workers increasingly enter knowledge-intensive, communication-heavy sectors such as national media, where professional competence is judged less by manual skill than by the ability to speak, write, and present in a manner the organisation recognises as appropriate. This shift raises a question that has received little sustained attention in Indonesian communication scholarship: what does it mean to communicate ethically when the norms one has grown up with and the norms one is now required to perform are, in important respects, incompatible.

Ethical communication has traditionally been theorised around principles such as honesty, respect for the other, and responsibility to the community of discourse (Arnett, Fritz, and Bell, 2009). This study operationalises that tradition through five analytically distinct dimensions used throughout the analysis to evaluate informants' communicative choices: honesty (disclosure rather than concealment, particularly after error), dignity (the preservation of self- and other-respect across status differences), responsibility (accountability to colleagues, supervisors, and the communities informants come from), reciprocity (mutual obligation honoured even at personal cost), and respect (accommodation that does not require self-erasure). These principles are typically discussed as though speakers already share a single moral and cultural horizon. Rural Generation Z migrants entering Jakarta's newsrooms do not have that luxury. They must decide, often within their first weeks of employment, which inherited communicative habits to keep, which to set aside, and how to remain recognisably themselves while satisfying an organisation that prizes directness, speed, and confidence. Whether they manage this well or poorly has consequences not only for their careers but for how honestly, and how comfortably, they are able to show up at work.

Edward T. Hall's (1976) distinction between high-context and low-context communication offers a starting point for understanding the gap these workers must cross. High-context communities, of the kind most rural Indonesian informants grew up in, rely on implicit cues, communal obligation, and shared background knowledge; low-context environments, of the kind that characterises Jakarta's media workplaces, reward explicit, efficient, and individually attributable speech. What Hall's framework does not fully capture is the subjective experience of living through that gap, nor a complication his cross-national framework was never built to anticipate: complying with the new environment's norms can itself feel, to some workers, like a small betrayal of the community they came from. High-context and low-context are used here as heuristic contrasts rather than fixed cultural labels. Individual informants move fluidly between more and less explicit registers depending on interlocutor and setting (see Findings), and the contrast is invoked only to the extent that the data support a specific, situated difference between home-region and newsroom communicative norms at Metro TV, not a general claim about rural or urban Indonesian culture. Even 'rural' or 'Javanese' communicative style, the data further show, is not a single category: informants from East Java's more direct Surabaya-Bojonegoro register report a

markedly gentler adjustment than informants from the more implicit, hierarchical Yogyakarta-Solo register, a spectrum internal to a single ethnic label the Findings return to below.

This is where Alfred Schutz's (1967) social phenomenology becomes useful. Schutz argued that social actors do not simply react to their environment. They interpret it through a stock of knowledge built from past experience, act from a because-motive rooted in that past and an in-order-to motive aimed at a projected future, and retrospectively attach meaning to their own completed acts. Applied here, Schutz's vocabulary lets us ask not only what rural Gen Z workers do when they adapt communicatively, but why they do it and how they come to regard some choices as right and others as merely convenient. Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, Edwards, and Walther, 2023) and Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory (Gudykunst, 2005) supply the behavioural vocabulary for how accommodation and anxiety are managed in intercultural encounters; Identity Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey and Dorjee, 2018) explains how face and identity are jointly constructed during this process. These four frameworks are not competitors. They operate at different explanatory levels and are integrated here as follows. Schutz's phenomenology explains how *meaning* is constructed: how an informant comes to interpret a given interaction as, for instance, a threat to identity or an occasion for growth. Communication Accommodation Theory and Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory explain *behaviour*, the observable moves of convergence, divergence, and uncertainty-reduction that follow from that meaning. Identity Negotiation Theory explains the ongoing negotiation of *identity and face* that those behavioural choices, once made, feed back into. None of these frameworks was developed, however, with an eye to the ethical dimension of the adaptation itself, to whether the resulting communicative choices preserve the worker's honesty, dignity, and sense of obligation to others, or whether they come at the cost of these things.

This article draws on a larger doctoral study of communication and social capital formation among rural Generation Z migrant workers at Metro TV, a national television station in Jakarta, and, distinctively, on eleven triangulation interviews with ten supervisors, coordinators, and peers who work alongside them, to examine this narrower and, we argue, ethically consequential question.

Research Questions

RQ1. How do rural Gen Z workers experience and interpret, in Schutzian terms, the disjuncture between the high-context communication of their home regions and the low-context norms of the urban newsroom, and how do the people who supervise them independently describe that same disjuncture?

RQ2. What communicative choices, among those available to them, are treated by the workers themselves, and corroborated by their supervisors, as ethically significant?

Objectives and Contribution

In addressing these questions, the article pursues three aims: (1) an empirical aim, to produce a cross-validated account of ethical communication grounded in migrant workers' own reflective meaning-making; (2) a theoretical aim, to extend intercultural adaptation theory by showing that convergence and divergence are not simply strategic but are also felt, by those who practise them, as matters of integrity; and (3) a practical aim, to inform organisational onboarding and supervisory practice in media and other communication-intensive industries that increasingly rely on rural-origin Generation Z labour.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a social-phenomenological design, following Schutz's (1967) premise that social reality is not simply given but is intersubjectively constructed through actors' interpretation of lived experience. The phenomenological design was chosen because the research questions concern not only observable communicative behaviour but the motives and meanings informants themselves attach to that behaviour, which are only accessible through their own first-person accounts.

Setting, Sample, and Recruitment

The study involved twenty-nine participants in two distinct strands, profiled in Tables 1 and 2: a primary strand of nineteen worker-informants, whose first-person accounts form the phenomenological core of the analysis, and a triangulation strand of ten supervisors and peers, interviewed in eleven sessions, whose accounts were used to corroborate or complicate those first-person accounts. No individual belongs to both strands. Throughout this article, 'informants' without further qualification refers to the nineteen worker-informants; the ten supervisors and peers are referred to as triangulation participants. Of the nineteen worker-informants at Metro TV's Jakarta newsroom, seventeen are key informants who met the study's full qualification criteria: born between 1997 and 2006, of rural origin under Statistics Indonesia's classification, one to five years into their employment, and working in communication-intensive newsroom roles (reporter, field journalist, producer, assistant producer, creative staff, scriptwriter, or coverage coordinator). Key informants span Javanese and West Javanese (Cirebonese-Sundanese) backgrounds from Central Java, Yogyakarta, East Java, and West Java (the largest group, n = 9, 52.9%), Minangkabau and Acehnese together with Malay from Jambi and South Sumatra (n = 6, 35.3%), Dayak (n = 1, 5.9%), and one informant (5.9%) with a layered Banten-Sundanese-Javanese identity that resists a single regional label. Two further informants were deliberately included as boundary cases to enrich, rather than replace, the reading of the key-informant group: Kirana, an urban-to-urban migrant from Tangerang, and Aisyah, an informant from a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) background who moved directly from religious education into a media workplace. Table 1 profiles all nineteen worker-informants.

