

## Analysis of Audience Reception towards Child-Free Discourse through Social Media

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Child-free is a person's decision not to have children. Child-free is a new value for the people of Indonesia. Gita Savitri Devi is an influencer who announced via Instagram and YouTube that she has decided to be child-free. This statement then caused controversy in the community. As a result, some parties are pro and contra against child-free.

**Methods:** The method used is a qualitative method with a reception analysis approach. This study uses Stuart Hall's reception theory which divides the audience's meaning into dominant positions of hegemony, negotiation, and opposition.

**Findings:** The results divide into four: accepting and desiring child-free, accepting and respecting child-free choices, opposing child-free discourse, and the audience trying to be neutral toward child-free discourse. The background behind the meaning is the place of residence, religion, education, occupation, and lifestyle owned by the audience, with the most common background tendency being the background of living. The reception in this study is that four informants are in a dominant position of hegemony, two informants are in a negotiating place, and one informant is in an opposition position, with the tendency of informants to be in a dominant part of hegemony.

**Originality:** The results of this study can reveal how the audience interprets child-free discourse, which is a new perspective. In addition, it can be a development material for further researchers in examining the other side of the child-free phenomenon that has not yet appeared in this study.

**Keywords:** Child-Free, Reception, Audience, Social Media.

### Introduction

The child-free phenomenon has become a hot topic of discussion in Indonesia (Afif, Nur Afifah, 2024; Asmaret, 2023; Meidina, Ahmadrezy, 2023; Nikma, 2024; Rizka, Sitti Muliya, 2021). Especially after Gita Savitri Devi, a well-known social media influencer, publicly revealed her choice not to have children. Through platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, the issue has sparked debates that challenge social norms and offer diverse perspectives to the public.

As an influencer, Gita Savitri Devi uses social media to share personal information through text, images, video, and audio (DeHart & Grant, 2018; MedieKultur, 2020). Gita then revealed her and her husband's decision to be child-free on her YouTube content entitled “*Childfree: Serba Salah di Mata Warganet PagiPagi episode 32*”, Gita revealed that from the start, she never did have the desire to have children and choose to be child-free. Gita Savitri Devi's decision to be child-free was previously not prevalent in Indonesia, so it caught the public's attention after being widely disseminated through social media (Anjani & Irwansyah, 2020; Bruns, 2018).

Gita Savitri Devi has 1 million Instagram followers and 1.27 million subscribers on her YouTube. With the large number of Instagram followers and subscribers, Gita's decision to be child-free has become a trending topic on Twitter. After going viral, various reactions arose from the public regarding the child-free principle. This phenomenon was then responded to by various groups from millennials, academics to religious circles.

The child-free discourse has become an issue that has attracted the attention of the Indonesian people because there are two pro and contra camps. The stigma that arises from society towards people who choose not to have children is diverse. They are described as mentally unstable individuals. Society criticizes by saying those who choose not to have children as a workaholic, selfish, cold, and materialistic. When a married couple has child-free status, the view that emerges from society is that the choice is considered deviant (Blackstone & Stewart, 2012).

In contrast to the phenomenon in Indonesia, modern society in western countries has a more open mind and many have accepted the principle of child-free. The idea of not having children in western countries seems to be an evolution of lifestyle (Davies, 2014; Dejjia et al., 2014; Maher & Saugeres, 2007; Miettinen & Szalma, 2014). In the last ten years, many women in the western world have stated that the way they contribute to preventing the destruction of the earth is by becoming child-free (The Guardian, 2017).

On the other hand, the issue of the child-free phenomenon that was widely conveyed by influencer Gita Savitri Devi through Instagram and YouTube slowly began to produce individuals who justified this principle. The emergence of online child-free communities shows that those who choose not to have children recognize the status that they are stigmatized and oppose that their choices are distorted (Budiansyaah, 2019; Morison et al., 2016; The Guardian, 2017; Wahyuni, 2021).

The research will focus on how the audience interprets child-free discourse after it has become a trending topic because it is a new view that attracts much attention (Bahraen, 2021; Budiman, 2021; Jae-hee, 2020; Muntaha, 2021; Patrio, 2021). By using reception analysis theory, this study will interpret the meaning and position of the audience regarding child-free, which Gita Savitri Devi conveys through her Instagram and YouTube platforms.

In addition, reception analysis does not only examine the audience's position, namely the dominant-hegemonic position (the audience understands and accepts the message conveyed), the negotiated position (the audience understands but does not fully accept the message conveyed), or the oppositional position (the audience has their own opinion in interpreting the message) (Idham, 2019). However, this research can also see how the cultural background and the audience's lives will color the process of forming meaning about a phenomenon. The meaning of child-free understanding depends on the cultural context in which the individual lives and grows up (Jensen, 1999).

