

## Representation of Emigration: The Meaning of the #Kaburajadulu Meme on Instagram

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram as a digital representation of emigration among Indonesian youth. The findings reveal how the trend reflects aspirations for better opportunities abroad, shaped by economic pressures, identity struggles, and collective imagination. Unlike previous research focused on mainstream media, the analysis demonstrates social media's evolving role in shaping emigration narratives. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study analyzes 143,000 Instagram posts shared between August 1–17, 2025, during Indonesia's Independence Day. Data were collected through online documentation and examined using Miles and Huberman's framework. The findings reveal that the hashtag #kaburajadulu functions not only as a symbolic expression of migration aspirations but also as a cultural medium through which young Indonesians articulate humor, solidarity, disappointment, hope, and socio-cultural anxieties. The trend reflects broader economic, educational, political, and employment-related concerns that encourage aspirations for opportunities abroad. Furthermore, the study demonstrates how Instagram has become a significant digital space for negotiating identity, expressing dissatisfaction with domestic socio-economic conditions, and constructing collective narratives of emigration. This research contributes to broader discussions on the relationship between social media, identity formation, and migration discourse in contemporary digital culture.

Keywords: #kaburajadulu, digital culture, Instagram, representation, emigration, youth.

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Received: 15 September 2025

Accepted: 6 March 2026

Published: 24 May 2026



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## 1. Introduction

Recently, the #kaburajadulu trend has become a prominent topic of discussion within Indonesian society, widely circulated on various social media platforms, particularly Instagram. The trend has emerged as a form of social expression shaped by cultural values and public responses to social and economic uncertainty. According to Bartolini et al. (2017), this trend has arisen as a result of communities experiencing financial and economic pressures for many years in their respective countries. In the midst of labor market collapse, rising unemployment, economic recessions, and budgetary austerity, people migrate to other countries in pursuit of better professional opportunities. A similar phenomenon has also occurred in Indonesia, particularly among young people, as an expression of their desire to “leave” or “relocate” to places with greater opportunities and better lives (Mardiana, 2025). On Instagram, the hashtag #kaburajadulu frequently represents this phenomenon. As noted by Collins and Schloffel-Armstrong (2022), emigration activities represented in the media significantly shape public understanding. Therefore, research on the representation of emigration on Instagram has emerged as an important scholarly field (Seo & Kavakli, 2022).

The trend of #kaburajadulu, as part of emigration discourse on Instagram, has developed into a representation of meanings that are both complex and contextual. However, over the last three years, studies addressing the representational meanings of emigration in media have focused only on three main contexts. First, studies on the representation of emigration within mainstream media (Gonçalves, 2024; Hida & Coutinho, 2024; Smith, 2025). Second, studies on emigration representations in socio-cultural contexts (Calabretta, 2025; Taqiyeddine, 2025; Ung, 2023; Zapata et al., 2024). Third, studies examining emigration in visual representations (Brzykcy, 2024; Omidiora & Goodman, 2025; Rizzi, 2023). Other works have analyzed the representation of emigration through radio (Fajardo, 2024). In general, such studies have primarily concentrated on mainstream, socio-cultural, visual, and radio-based media, while discussions of emigration representations in social media are often overlooked. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that discussing emigration through the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram constitutes an important area of scholarly inquiry.

The representation of emigration through #kaburajadulu on Instagram is a highly complex and contextual phenomenon. This observation aligns with Ambrosetti and Miccoli’s (2025) argument that, in recent decades, emigration has become a phenomenon sparking debates within politics, news media, and social media. Furthermore, Ambrosetti & Miccoli (2025) emphasize that social media platforms have become spaces through which insights into the narratives

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of emigration are shaped and disseminated. However, previous studies have not comprehensively examined representations of emigration on social media, particularly regarding representations of emigration through the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram.

The hashtag #kaburajadulu frequently appears as a form of representation within Instagram content. Consequently, this study focuses on two central research questions. First, what are the representational meanings of emigration conveyed through the #kaburajadulu memes on Instagram? Second, what factors shape the trend of #kaburajadulu on Instagram? In line with these questions, this study is also based on the argument that the representation of emigration through the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram not only reflects individuals' desires to relocate to potential host countries but also serves as a cultural symbol of the younger generation in expressing their anxieties, hopes, and imaginations about an ideal life abroad. Such representations also demonstrate how digital culture constructs collective perspectives on emigration, framing it not merely as an economic-political issue but also as a cultural phenomenon embedded within identity, humor, and solidarity among social media users.