To test whether informants' self-reported adaptation held up from the outside, the study additionally draws on eleven triangulation interviews with ten participants (one participant, Rina, was interviewed in two separate sessions): two coverage coordinators (koordinator liputan, locally abbreviated as Korlip), a head of social media overseeing roughly fifty Generation Z staff, a twenty-year human-resources officer, a production supervisor, two marketing seniors, a senior peer who mentors junior reporters, a supervisor with a four-year working relationship with one key informant, and a Jakarta-born intern peer. Table 2 profiles these participants. The two strands therefore comprise twenty-nine distinct individuals: nineteen worker-informants and ten triangulation participants, the latter interviewed in eleven sessions. These figures are used consistently throughout the article.

Key informants were identified by the human-resources division, which screened staff against the four qualification criteria above using its own records (the researcher did not access these records), and were approached first through the human-resources officer who also served as a triangulation participant, with subsequent informants recruited through snowball referral among

newsroom staff meeting the same criteria. Referral served only to identify eligible staff: each prospective informant was then contacted individually by the researcher, given an explanation of the study's aims, procedures, and intended use of data, and interviewed only after consenting, so that being named by a colleague or by human resources did not in itself oblige anyone to take part, and the human-resources officer was not told who eventually agreed. Boundary-case and triangulation participants were purposively selected to represent, respectively, communicatively distinct starting points and structurally distinct vantage points on the key informants' adaptation. Dewi, for instance, was selected for her four-year mentoring relationship with Hendra, Ratna for her two decades of experience in the organisation's recruitment, and Tiara precisely because, as a Jakarta-born Generation Z peer, she sits outside the rural-migrant group the study otherwise centres and so offers an internal check against generational rather than regional explanations for the findings. Triangulation participants were approached individually by the researcher after the first key-informant interviews had been completed, on the basis of their structural relationship to the worker-informant group (direct supervision, coordination of coverage, peer mentoring, or recruitment) rather than their relationship to any particular informant, with the single exception of the supervisor-informant dyad discussed under Research Ethics.

Sample Adequacy and Saturation

Sample size was judged by informational adequacy rather than fixed in advance. Following the information-power model of Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora (2016), nineteen worker-informants were considered adequate because the study aim is narrow (ethical meaning-making in communicative adaptation within a single organisation), the sample is dense in specificity (all key informants share rural origin, the Generation Z cohort, an early-career stage, and a communication-intensive role), the analysis is guided by established theory rather than purely exploratory, the interview dialogue was extended and episodic, and the analytic strategy is cross-case. Within these parameters, data collection continued until it was judged that new interviews were no longer generating typifications, motives, or reflective meanings not already represented in the existing corpus, a pragmatic saturation criterion consistent with phenomenological practice and applied jointly to the key-informant and triangulation strands rather than to either in isolation. In practice, a running list of open codes was maintained during fieldwork, and the final interviews in each strand added illustrative detail to existing categories rather than new categories.

Data Collection

Fieldwork was carried out in and around the Metro TV Jakarta newsroom. Eligible staff were identified with the assistance of the human-resources division from 17 June 2026; all interviews reported in this article were conducted between 7 and 28 July 2026, after the ethical exemption described below had been issued. Access to the newsroom was facilitated from the outset by Metro TV's human-resources division, which identified eligible staff and served as the initial point of contact; the organisation's formal written research permission was subsequently issued on 31 August 2026, and its approval for publication of this article was obtained before resubmission. All interviews were conducted face to face and in Indonesian, and were scheduled during informants' work breaks or unscheduled free time on shift, to minimise disruption to newsroom operations. Worker-informant interviews lasted approximately one to two hours; triangulation interviews lasted approximately thirty to ninety minutes. With each participant's permission, interviews were audio-

recorded and transcribed verbatim, and brief field notes were written after each session to record setting, non-verbal cues, and the researcher's initial impressions. Most worker-informant interviews were conducted individually; one session was conducted jointly with the three Sumatran informants whose shared discussion of speech levels is reported under Cultural Guilt below. Interviews with the worker-informants were in-depth and semi-structured, following the chronological structure recommended for phenomenological interviewing: describing lived episodes first, then inviting informants to reflect on what those episodes meant to them. The triangulation interviews used a parallel protocol, asking supervisors and peers to describe, independently and without being shown the key informants' own accounts, the same communicative patterns from their own vantage point. Consistent with a naturalistic approach to elite and workplace interviewing, some triangulation interviews (for example, with Bima and Dewi) were scheduled and formally structured, while others (Andra, Kevin, Yoga) took the form of less formally bounded conversation, conducted under the same consent procedure and, where recording was impractical or impaired, documented in field notes written immediately afterwards; this was a deliberate methodological choice, since less controlled settings were found to elicit franker admissions, including several participants' own acknowledgement of shifting institutional authority, than a fully standardised protocol was likely to produce.

Research Ethics

This study operated under a formal ethical exemption granted by the Health Research Ethics Committee (Komite Etik Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kesehatan) of Poltekkes Kemenkes Jambi, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, certificate No. LB.02.06/2/880/2026, issued 7 July 2026 and valid through 7 July 2027. All interviews were conducted within this period. The committee reviewed the protocol, registered under the title "Komunikasi Adaptif dalam Pembentukan Modal Sosial Generasi Z Pekerja Migran Asal Pedesaan di Jakarta" ("Adaptive Communication in the Formation of Social Capital among Rural-Origin Generation Z Migrant Workers in Jakarta"), against the seven WHO (2011) ethical standards (social value, scientific validity, fair selection and distribution of burdens and benefits, risk, persuasion/exploitation, confidentiality and privacy, and informed consent), with reference to the CIOMS (2016) International Ethical Guidelines, and declared it ethically appropriate. Because the study posed no more than minimal risk to informants, the committee's approval took the form of an ethical exemption rather than full-board review, consistent with standard practice for minimal-risk social and communication research. Informed consent was obtained from every participant, in both strands, before each interview; it covered audio recording, the use of anonymised quotations in publications, and the right to decline any line of questioning or to withdraw without consequence.

Confidentiality during cross-referencing. Because supervisors and peers were interviewed about the same workplace in which the worker-informants are employed, and in one case about a specific colleague, five safeguards were applied. First, triangulation participants were never shown, told about, or asked to comment on the content of any worker-informant's interview; cross-referencing between the two strands was carried out only by the researcher, at the analysis stage. Second, triangulation participants were asked to describe communicative patterns in their teams rather than to evaluate named individuals; the one supervisor-informant dyad reported here (Dewi and Hendra) is included because both parties separately consented to being discussed in relation to each other. Third, nothing said by one participant was disclosed to any other participant during

fieldwork. Fourth, every personal name in this article, including third parties mentioned in interviews, is a pseudonym, and regional origin is reported at no finer than regency or city level; the key linking pseudonyms to participants is held only by the researcher, stored separately from the transcripts on password-protected media. Fifth, because some triangulation participants hold roles that may be recognisable inside the organisation (for example, the long-serving human-resources officer), they were informed of this residual risk before consenting, and quotations that could expose any participant to workplace consequences were paraphrased or omitted.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