Previous research (Blackstone & Stewart, 2012; Morison et al., 2016) shows that the choice not to have children is often associated with negative stigmas, such as being perceived as selfish or materialistic. However, online communities that support child-free lifestyles are slowly changing these perceptions (Hintz, Elizabeth A., 2023; Morison, Tracy, Catriona Macleod, Ingrid Lynch, Magda Mijas, 2016; Rismarini, Nadya Anjani, 2024; Zulaikha, 2023). In this case, reception analysis is important to understand how audiences interpret this evolving discourse, as described in Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding model.

This study focuses on how Indonesian audiences, influenced by cultural and demographic contexts, understand the child-free discourse. Different from previous

research, this study provides specific context regarding how audience reception interacts with the Indonesian sociocultural landscape, thus providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between media messages and public interpretation.

## Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research methods develop a pre-existing theory (reception analysis theory). With reception analysis theory, researchers will try to interpret phenomena and social reality from the subject's point of view. In determining the research subjects, the researchers chose informants who followed social media owned by Gita Savitri Devi with various criteria. The researcher then selected informants with the following criteria: aged 19-25 years (based on BPS data, women in Indonesia were mainly married at the age of 19-21 years, while men married at the age of 22-25), had different backgrounds, understood what it is child-free and following the development of the phenomenon, seeing the child-free discourse conveyed by Gita Savitri Devi through the Instagram and YouTube platforms.

In this study, the researcher observed the message's meaning to the audience by looking at the background that colored the message's meaning. This study also examines how the audience's position in interpreting child-free discourse is divided into dominant hegemonic positions, negotiating, and opposition positions. This research utilized a qualitative methodology, combining focus group discussions (FGD) and in-depth interviews. Seven participants, aged between 19 and 25, were selected based on their engagement with Gita Savitri Devi's child-free discourse on social media. The participants represented diverse sociogeographical, sociodemographic, and lifestyle backgrounds to capture varying perspectives.

Researchers conducted in-depth interviews directly with informants to answer questions that arose after the FGD. The interview guide is in the form of written questions created to help researchers dig up information. In-depth interviews took place individually with informants to dig up further information that would color the research. Stuart Hall's reception theory framework was employed to categorize audience responses into three positions: hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional (Idham, 2019; Silverstone, 2005). FGDs were conducted to facilitate interactive discussions, while individual interviews provided deeper insights into personal interpretations (Sachdeva Shabina, Tamrakar Kumar Amit, Perwez Eram, Kapoor Pranav, n.d.; Yayeh, 2021). Data from these methods were then analyzed to explore how participants' cultural and social contexts influenced their reception of the child-free discourse.

## Results

The child-free discourse conveyed by Gita Savitri Devi contains meanings offered to the audience. Meanwhile, if studied with reception studies, the audience can have various interpretations of the same message. With preferred reading (dominant meaning), the dominant meaning can be obtained by analyzing the intended message. After finding the dominant meaning, the intent and purpose of the message maker in presenting the discourse conveyed will be obtained.

In the Question & Answer content on Gita Savitri Devi's personal YouTube, in the video, Gita and her husband, Paul Partohap, answer a question asking whether there is an intention to have children. Gita then answers the question by saying: *"We have no plans to have children. Actually, for me, it's because I never wanted to be a mother. Then I don't feel obligated to raise children and I don't feel like I have to have children to be*

*happy. I don't feel like I'm missing out on something. I also want to encourage people before deciding to have children to ask themselves, if they want to, why and if they don't, why. Especially women, the ones who have body authority are women. Don't make decisions because your husband, in-laws or parents want you to have children. Because in fact, the one who feels pregnant for nine months is a woman”* (Youtube Gita Savitri Devi, February 28, 2020).

Then, Gita Savitri Devi also explained her decision and opinion on child-free via Instagram story in August 2021. Gita wrote that the ‘selfish’ narrative that was thrown at her for choosing child-free was not true. On the contrary, Gita said that people who decide not to have children are very brave and think long and hard. Dare to question the reality in society that humans must have children. Dare to ask yourself whether having children is really a conscious desire. For Gita, selfish is if someone wants to have children because that person wants a ‘mini you.’ It would also be selfish to have children and put expectations on the child. And if the child does not grow up as desired, the person will not want to accept it (for example: the child changes religion, has a sexuality that is not in accordance with the principles of his parents, has a disability, and so on).