## 2. Methodology

This qualitative descriptive study was conducted amidst the widespread circulation of the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram, which coincided with the commemoration of Indonesia's Independence Day. However, the scope of this study is limited to explaining and reflecting on the characteristics of the #kaburajadulu hashtag as a representation of emigration on Instagram. The study is grounded in three major considerations. First, the representation of emigration through the #kaburajadulu hashtag on Instagram constitutes an important phenomenon that has not yet been comprehensively discussed within cultural studies. Second, the circulation of the #kaburajadulu hashtag, as a reconstruction of emigration, demonstrates characteristics that are complex yet contextual. Third, the representation of emigration through the #kaburajadulu hashtag is a significant social phenomenon that warrants reflection to evaluate cultural concepts explaining the reasons why young people seek to relocate to other countries. These three considerations provide the foundation for this study, which seeks to explain and reflect on the representations of emigration disseminated through the #kaburajadulu hashtag on Instagram.

This study relies on both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected by examining approximately 143,000 Instagram posts containing

the #kaburajadulu hashtag between August 1 and 17, 2025. The data review process was conducted systematically, focusing on the titles or themes of Instagram content that reflect the trend among young people aspiring to migrate to countries perceived as offering better opportunities than Indonesia. Data collection was carried out systematically through online documentation methods, using screenshot documentation on mobile devices to record hashtag-related content on Instagram.

The data analysis in this study follows the framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (Miles et al., 2014), which consists of three stages. The first stage involves data reduction, where we reorganize the data into a more systematic form by classifying it based on type, factor, and contextual trends. Second, data verification involves drawing thematic conclusions from the reduced dataset. Third, the data presentation involves elaborating on the verified data and displaying it in tables that include images and descriptions aligned with the study's focus. Following these stages, the data were interpreted inductively. Data interpretation involved revisiting and reflecting upon the data in light of ideas, patterns, and socio-cultural contexts (Fernando et al., 2025). This process allows the study to draw conclusions about the phenomenon it is investigating.

### **3. Results**

The circulation of the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram is frequently represented through images containing complex and contextual meanings. This study reveals two key findings that illustrate this context.

#### ***3.1 The representation of emigration through the Hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram***

The trend emerging through the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram illustrates a highly complex and contextual representation of emigration. Ambrosetti and Miccoli, (2025) also argue that discussions of emigration over the past decade have evolved and shifted from traditional channels to the internet and social media platforms. Through the contemporary and dynamic nature of social media, public representations of emigration have been revolutionized by providing a more open space for discussion and depiction. This context can be observed and reflected in Table 1.

Table 1 illustrates the representation of emigration through the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram, which emerges within both economic and socio-political contexts. In line with this, Table 1 also highlights two dominant

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tendencies regarding emigration represented through the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram.

First, the hashtag #kaburajadulu often portrays emigration as an economic solution. Meme images conveying this economic solution can be observed in the economic category, which describes the strong aspiration of Indonesians to emigrate abroad in search of significantly better employment opportunities. This context is consistent with the perspective of Tartakovsky et al. (2017) who argue that most individuals pursue emigration when the economic conditions in the destination country are more advantageous than in their country of origin.

Second, the hashtag #kaburajadulu often portrays emigration as an expression of disappointment. Meme images carrying this meaning can be seen within the political and social categories, describing how young people emigrate abroad due to frustration and disappointment with the nation's deteriorating conditions.

Additionally, the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram also represents emigration within the context of self-protection. This meaning is reflected in the political category, which describes how the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Prabowo previously lived abroad in self-imposed exile to shield himself from political pressures.

Table 1. Representation of Emigration through the #kaburajadulu Hashtag on Instagram

Image	Representation of Emigration	Category	Narration
	Representation of Emigration as an Economic Solution	Economic	The Aspiration to Work Abroad Rather than in Indonesia.
	Representation of Emigration as a Form of Political and Social Protest	Political and Social	Frustration over increasingly complex governmental issues
	Representation of Disappointment	Political and Social	Frustration with the Deteriorating Condition of the Nation
	Representation of Disappointment	Political and Social	Disappointment with the Condition of the Nation
	Representation as a Strategy of Self-Protection	Politics	Prabowo previously lived abroad in self-imposed exile as protection from political pressure.