All interviews were conducted, and all coding carried out, by the principal investigator, a communication lecturer at a Jakarta university and a doctoral candidate in development communication. The researcher held no employment, supervisory, or contractual relationship with Metro TV before or during the study, and access to the newsroom was facilitated by the organisation's human-resources division, as described under Data Collection. This outsider position shaped the data in two directions. On the one hand, informants had no reason to fear that disclosures would reach their superiors through the researcher, which is likely to have encouraged candour about hierarchy and supervision. On the other hand, the researcher's academic status and seniority relative to Generation Z informants could itself reproduce the very deference hierarchy under study, inviting informants to present their adaptation as more successful or more principled than it was. The researcher's familiarity with Indonesian regional communicative norms and with broadcast journalism as a teaching field supplied the cultural and professional literacy needed to read implicit cues, but also risked importing prior assumptions about 'rural' politeness and 'urban' directness into the interpretation of rurality, hierarchy, identity, and ethical meaning. Four practices were used to manage these influences (Berger, 2015): a reflexive memo kept throughout fieldwork and analysis, recording the researcher's expectations and reactions after each interview; phenomenological bracketing (*epoché*), that is, suspending those expectations when first reading each transcript and describing the informant's experience in the informant's own terms before applying any theoretical category (Moustakas, 1994); deliberate attention to disconfirming cases, such as the Dayak informant who attributed his early difficulties to professional inexperience rather than regional background, and the Jakarta-born peer who served as a within-generation comparison; and member checking and triangulation, described below, as external checks on the researcher's reading.

Data Analysis

Verbatim transcripts were analysed through a three-stage coding procedure combined with the iterative data reduction, data display, and conclusion-drawing/verification cycle described by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). Although open, axial, and selective coding originate in the grounded-theory tradition, they are used here as analytic techniques rather than as a methodology: the aim was not to generate a substantive theory inductively, as grounded theory requires, but to describe and interpret informants' lived meanings within an explicitly Schutzian framework. Coding techniques are routinely adapted in this way across qualitative designs (Saldaña, 2021), and three features of the procedure preserved its phenomenological character. First, each transcript was read in full, and a short descriptive account of the informant's experience was written in the informant's own terms, before any coding began, so that coding operated on a whole, bracketed account rather than on decontextualised fragments (Moustakas, 1994). Second, open coding was conducted *in vivo*,

retaining informants' own words (for example, 'mask', 'same boat', and 'lowering my own register') as code labels, so that the first analytic layer stayed at the level of lived description. Third, Schutz's concepts were used at the axial stage as sensitising concepts (Blumer, 1954) rather than as fixed hypotheses: axial coding grouped the open codes into categories corresponding to typification, because-motive, in-order-to motive, and reflective meaning (*Sinndeutung*) in Schutz's sense, as well as to convergence, divergence, and uncertainty management from Communication Accommodation Theory and Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory, while codes that fitted none of these categories were retained and examined rather than discarded; cultural guilt emerged from precisely such a residual code. Selective coding, finally, did not seek a single core category, as grounded theory would, but reconstructed each informant's narrative chain from typification through motive to meaning, keeping the individual informant rather than the pooled code as the unit of interpretation, and cross-referenced it, where a corresponding account existed, against triangulation data, following the event-pattern-structure model of interpretive depth (Anderson and Johnson, 1997).

Coding credibility. Coding was conducted by the principal investigator and reviewed at each stage through member checking with informants themselves, to confirm that the researcher's interpretation of quoted material matched informants' intended meaning. Credibility was additionally supported by methodological triangulation across twenty-nine independent data sources (the nineteen worker-informants and ten triangulation participants) rather than by formal multi-coder inter-rater statistics; where self-report and triangulation data diverged (for instance, on the extent to which rural-origin informants had genuinely blended into Jakarta-born peer networks), the divergence itself was treated as a substantive finding rather than resolved by treating one source as more authoritative than the other, consistent with a phenomenological view of social reality as intersubjectively, rather than singularly, constructed. A small number of triangulation interviews (Hasan, Ratna, and Kevin in particular) were affected by recording-quality limitations or interruption and required interpretive reconstruction from field notes; this is acknowledged as a limitation in the Conclusion. All quotations reported below were spoken in Indonesian and have been translated into English by the authors; pseudonyms are used throughout to protect informant identity.

Status of institutional claims. The article reports several claims about Metro TV's recruitment and retention history, including twenty years of recruitment, some 1,130 hires across twenty-six cohorts, and the comparative retention of rural-origin staff. These figures derive from the triangulation interview with the human-resources officer; personnel records were not accessed or analysed, and no separate institutional dataset was used. The claims are therefore treated throughout as the informed testimony of a long-serving institutional insider, analysed in the same way as other triangulation data, and not as independently verified institutional evidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Voices Behind the Data

Numbers and typologies can flatten the people who produced them. Table 1 profiles the key informants and boundary cases whose accounts are quoted directly in this section; Table 2 profiles the ten triangulation participants who independently corroborate or complicate their testimony. A few things about these two groups are worth flagging before turning to the data itself. Several of the key informants carry more than one cultural register at once: Salsa, for instance, layers Sundanese,

Betawi-Tangerang, and a pesantren-shaped Javanese courtesy acquired during her studies in Sleman, Yogyakarta, while Intan moves between coarse Sundanese, Cirebon-inflected Indonesian, and Jakarta slang depending on where she is standing. On the other side of the interview table sit people who make this article something more than a set of self-reports: a head of social media who has led some fifty Generation Z staff for over six years, a human-resources officer who reports having overseen some 1,130 hires over twenty years, senior peers, and supervisors who agreed to describe, without access to what the key informants had already said, the same communicative patterns from their own vantage point. And one of those ten is not a supervisor at all. Tiara, a Jakarta-born intern, offers a within-generation comparison point that functions as a check against the possibility that everything reported here is simply older colleagues' generational bias, a possibility taken seriously enough that her own verdict is reported later in this section, in her own words.

Table 1. Profile of Worker-Informants: Key Informants and Boundary Cases (N = 19)

Pseudonym	Regional / Cultural Origin	Cultural Background	Category
Nadia	Jambi City (studied in Palembang)	Jambi Malay	Key Informant
Laras	Kendal, Central Java (North Coast)	Javanese	Key Informant
Wulan	Bojonegoro, East Java	East Javanese	Key Informant
Salsa	Balaraja, Banten / Bandung, West Java (raised in Sleman, Yogyakarta)	Sundanese-Betawi-Javanese (layered)	Key Informant
Ayu	Kebumen, Central Java	Javanese	Key Informant
Bagas	Semarang, Central Java	Javanese	Key Informant
Nisa	Malang, East Java	Javanese	Key Informant
Sekar	Bantul, Yogyakarta	Javanese	Key Informant
Galih	Sleman, Yogyakarta	Javanese	Key Informant
Fadli	Padang, West Sumatra	Minangkabau	Key Informant
Hendra	Lahat, South Sumatra	South Sumatran Malay	Key Informant
Rizal	Pariaman, West Sumatra (based in Riau)	Minangkabau	Key Informant
Rahmat	Aceh, Sumatra	Acehnese	Key Informant
Arif	Padang, West Sumatra (studied in Semarang)	Minangkabau	Key Informant
Markus	Sanggau Regency, West Kalimantan (via Pontianak)	Dayak	Key Informant

Pseudonym	Regional / Cultural Origin	Cultural Background	Category
Putri	Klaten, Central Java (Solo-Yogyakarta)	Javanese	Key Informant
Intan	Cirebon, West Java (via Jatinangor)	Sundanese/Cirebonese	Key Informant
Kirana	Tangerang (urban origin)	Betawi/urban	Boundary Case (urban-to-urban migrant)
Aisyah	Tangerang (pesantren background)	Betawi/urban	Boundary Case (pesantren-to-media)

Note. All names are pseudonyms. Regional origin is reported at no finer than regency or city level. Percentages reported in the text refer to the seventeen key informants.