After her opinion went viral and became a topic of conversation, she then provided clarification via her personal blog regarding her purpose in conveying her decision to be child-free. Gita explains the point of her thinking that not having children does not necessarily make a woman's life meaningless. Not having children does not make a woman inferior to other women. Choosing child-free does not mean being selfish. Women can make decisions about themselves and women's bodies are not up for debate. The matter of deciding not to have children has nothing to do with whether the person's mind is closed or open. Based on the explanation above, the researcher concludes that the dominant meaning of the child-free discourse conveyed by Gita Savitri Devi is that women as the owners of the womb have the right to choose and decide what is best for themselves, including the decision not to have children. Informants as audiences were selected based on the diversity of backgrounds and had seen and read the discourse. Researchers found various interpretations of the child-free discourse delivered by Gita Savitri Devi after conducting a focused group discussion with seven participants. This research aims to determine the audience's position in interpreting the child-free discourse conveyed by Gita Savitri Devi as well as the factors behind this meaning.

#### 1. Supporting and Desiring Child-Free

One informant, Jossie Margaretha Natalia, felt very much in line with Gita's views. This support arises due to similarities in environmental and psychological factors. Jossie emphasized that personal readiness is more important than following social expectations in the decision to have children (Hoffman, C., & Levant, 2021). When conducting group discussions, Jossie Margaretha Natalia, as a woman who also wants to be child-free, considers what Gita has done a brave act. Jossie sees Gita's background as a Muslim who wears a hijab and is very brave in conveying her choice to be child-free to Indonesian audiences who are still unfamiliar with the discourse. According to Jossie, it would be selfish to have children if they did not feel ready to face them. Jossie's interpretation of the child-free discourse conveyed by Gita is because she has more or less the same reasons as Gita in deciding to be child-free, which is related to environmental background, especially family and psychological factors.

#### 2. Respecting Child-Free Choices

Three informants supported Gita's right to choose her life path even though they personally still aspire to be parents. Their views are shaped by exposure to discourses on

women's autonomy and mental health, as supported by the research of (Morison et al., 2016) as well as additional findings from (Miller, 2021). Three other female informants in the group discussion forum support Gita Savitri Devi's child-free discourse: Graceilla Mellania, Aulia Rahmatina Sulthoni, and Rahmi Lailani. Seeing the discourse presented by Gita, the three women felt the same empathy as fellow women, especially regarding the opinion that women should be free to choose whatever they want, including child-free. Graceilla Mellania agrees with Gita's argument because, according to Graceilla, the discourse does not hurt anyone. Although Graceilla still wants to be a mother, she respects those who choose to be child-free. Furthermore, Graceilla said that women have authority over their bodies, especially concerning whether or not they want to have children, because women are the ones who will be pregnant for nine months.

Aulia Rahmatina Sulthoni also agreed to support the discourse presented by Gita Savitri Devi. Just like Graceilla, although Aulia wants to be a mother, she does not mind the child-free option. During the discussion, Aulia often related to linking child-free with mental health. Aulia said the way parents educate their children, and the words parents make will shape the development of children. Lastly, Aulia believes that Gita's child-free discourse can be a positive thing to increase public awareness about the importance of mental health.

Just like Graceilla and Aulia, Rahmi Lailani considers that the child-free decision is entirely Gita's right, and no one else has the right to judge that choice. Rahmi believes that Gita's decision to be child-free has strong reasons and that Gita is responsible for her decision. Rahmi regrets that parents who have children without preparation are not responsible for raising their children.

### 3. Challenging the Child-Free Discourse

Dien Amama Rizal, the only informant who was opposed, considered having children as an integral part of marriage. This perspective is influenced by Dien's background in a large family and traditional values. In addition, this view reflects Eastern cultural values in Indonesia, where children are considered a 'gift of God' that is important for the fulfillment of spiritual and family responsibilities (Rawlins, 2021; Suryadinata, 2017).

Unlike the other four female informants who supported what was conveyed by Gita Savitri Devi, Dien Amama Rizal was the only informant who gave another view. Dien assumes that if someone has decided to marry, they must take all the consequences in marriage, including having children. Dien Amama's view of child-free is inseparable from the background of the environment in which he grew up. Dien grew up with six siblings. In addition, many of his peers in his neighborhood are married and have children. So Dien believes that having children is not as scary as people think.