### 3.2 Factors Shaping the Trend of #kaburajadulu on Instagram

#### 3.2.1 Educational Factors

The representation of emigration disseminated through the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram frequently emerges in relation to educational factors. According to Hussain et al. (2021), the lack of educational opportunities in one's country of origin constitutes a key reason for individuals to emigrate to other countries. Table 2 illustrates this context.

Table 2. Educational Factors Shaping the #kaburajadulu Trend

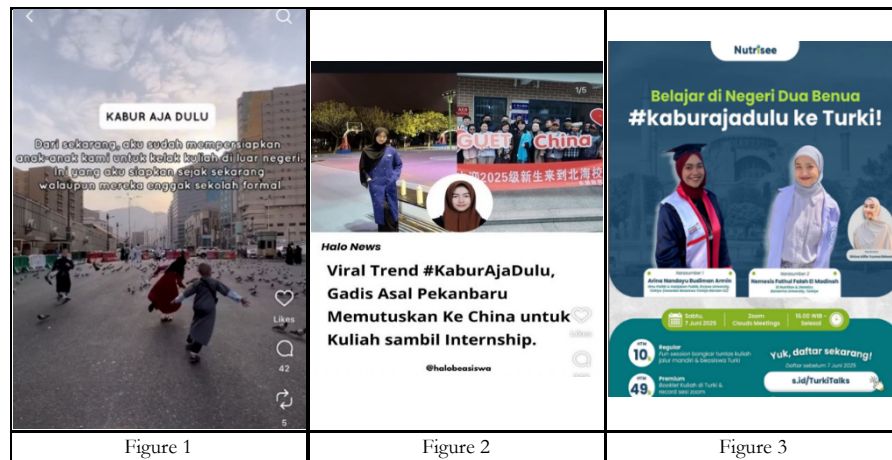


Table 2 presents the educational factors that influence the emigration representations associated with the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram. Communities that engage in emigration perceive the pursuit of better educational opportunities abroad as one of the reasons for "escaping" from their home country. In line with this, Table 2 also presents two dominant tendencies regarding the factors shaping the #kaburajadulu trend on Instagram.

First, educational preparation for future generations emerges as a dominant factor motivating many individuals to emigrate to other countries. This context is reflected in Figure 1, which depicts parents bringing their children along in the process of emigration as a means of familiarizing them with life and education abroad. In line with that, Tartakovsky et al. (2017) argue that among emigrants, one of the key motivations is ensuring that their children gain access to quality education, which thus becomes a strong determinant for undertaking emigration.

Second, the motivation and initiative to pursue higher education abroad represent another dominant factor prompting communities to realize the #kaburajadulu trend by moving to other countries. Figure 2 exemplifies this context by showing a young woman from Pekanbaru, Riau, making the decision to study in China while completing an internship.

Moreover, the pursuit of university admission abroad serves as a significant motivator for individuals to embrace the #kaburajadulu trend in foreign countries. Figure 3 illustrates this phenomenon by showcasing a webinar on securing admission to universities in Asia and Europe.

### 3.2.2 Employment Factor

The representation of emigration disseminated through the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram also frequently emerges in relation to employment factors. According to Tartakovsky et al. (2017), one of the factors influencing individuals to emigrate is unemployment, which makes their intention to emigrate more significant. This context can be observed in Table 3.

Table 3. Employment Factors Shaping the #kaburajadulu Trend

<p>Figure 1</p>	<p>Figure 2</p>	<p>Figure 3</p>

Table 3 illustrates employment as a factor shaping the #kaburajadulu trend on Instagram. Indonesia is perceived as not yet an ideal country for pursuing professional careers, leading many individuals to emigrate to other countries in search of better employment opportunities and fair wages. In line with this, Table 3 also highlights two major tendencies regarding the employment-related factors underlying the #kaburajadulu trend on Instagram.

First, the presence of inadequate systems and qualifications emerges as a dominant factor prompting individuals to temporarily leave Indonesia and

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relocate to countries deemed more promising. This tendency can be observed in Figure 1, which illustrates how the employment standards for job acceptance in Indonesia are perceived as less transparent compared to those in Italy.

Second, the high unemployment rate and large-scale layoffs in Indonesia significantly contribute to individuals' decision to emigrate. This tendency is illustrated in Figure 3, which depicts how approximately 10 million members of Generation Z in Indonesia remain unemployed, highlighting the difficulties of securing jobs amid widespread unemployment and the occurrence of massive layoffs (PHK).