Table 2. Profile of Triangulation Participants (N = 10; 11 interview sessions)

Pseudonym / Role	Position	Tenure / Relation	Relevant Contribution
Hasan	Coverage Coordinator, News Division (Korlip)	~5 years, former reporter	Three-category typology of disciplinary style; corrective feedback often perceived as personal attack
Yoga	Coverage Coordinator, News Gathering (Korlip)	5 years, oversees 37 reporters	Digital-text semiotics (capslock/ellipsis); reverse accommodation as structural necessity (resignation leverage)
Maya	Head of Social Media, DigiHub	6+ years, ~50 Gen Z staff	Four-step leadership formula; reverse accommodation as a deliberate strategy
Ratna	HR, corporate level	20 years; reports 26 JDP cohorts and ~1,130 hires	Interview-based account of long-term recruitment and retention patterns (not verified against personnel records); JDP as a peer-socialisation engine; accent evaluation by voice specialists
Andra	Production Supervisor	Millennial generation	Formal authority (written warnings) no longer commands deference; “dunia akan beradaptasi dengan mereka” (“the world will adapt to them”)
Bima	Senior Supervisor, Marketing	Millennial	“Penjelasan berizin” (“permission through explanation”); frames hierarchy-related awkwardness as cognitive dissonance
Kevin	Senior, Marketing	Cross-division colleague	Explicit reverse accommodation (“aku yang menurunkan derajat”, “I'm the one who lowers my own register”); Gen Z training programme in preparation by HR
Rina (2 sessions)	Senior peer, Jakarta-born	Directly mentors several juniors	Directed convergence (“jangan jadi cewek Jawa dulu”, “don't be a

Pseudonym / Role	Position	Tenure / Relation	Relevant Contribution
			Javanese girl about it"); gap between claimed and observed networking behaviour
Dewi	Hendra's direct supervisor, Floor Director	4 years, knows Hendra	Sponsorship advocacy; pull-knowledge norm; accent-perception bias; action-confidence vs. verbal-confidence gap
Tiara	Intern student, Jakarta-born	Fellow intern	Local Gen Z comparison control; "yang lebih baperan justru Gen Z kota" ("if anything, it's Jakarta-born Gen Z who take things more personally")

The Typification Gap: High-Context Origins Meeting Low-Context Newsroom Norms

Nearly all key informants began their working lives with a stock of knowledge built from years of communicating within high-context, implicit, relational ecosystems, in Hall's (1976) sense. Ayu, from Kebumen, Central Java, named the gap with unusual precision, without prompting from any theoretical framework the researcher had introduced: "Here it's more to the point, more frontal. Back home it's more high-context — a gentle hint, but you have to know how to read it yourself. Like when you visit someone: if the host doesn't offer you a drink, that's the sign they don't want you to stay long." Galih, from Sleman, experienced a subtler version of the same gap at the level of a single phrase: "baru ngerjain" ("already under way") in his home region, meant by Jakarta colleagues instead as "only just started," a misunderstanding rooted entirely in differing temporal typifications of ordinary speech. Bagas described a triple dissonance on arrival: unfamiliar vocabulary, a much faster speech tempo, and a tendency to misread firmness as anger, three linguistic layers of disruption converging at once.

These episodes illustrate what is termed here typification disruption: moments in which an interpretive scheme previously taken for granted suddenly fails and must be consciously renegotiated. More formally, it is a moment in which a previously taken-for-granted interpretive scheme (a Schutzian typification that had reliably guided action without conscious reflection) fails to produce its expected social meaning and must be consciously renegotiated before action can proceed. This differs from *culture shock* in the broad, diffuse sense used in cross-cultural psychology, which typically denotes a sustained affective and physiological reaction to prolonged immersion in an unfamiliar environment; typification disruption, by contrast, is discrete and cognitive-interpretive rather than diffuse and affective, naming the single moment a specific typification fails rather than the general condition of being in a new place. It also differs from ordinary *miscommunication*, which can occur between any two speakers who share a communicative code but momentarily fail to apply it correctly. What happened to Sekar, when a colleague's informal reply made her tacit standard of respectful address newly and uncomfortably visible to her, was something more specific: the exposure of a previously unconscious rule as a rule. And it differs, finally, from ordinary *adjustment difficulty*, which is typically resolved through repetition and practice. A typification disruption is resolved, when it is resolved, through conscious reinterpretation of the rule itself, not through more exposure to it.

Sekar, from Bantul, was corrected within her first weeks for addressing a colleague with "Pak," the respectful title standard at home; the colleague's informal reply made explicit, and instantly

unsettled, a typification of politeness she had never before had reason to question. Putri experienced a gentler version of the same disruption: greeting a supervisor as "Bapak/Ibu" had to be recalibrated to "Mas/Mbak," even toward lecturers, because, as she put it herself, addressing a superior formally in Jakarta is read as "strange" and creates unwanted distance. Not every Javanese informant experienced this disruption with equal force, however: Wulan, from Bojonegoro in East Java, reported comparatively little shock at Jakarta's direct speaking style, because East Javanese communication is already closer to it than the more implicit, hierarchical register of Yogyakarta and Solo that shaped Sekar's and Galih's expectations. This is a reminder, corroborated independently by Yoga's observation that region of origin matters less to communicative style than family upbringing does (see below), that "Javanese culture" is not a single homogeneous category but an internal spectrum. Such incidents were not isolated. The pattern recurs across the wider corpus of nineteen informants, suggesting a structural feature of rural Gen Z migrants' early working life rather than an anecdotal experience confined to one or two individuals.

Motive, Meaning, and the Ethics of Staying True

Schutz (1967) distinguishes the because-motive, rooted in an actor's past, from the in-order-to motive, oriented toward a projected future, arguing both operate simultaneously within a single stream of consciousness. This study's data confirm that distinction while adding an ethical dimension Schutz's original formulation leaves implicit. Bagas's because-motive was less a pull toward Jakarta than a push away from a dead end at home: "I spent six months looking for work in Semarang, but nothing came through. Eventually I checked the Ministry of Manpower's website and found a vacancy here." Arif's in-order-to motive was unusually deliberate for someone so early in his career: "I have to build a personal brand now... and keep learning, because I'm sure that every year that passes, there will be more and more impressive people." What eventually settled for Arif was less a job title than an identity he describes as fused with himself: "gue seorang Arif jurnalis." This was not, for him, an administrative fact about his position. It was a sense of who he now is, built from thousands of small interactions rather than one formal moment of induction.

Meaning-making, the third pillar of Schutz's (1967) framework, is clearest when informants pause to interpret a completed act retrospectively. Salsa offered the most explicit articulation of layered identity in the entire corpus: "I'm still wearing my mask as a Yogyakarta student. I still talk like, 'Mas, excuse me, where's the HR building?'... Still carrying that Javanese mask." On reflection, that mask was not falsehood; it was a considered strategy for preserving a face she valued while meeting the expectations of a workplace she also valued, an ethical compromise rather than a capitulation. Reciprocity carried a similar dual grounding for Nadia, whose main source of guidance was neither a supervisor nor an office friend but her older sibling in Bekasi, who gave her one piece of advice she still holds to: more experienced people are glad to be listened to. Markus's account of reciprocity went further still, describing a habit of asking senior crew for input rather than issuing instructions, a genuine humility that, he found, consistently drew senior colleagues who might otherwise have kept their generational distance into becoming willing sources of guidance. Dewi's independent account of the newsroom's information culture gives this pattern an organisational name: Metro TV, in her description, runs substantially on *pull knowledge*. Expertise is not pushed evenly to everyone; it is disproportionately available to those who actively ask for it, so asking becomes a form of social currency. Read against Nadia's and Markus's own strategies, reciprocity

in this newsroom is not only an inherited value informants bring with them. It is also, independently, the norm the institution itself rewards.

Cultural Guilt: The Ethical Cost of Complying

The most ethically distinctive finding here, and one not, to our knowledge, previously documented among Indonesian domestic migrant media workers, emerged from a joint interview with Rizal, Rahmat, and Arif, the three Sumatran informants who each carry an explicit, structured system of speech levels from home. In Minangkabau and Acehnese communication, deference is not merely a preference but something closer to a written rule. When that system meets Metro TV's egalitarian, first-name newsroom culture, the result is not simple relief at no longer needing formality. It is what is termed here cultural guilt: the sense of having been "uncivilised" toward one's home values by practising the very egalitarian communication the workplace demands, even while correctly following the new environment's norms. Unlike the identity mask Salsa describes wearing consciously, cultural guilt is not a strategy the informant chooses; it is an unwanted feeling that accompanies compliance itself.

Formally defined, cultural guilt is the affective and moral discomfort that arises when an individual complies correctly and successfully with a new environment's communicative norms, and interprets that very compliance as a betrayal of the value system that norm has displaced. A few nearby emotional and clinical concepts are worth distinguishing it from. Unlike *acculturative stress*, which Berry (1997) describes as the general strain of psychological and sociocultural adjustment to a new cultural setting, cultural guilt is not diffuse strain but a specific, morally coded response to *successful*, not failed, adaptation: it appears precisely when the informant is performing the new norm correctly, not when they are struggling with it. It is also different from *identity strain* in the sense Settles (2004) describes, interference between multiple identities competing for the same psychological space: cultural guilt does not register as competition between roles but as a felt violation of one role's values by the successful performance of another, where the identities are less competing for attention than one appears, in the moment, to indict the other. More consequentially still, cultural guilt is markedly narrower than *moral injury* as Litz et al. (2009) define it in the context of war trauma, a violation of deeply held moral beliefs by an act one perpetrates, witnesses, or fails to prevent. The informants in this study describe discomfort, not the transgression-level violation and lasting psychological injury central to that literature, and the comparison is offered here only to mark a conceptual boundary, not to suggest equivalence of severity. Cultural guilt differs, too, from the social-mobility literature's account of *cultural dissonance*, in which upwardly mobile individuals report persistent disorientation from moving between the cultural repertoires of their origin and destination classes (Daenekindt, 2017). Where that literature describes a lasting condition of not-quite-belonging to either world, informants here describe a bounded, situationally triggered feeling that is metabolised, as shown below, through solidarity and disciplined work rather than settling into lasting disorientation. Cultural guilt is, in sum, adaptation-specific and compliance-triggered, and in this data it is actively resolved rather than chronically endured.

This finding gains ethical weight from what it is not: none of the three men resolved the tension by abandoning either side. Instead of shame paralysing them, all three converted it into a form of proactive diligence. Rather than waiting passively to be told what to do, a pattern easy to expect from stereotypes of a supposedly passive generation, they took the initiative to confirm and follow through on assignments unprompted, a disposition traced here to the same inherited ethic of hard

work and courtesy that produces the guilt in the first place. Rizal named the compensating bond directly: "Why are we closer to fellow migrants? Because we're in the same boat — struggling together, without family here, we help each other out. If we complained to people from the city, they wouldn't understand what we're going through." Cultural guilt, in other words, is not resolved by suppressing the home value system; it is metabolised through solidarity with others who carry the same inherited weight, and through work discipline that lets the value system express itself even inside a culture that no longer requires its outward form.

Selective Convergence, Selective Divergence, and the Refusal to Simply Assimilate

Communication Accommodation Theory's premise that convergence and divergence can operate simultaneously on different dimensions of the same repertoire (Giles, Edwards, and Walther, 2023) proved the most productive behavioural framework for the data gathered here. Sekar converged deliberately on work tempo and vocabulary while just as deliberately preserving a respectful register toward superiors: "Sometimes, but only occasionally. Because I think changing the way I talk too much just makes it not feel like me anymore. It feels uncomfortable." Laras, four years into her reporting career, has never adopted the informal "gue-lu" register her colleagues use, holding onto the more measured "aku-kamu" instead: "I feel different from the others because of my accent... but in the end I still use 'aku-kamu,' not 'gue-lu.' Still, to this day." Where Laras could not simply out-talk colleagues who spoke faster than felt natural to her, she developed a specific compensatory tactic instead: "I focus on the first five words of my question. Because if I speak slowly, people can get impatient. So those first five words are usually enough for a source to understand what I'm asking."

Putri's data reveal that this convergence is not applied uniformly; it is calibrated by the direction of power itself. She accepts the informal "lo-gue" register from peers her own age, but consciously chooses the more formal "saya" or "aku-kamu" register with seniors, evidence that linguistic convergence is asymmetric, tuned to the direction of a relationship rather than applied as a blanket rule. Intan's repertoire is the most elaborate documented in this corpus: coarse Sundanese "aing-maneh" at home, Cirebon-inflected Indonesian "aku-kamu" with family and old friends, and Jakarta slang "lo-gue" at work, three registers she toggles between depending on location rather than a single evolving style. None of these informants described their accommodation as assimilation. What they described was addition: surface behaviour converging toward organisational norms, while identity-anchoring elements (respect for elders, core moral commitments, residual linguistic habits) were deliberately or semi-deliberately preserved.

Not all convergence in this newsroom is self-directed, however. Rina, a Jakarta-born senior, described actively pushing a Javanese junior reporter out of a communicative style Rina judged too passive for the job: "Jangan jadi cewek Jawa dulu — kamu harus ngegas" ("Don't be a Javanese girl about it — you need to push harder"). This is a form of what this study terms directed convergence, qualitatively distinct from the organic, self-paced convergence Sekar and Laras describe: here a senior deliberately identifies an inherited communicative habit and instructs a junior to set it aside, rather than the junior discovering the need for change through her own accumulated experience. Rina's account also surfaces a variable that was not part of the original research design: Korlip Hasan independently observed that gender, more than regional origin, was in his experience the sharper predictor of communicative style, and Rina's own intervention was aimed specifically at the intersection of being both Javanese and a young woman. The data here are too limited to draw a

firm conclusion, but they mark gender as a variable future research on this population should examine by design rather than treat as incidental.