Furthermore, the desire for improved living standards and employment opportunities overseas significantly drives emigration. This phenomenon is exemplified in Figure 2, which shows that countries such as Canada, Japan, and the United Kingdom offer employment systems that do not impose age restrictions.

#### 4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the representation of emigration through the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram is largely motivated by factors such as economic solutions, disillusionment, and self-protection. Beyond these diverse motivations, the trend also emerges from other determinants, particularly education and employment. Access to quality facilities and education requires appropriate conditions, as explained in migration theory, which highlights that the phenomenon of emigration is often shaped by intentions, attitudes, and subjective social norms (Hemade et al., 2024). Accordingly, the #kaburajadulu trend has become a significant phenomenon represented by social media users (Seo & Kavakli, 2022) and functions as a mobilizing tool for groups advocating emigration (Workneh, 2021).

The #kaburajadulu trend, as represented on Instagram by digital communities, reflects young people's expressions in responding to current social conditions in Indonesia. In line with this, Sabry (2018) asserts that social media has become a virtual space favored by young people to strengthen engagement and encounters with individuals from other countries, thereby heightening their desire for emigration, both physically and symbolically. Social media has thus had a significant impact, functioning as a platform for the dissemination of information and discussion on emigration, which influences the aspirations and everyday lives of populations (Chonka, 2024).

The representation of emigration through the #kaburajadulu trend on Instagram underscores the social, political, and economic conditions in Indonesia, articulated by users both physically and symbolically. Hida and

Coutinho (2024) further argue that citizens who emigrate are frequently driven by ongoing political, economic, and social crises that compel millions to relocate neighboring countries (Vučenović Gnjata, 2025). This context is represented on social media as the only viable option for certain groups, particularly young people and skilled workers (Pratsinakis et al., 2017). Soto Merola and Visa Barbosa (2017) also highlight how the representation of youth in media serves to explore how identity is negotiated within an interconnected global context. In other words, the representation of emigration through the #kaburajadulu trend on Instagram is often perceived as a solution to securing a more dignified life in countries that prioritize public welfare.

The representation of emigration through the hashtag #kaburajadulu on Instagram reveals socio-cultural characteristics and profound consequences for Indonesian national identity. Encouraging citizens to rebuild and contribute to the nation remains crucial for reinforcing collective identity. However, these efforts must be accompanied by governmental reforms aimed at improving national systems and conditions so as not to neglect the potential of human capital. Without such measures, Szilasi et al. (2025) argue, renewed waves of emigration may occur, driven by wage disparities, labor culture disempowerment, and social interactions that complicate reintegration processes. This point is reinforced by Grabowska et al. (2025) who emphasize that integration requires more humane, localized, and participatory approaches, in which individuals are regarded as active agents rather than mere recipients of policy.

## 5. Conclusion

The study's findings reveal that Instagram functions as more than merely a platform for social connectivity. More importantly, Instagram has transcended its role as a space for social connectivity to become a medium for representing individuals who relocate from their home country in pursuit of more prosperous opportunities abroad, a phenomenon referred to as emigration. Educational, economic, and socio-political symbols frequently represent emigration practices disseminated through Instagram. These symbols, articulated by Instagram users, further emphasize that current conditions in Indonesia have prompted both domestic citizens and diaspora communities to promote the #kaburajadulu trend as a pathway from Indonesia to more promising countries.

The findings of this study differ from previous research. Earlier studies on the representation of emigration primarily focused on mainstream media. However, this study's results indicate that social media also portrays emigration

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as a way to pursue a more meaningful life. Emigrants frequently appear in social media discourse within the dual perspective of solidarity and hostility (Lampredi, 2024; Vučenović Gnjato, 2025). Furthermore, as argued by Niriksha and Kumar (2024) the decision to disengage from one's own country and move to another constitutes an effort to obtain better life opportunities, even though it often results in feelings of loneliness among the families left behind. Thus, Iancu et al. (2017) contend that emigration is a complex phenomenon with economic, social, political, cultural, and humanitarian implications, making it a central focus of inquiry for researchers across diverse fields.

This study also acknowledges certain limitations, particularly in its data collection, which relied exclusively on Instagram using the hashtag #kaburajadulu. As such, the data were restricted to the description of symbols and language embedded within meme images circulating under this hashtag. Nevertheless, this limitation is expected to provide a foundation for future research, especially studies that aim to examine the representation of emigration practices on Instagram by incorporating direct interviews with emigrants to achieve a more comprehensive and collective understanding.

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