Read against the five dimensions of ethical communication set out in the Introduction, these accommodation choices are not ethically uniform. Preserving "aku-kamu" against social pressure to use "gue-lu" (Laras), maintaining a distinct linguistic register in each social sphere rather than performing a single assimilated self (Intan), and calibrating formality by the direction of power rather than defaulting to whichever register is easiest (Putri) are best read as choices that protect dignity and respect: they keep the informant recognisable to themselves and honour the relational asymmetries their home cultures taught them to observe. Converging on work tempo and vocabulary (Sekar) or compressing a question into its first five words to manage a faster newsroom tempo (Laras), by contrast, are better read as pragmatic adaptations in the domain of efficiency rather than as choices bearing directly on honesty or identity: changing how quickly one speaks does not, on the evidence gathered here, feel to informants like changing who one is, in the way that changing a form of address does. The ethical weight of an accommodation, in other words, tracks not whether it is convergence or divergence, but which of the five dimensions (honesty, dignity, responsibility, reciprocity, or respect) the informant experiences it as touching.

Anxiety, Mindfulness, and the Ethics of Not Reacting Automatically

Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory (Gudykunst, 2005) holds that effective intercultural communication depends on an actor's capacity to manage cognitive uncertainty and affective anxiety. Hendra, from Lahat, South Sumatra, operationalised this almost textbook-perfectly, describing a habit of first getting to know a colleague or supervisor personally before deciding how to approach them: "First I get to know the person. Say it's a colleague or a supervisor — before I'm going to meet them at work, I do my research first: sit down, talk, see how they speak, what makes them comfortable when they're talking. Then I apply what fits." Markus's version of the same principle operated at the level of channel choice rather than person: "Text gets read a lot of different ways by different people... That's why I don't bother with WhatsApp, I always call." Choosing to phone rather than type was not incidental habit but an explicit, pre-emptive strategy against the loss of tone and intent in text, preventing anxiety and miscommunication before they could arise rather than managing them afterward.

Yoga's independent, coordinator-side account shows that this textual anxiety runs in both directions and has its own local semiotics: he reports that reporters under his supervision routinely read a supervisor's ALL-CAPS message as "shouting" and respond with disproportionate alarm, while a trailing ellipsis ("...") is read as a relaxed, unhurried tone, a paralinguistic code that develops organically in everyday text communication and is understood without ever being taught explicitly. A supervisor unaware of this code, in Yoga's account, risks generating repeated emotional miscommunication without ever learning why. Anxiety about textual tone, in other words, is not only something rural-origin newcomers must manage; it is a shared interpretive burden the whole newsroom carries, on both sides of the authority line.

There is an ethical dimension to mindfulness that AUM's original behavioural vocabulary does not foreground but that the informants here made explicit: choosing to seek information rather than guess, and choosing to reframe rather than retaliate, are themselves choices about how to treat colleagues fairly under uncertainty. Markus is also the clearest disconfirming case here for AUM's general prediction: as the corpus's only Dayak informant, from a background as culturally distant

from Jakarta as any in the sample, he reported no identity-based confidence crisis at all, attributing his early difficulties to being a novice journalist rather than to his regional background, a distinction he draws explicitly and one that a purely cultural-distance account of anxiety would not predict. Korlip Yoga's triangulation data add a further, structural qualification to AUM's largely psychological account of anxiety: in his observation, Jakarta-born reporters refuse unwanted assignments more readily than rural-origin reporters not because they are less anxious by temperament, but because they can typically fall back on a family financial safety net that rural-origin reporters, further from home and without that cushion, do not have. Anxiety about negotiating with authority, on this account, is not purely psychological or cultural; it is also economic, a dimension AUM's original formulation does not capture.

Barriers, Ethical Leadership, and the Organisation's Share of the Burden

Empirical pattern

Not every barrier these workers face originates in their own adaptation; the triangulation data show that several originate in how the organisation treats them. Wulan's description of her onboarding remains the single most pointed testimony of minimal formal support anywhere in the corpus: "There was no briefing, Mbak. I just sat there, not knowing what to do. The only person who taught me anything did it for six days. On day seven that person didn't show up. I was even given Mandarin-language content to work on — I don't understand Mandarin." Korlip Hasan's own account, offered independently from the supervisory side, corroborates the underlying dynamic rather than the specific incident: a work correction meant as professional feedback is, in his experience, sometimes received by younger staff as body-shaming or a personal attack, a mismatch he addresses not by withholding feedback but by explicitly teaching turn-taking and listening skills so that feedback stops being reflexively heard as an attack on self-worth.

Salsa's most psychologically consequential barrier came from being corrected in front of her entire team through a shared spreadsheet, after misjudging the newsworthiness of a religious observance story from outside Jakarta: "I was traumatised. I apologised at length... I cried because I felt it was the biggest mistake of my early days at the portal." What resolved a related barrier, her anxiety about her height on camera, was not a training programme but a single well-timed sentence from her supervisor, Mas Arga: "Salsa, does the audience at home even know if you're tall or short? The camera height can be adjusted." Independent testimony from supervisors describes similar moments as a repeatable practice rather than a lucky accident. Maya, who has led roughly fifty Generation Z staff for over six years, described an implicit four-step formula: understand their world and interests first, actively build closeness, give an unambiguous brief with deadlines and review steps, and be firm on output while staying flexible on process. Tellingly, she also described accommodating requests for leave framed in Gen Z's own emotional vocabulary ("I'm *kena mental*, can I take the day off?") not by refusing them outright nor granting them unconditionally, but by negotiating a proportionate middle ground ("come in at 1pm, then"). Bima, from marketing, described a parallel practice he calls "penjelasan berizin" ("permission through explanation"), offering a reasoned justification before assigning work outside a younger colleague's formal role: "Kalau sudah dikasih penjelasan rasional, mereka jalanin" ("Once you give them a rational explanation, they get on with it"). He reframes Gen Z's visible discomfort with hierarchy not as disrespect but as cognitive dissonance between an internalised belief in equality and the hierarchy the workplace still requires. Dewi, Hendra's supervisor of four years, describes defending him

before a manager at a decisive moment in his career: "Saya yang tanggung jawab, saya percaya Hendra bisa" ("I'll take responsibility — I believe Hendra can do it"), a documented instance of the kind of developmental sponsorship organisational scholarship associates with durable career mobility (Kram, 1985). Her account of Hendra also identifies a barrier invisible in his own self-report, a gap between his willingness to take on any assigned task and a persistent reluctance to speak or present himself verbally in public: "berani action, tidak berani verbal." She reads this as a distinct, coachable skill gap rather than a motivational one. She further attributes some of the negative perception rural-origin accents receive in the newsroom, particularly Sumatran and Batak intonation patterns read locally as "impolite" or "aggressive," to a structural bias entirely outside individual workers' control, one Ratna confirms has been partly institutionalised through a voice-coaching evaluation in recruitment rather than left to informal supervisor judgement alone.

Interpretation

Read together, this organisational-side evidence maps onto three literatures that the original theoretical frame (Schutz, CAT, AUM, Identity Negotiation Theory) does not itself cover, because all four are theories of the individual's adaptation rather than of the organisation's response to it. What Maya, Hasan, and Arga each independently practise is consistent with what Brown and Treviño (2006) describe as ethical leadership: fair, considerate treatment paired with clear, explicit communication of expectations, exactly the "unambiguous brief with deadlines and review steps" Maya reports giving, and the same principle Bima operationalises as "penjelasan berizin." The minimal-onboarding cases, Wulan's in particular, also sit close to what Bauer et al. (2025) identify, in a recent meta-analytic review, as the central lever of newcomer socialization: structured onboarding processes measurably reduce role ambiguity and turnover intention, the organisational-level mechanism Wulan's case illustrates from the inside. Ratna's account of Metro TV's Journalist Development Program (JDP) offers an institution-side perspective on the same mechanism, reported here as her testimony rather than as programme evaluation data. She attributes much of the newsroom's relatively fast communicative adaptation not to formal training content but to the programme's cohort design, which places an entire intake in the same classroom for a full year and lets peer observation, including observation of Jakarta-born cohort-mates, do socialisation work that no explicit instruction accomplishes as efficiently: a structured-onboarding mechanism consistent with Bauer et al.'s (2025) findings but operating through peer contact rather than supervisor contact. Hasan's practice of teaching turn-taking and listening skills so that feedback is not reflexively heard as a personal attack, and Arga's single well-timed reassurance to Salsa, are further consistent with what Edmondson (1999) terms psychological safety: a shared belief that it is safe to take interpersonal risks, including the risk of being seen to make a mistake, within a given team. Kevin's triangulation data support this reading, indicating that Metro TV's own human-resources division is already moving in this direction: a dedicated Generation Z training programme was, at the time of data collection, in active preparation, an indication from within the organisation that these implications are not purely academic recommendations but converge with a direction the institution had already begun to take. None of this organisational-side data were designed to test these three literatures directly, and the connection drawn here is interpretive rather than measured; it is offered as a bridge between the phenomenological findings above and organisational-behaviour scholarship that future, more structurally focused research could test directly.

Reverse Accommodation and the Persistence of Bonding Capital

Not every pattern of accommodation moves in the direction classically predicted by Communication Accommodation Theory, from the less powerful migrant toward organisational norms (Giles, Edwards, and Walther, 2023). Laras reports that after roughly four years, a senior cameraman gradually adjusted his own working rhythm to match hers rather than the reverse, a pattern this study terms *reverse accommodation*. What makes this pattern more than an anecdote is that supervisors from multiple divisions independently described the same inversion without prompting from one another. Bang Andra, from production and of the Millennial generation, admitted with something close to rueful honesty that the burden of communicative adaptation now sits more with supervisors than with rural-origin Gen Z staff: "Kalau kita beradaptasi dengan mereka, berarti sabar kita harus berlapis-lapis-lapis" ("If we're the ones adapting to them, our patience has to run many layers deep"). Kevin, from marketing, put it more bluntly still: "aku yang menurunkan derajat" ("I'm the one who lowers my own register"). Kak Dewi described the same shift in maternal terms: "I have to be like a mother — don't be too harsh." Bima acknowledged having become slower and less authoritative than his own earlier management style.

Two further, independent voices sharpen rather than merely repeat this pattern. Maya frames her own version of the same accommodation as a deliberately chosen leadership strategy that she judges to have succeeded, not a concession extracted from her. Korlip Yoga frames it in the opposite register: as a felt structural necessity rather than a preference, driven by the concrete organisational cost of not accommodating (reporters who resign, camera crew who stop complying). He offers the clearest institutional explanation for why authority has shifted despite no formal change in the organisational chart: "*Gen Z memiliki leverage untuk resign kapan saja*" ("Gen Z has the leverage to resign at any time"). Read together, Maya's and Yoga's accounts show that reverse accommodation is not a single, uniform phenomenon but two distinct pathways, chosen strategy and structural constraint, that converge on the same observable behaviour.

Six supervisors and seniors across five divisions, interviewed separately and without access to one another's accounts, describing the same phenomenon: this is unlikely to be coincidence. Rather than concluding that Communication Accommodation Theory itself needs revising on the strength of a single organisational case, the pattern is framed more cautiously here as a contextual extension of CAT: in settings where a formally subordinate group holds real structural leverage (in this case, Generation Z's demographic weight within the newsroom and, as Yoga makes explicit, the comparative ease of resignation in a competitive media labour market), accommodation appears to flow in both directions even while formal authority itself has not changed. Confirming whether this is a genuine boundary condition of CAT, rather than a feature specific to this newsroom, would require comparative data from organisations where Generation Z workers hold less structural leverage, which this single-site study cannot provide.

Triangulation also corrects the key informants' own account of how far bonding gives way to bridging. Rina, a Jakarta-born senior who mentors several junior reporters directly, offered what may be the most disarmingly honest observation in the entire triangulation dataset: rural-origin reporters often describe themselves as having blended in with Jakarta-born colleagues, yet her own observation shows a persistent clustering pattern: migrants still eating and resting together in recognisable subgroups well beyond their first year. This is a gap between self-perception and an actual behavioural pattern that is easier to see from outside than to notice in oneself, and a methodological reminder that self-reported integration tends to overstate the integration that has

actually taken place. Bonding capital among fellow migrants appears more durable and more extensive than the informants who live inside it fully realise, persisting as a stable base layer even as bridging and linking capital (Lin, 2001) continue to accumulate above it rather than displacing it.

The value the organisation appears to place on rural-origin communicative habits is also visible at the institutional level, although the evidence here is testimonial rather than documentary. Ratna, twenty years in human resources, who reports having overseen some 1,130 hires across twenty-six recruitment cohorts, states that recruitment policy has deliberately shifted over the past three years to prioritise rural-origin candidates, and attributes the shift not to personal preference among management but to a pattern she has observed across two decades: in her experience, rural-origin hires stay longer and rise further than their Jakarta-born peers, even when they present as less verbally confident at interview. Because this account was not verified against personnel records, it is treated here as an experienced insider's perception of institutional practice rather than as independently corroborating retention data; it is, nonetheless, consistent with the supervisors' accounts reported above. Read on those terms, it describes a form of linking social capital that runs in the opposite direction from how the concept is usually discussed: not an individual migrant seeking access to an institution, but an institution actively seeking out and prioritising a category of individual it has learned, over two decades, that it needs. This reputational asset is double-edged, however. Dewi cautions that the 'hardworking migrant' reputation documented here also becomes a standard rural-origin staff feel obliged to keep proving, creating a form of identity pressure that Jakarta-born peers, not held to the same expectation, do not carry, a caution treated here as a necessary corrective to a finding that could otherwise read as uncomplicated good news.

Toward an Ethics of Communicative Adaptation

Returning to this study's two research questions and four guiding frameworks, Table 3 summarises how each major finding answers RQ1 or RQ2, which theoretical lens it draws on, and what it implies ethically; the discussion below elaborates the pattern the table shows in outline.

Table 3. Synthesis of Findings

Finding	RQ	Theoretical Lens	Ethical Implication
Typification disruption at onboarding	RQ1	Schutz (typification)	Ethical outcomes depend on supervisory response to disorientation, not only newcomer resilience
Cultural guilt among hierarchical-home-culture informants	RQ1 & RQ2	Schutz (motive/meaning); Berry 1997; Settles 2004; Litz et al. 2009; Daenekindt 2017	Compliance can carry an unacknowledged ethical cost organisations should not assume is costless
Selective and directed convergence / divergence	RQ2	Communication Accommodation Theory	Ethical accommodation preserves dignity/respect while conceding efficiency-domain ground
Mindful information-seeking over reactive judgement	RQ2	Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory	Verifying rather than assuming is itself an ethical act of fairness under uncertainty

Finding	RQ	Theoretical Lens	Ethical Implication
Non-deceptive identity negotiation (layered "masks")	RQ2	Identity Negotiation Theory	Adding a professional register without erasing an inherited one satisfies honesty and dignity together
Organisational responsiveness (leadership, onboarding, safety)	RQ1	Brown & Treviño 2006; Bauer et al. 2025; Edmondson 1999	Ethical communication is co-produced by the organisation, not solely a migrant achievement
Reverse accommodation (choice and structural constraint)	RQ1	CAT (contextual extension)	Structural leverage can redistribute the ethical burden of accommodation; single-site observation

Taken together, these findings support an account of ethical communication among rural Generation Z migrant workers that differs from the classical view of ethics as adherence to a fixed set of principles applied uniformly across contexts (Arnett, Fritz, and Bell, 2009). What this study's informants and their supervisors alike treated as ethical was not any single communicative style, but the capacity to move between provinces of meaning, in Schutz's (1967) sense, without losing track of who one remains underneath each performance, and without abandoning obligations to family, community, and colleagues along the way. Ethical communication, on this account, is enacted through honest disclosure after error rather than concealment, through reciprocity honoured even at personal risk, through mindful information-seeking rather than reactive judgement, through the quiet discipline that converts cultural guilt into solidarity rather than resentment, and through a form of identity negotiation, Ting-Toomey and Dorjee's (2018) term for the joint construction of face and identity in intercultural encounters, that adds a professional register without erasing an inherited one. This section closes fittingly with the verdict of the one informant here who is not herself a rural migrant. Asked to compare rural-origin colleagues with fellow Jakarta-born Generation Z, Tiara offered a plain assessment with nothing to gain from flattering either group: "*yang lebih baperan justru Gen Z kota*" ("if anything, it's Jakarta-born Gen Z who take things more personally"). Coming from inside the very comparison group this study implicitly measures rural-origin workers against, that verdict is not proof of anything on its own, but it is difficult evidence to dismiss as generational bias from an older generation impressed by politeness.

This account also carries an organisational implication that the triangulation data make difficult to avoid. Where onboarding is minimal, ethical outcomes depend disproportionately on chance: on whether a newcomer happens to find a mentor, and whether a supervisor happens to notice a specific psychological vulnerability at the right moment, as Arga did for Salsa and Dewi did for Hendra. Positioned within the broader field of communication for development (Servaes, 2020), the communicative adaptation documented here is a form of grassroots social capital formation (Putnam, 2000), and the human-resources officer's account of long-term retention suggests that organisations which invest in structured onboarding and attentive, trained supervision are not merely being kind; they may also be making a sound organisational decision, a proposition that future research using personnel records could test directly.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how rural Generation Z migrant workers at Metro TV Jakarta communicate ethically while adapting to an urban workplace whose norms differ sharply from those of their home regions, drawing on twenty-nine participants: nineteen worker-informants whose accounts were cross-referenced against eleven independent interviews with ten of the supervisors and peers who work alongside them. The findings show that these workers do not resolve the gap between high-context origins and low-context organisational demands by assimilating wholesale or by refusing to adapt, but by selectively converging on surface communicative behaviour while deliberately preserving identity-anchoring elements they regard as non-negotiable, sometimes at the emotional cost of a cultural guilt that, to our knowledge, has not previously been documented among this population. This adaptation is grounded simultaneously in because-motives rooted in family obligation or past hardship and in-order-to motives oriented toward professional futures, and it is bridged, where anxiety threatens to overwhelm it, by mindfulness practices that favour information-seeking and reframing over automatic reaction. Ethical communication, on the evidence gathered here, is best understood not as loyalty to a fixed code but as an ongoing, intersubjective negotiation of meaning in which honesty toward others, fidelity to inherited obligations, and openness to organisational demands are held together rather than traded off.

The study also shows, with a strength of corroboration rarely available in migrant-adaptation research, that ethical outcomes are not the sole responsibility of the migrant worker. Six supervisors and seniors, independently, described softening their own communicative authority toward rural-origin Gen Z staff rather than the reverse, for reasons ranging from deliberate leadership strategy to the structural leverage this generation holds in a competitive labour market; a long-serving human-resources officer reports that these workers are now actively recruited for precisely the qualities this study identifies; and a single well-judged sentence from a supervisor, offered at the right moment, twice in this data set changed the course of a young worker's confidence more than any formal training programme did. For communication scholarship, this suggests that ethical communication research in diverse workplaces should attend as closely to organisational listening and responsiveness as it does to individual competence. For organisations managing an increasingly rural-origin, digitally native Gen Z workforce, it suggests that structured onboarding, including cohort-based designs that let peer socialisation do part of the work, as Metro TV's own Journalist Development Program appears to do, and trained, attentive supervision are not merely matters of efficiency but of ethical obligation.

Limitations

Several limitations qualify these conclusions. The study is set within a single media organisation, Metro TV Jakarta, so its account of institutional responsiveness, including the retention pattern Ratna describes, reflects one organisation's practice and cannot be assumed to generalise to Indonesian media workplaces, or workplaces in other sectors, more broadly. The triangulation data themselves acknowledge this limitation, since all nineteen worker-informants and ten triangulation participants were drawn from the same organisational environment. Relatedly, the qualitative, single-site phenomenological design that makes this study's depth possible also limits its generalisability; the synthesis in Table 3 should be read as a set of theoretically grounded propositions for further testing rather than as population-level claims. Informants' accounts also rely on retrospective self-report and are therefore subject to recall bias, particularly for informants describing episodes, such as early-onboarding disruption, that occurred one to five years before the

interview. All quotations, in addition, were spoken in Indonesian, in several cases inflected by regional registers (Minangkabau, Acehnese, Sundanese, and others), and translated into English by the authors; translation inevitably involves interpretive choices, and readers should treat the English quotations as the authors' best-effort rendering of meaning rather than as a neutral transcription. A small number of triangulation interviews (Hasan, Ratna, and Kevin) were affected by recording-quality limitations or interruption and required interpretive reconstruction from field notes rather than clean verbatim transcription. Claims about institutional recruitment and retention rest on one human-resources officer's testimony rather than on analysis of personnel records, and should be read accordingly. The researcher's position as an academic outsider, discussed under Methods, may also have shaped what informants chose to disclose, even though bracketing, reflexive memoing, and triangulation were used to limit this influence. Finally, this study was not designed to examine gender systematically, yet two independent observations, Korlip Hasan's view that gender predicts communicative style more sharply than regional origin, and Rina's directed-convergence intervention aimed specifically at a junior who was both Javanese and female, suggest gender may interact with regional origin in ways this design cannot disentangle. Future research might extend this triangulated, phenomenological approach to other sectors beyond media, to migrant workers whose organisational leverage is more constrained, and to a sampling design that examines gender and regional origin jointly, testing whether the ethical strategies identified here (selective convergence, honest disclosure, and reciprocity under uncertainty) hold under different structural and demographic conditions.

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