### 4. Being Neutral to the Child-Free Discourse

Two male informants took a neutral stance, recognizing the individual's right to choose child-free, but still emphasizing the importance of biological and cultural aspects as reasons to support motherhood in family life (Taylor, 2017). Yunus explained that the argument about being child-free is a good choice. However, Yunus considers the nature of a married human being to have children. In addition, Yunus said that those who choose child-free might think too far, so they are afraid of what they want to decide regarding whether to have children or not.

Apart from Yunus, Dedi Irawan also tried to be neutral in responding to the child-free discourse presented by Gita Savitri Devi. Dedi said he respects child-free choices more carefully than those who decide to have children but are not prepared to raise them.

Finally, Dedi conveyed that Gita's child-free discourse could be an education for couples who want to get married in considering whether or not to have children.

Gita Savitri Devi as an influencer who is quite brave in voicing her thoughts on various world issues. When she conveyed her views and choices for child-free, this was still a new issue for Indonesian society and not many people spoke openly about the child-free discourse like Gita did. The child-free discourse conveyed by Gita focused on how she wanted to convey the message that child-free does not make women inferior to other women. Choosing child-free does not mean being selfish. Women can make decisions about themselves and women's bodies are not up for debate. The matter of deciding to be child-free is absolutely a woman's choice and has nothing to do with the person's closed or open mind.

The researcher obtained the results of how the informant's position as the audience in interpreting the child-free discourse conveyed by Gita Savitri Devi based on Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory. The message about child-free delivered by Gita through Instagram and Youtube is interpreted differently by the audience based on the background of socio-geographic aspects (residence environment), socio-demographic aspects (age, gender, religion, marital status, ethnicity, race, education level, occupation), lifestyle and psychosocial aspects also play a role in coloring the meaning of the message by the audience. The results of this study are in line with the assumption of the reception theory that the audience actively understands, interprets, and constructs the messages they read, hear or watch. Interpretation of the message is the result of the audience's subjectivity, resulting in differences in the meaning of the message. The interpretation by the audience in different ways is related to the diverse background of the audience (Pujileksono, 2016).

Through the analysis conducted by the researcher, there are results that then become a common thread in this study. The background aspects that most color the meaning of the audience in this study are the socio-geographic aspects (residence) and socio-demographic aspects (religion, education, and occupation), then followed by the lifestyle aspects (activities and interests). In addition to obtaining the results of the audience's position in interpreting the child-free discourse and the factors causing the diversity of audience interpretations, researchers also found interesting findings about child-free in this study, including:

1. A Person's Child-Free Decision can be caused by the Inner Child

This is based on the statement of one of the female informants, Jossie Margaretha Nathalia. In an in-depth interview with Jossie, she said that the desire to be child-free came from experiences from childhood to adulthood seeing her family while they were children. Jossie felt that her parents married too young so that many things became unstable, both mentally and financially, and this then had an impact on her children.

According to Dr. Diana Raab, a psychological researcher, the inner child is an expression of a person's past from childhood to beyond. A person's life experiences, both experiences that bring happiness and sadness, will shape how a person expresses themselves when they are adults. These experiences can also influence a person's growth and development at a later stage (Sills, 2018).

2. Religion becomes a guideline in responding to the Child-Free discourse

Dien Amama concluded that a person should indeed have children if they have no obstacles in giving birth. This conclusion was obtained because Dien saw in the Qur'an that there are verses about children, that there are prayers about children, and that the unbroken practice is the prayer for pious and pious children. Yunus Asmoro, who had received religious education at an Islamic boarding school, also explained that the purpose

of marriage in Islam as contained in the letter Al-Furqon verse 74 is to have children. Furthermore, Yunus said that human nature in religion is created in pairs, namely male and female, and has reproductive organs. Then, in a woman's body there is a uterus which is indeed natural for conceiving and giving birth.

The public's view of the child-free principle in Indonesia is partly colored by the public's religious background. Based on data from the Directorate General of Population and Civil Registration in June 2021, 86.88% of Indonesia's population is Muslim (Databoks, 2021). In Islam, the position of being a parent is highly respected. The command to respect and obey parents in Islam is placed under faith in Allah SWT. In addition, being a mother in Islam is highly respected to the point that there is an expression that heaven is under the soles of a mother's feet (Nufu, 2017).

Several scholars have argued that child-free is not allowed in Islam and say that it is haram. There are several reasons why the principle of child-free is not in accordance with Islamic teachings. The *first* reason is that conceiving and giving birth to children is a woman's nature and being a parent is a gift. *Second*, having and raising children well is a sunnah. *Third*, there are many verses that call for having and multiplying offspring. Furthermore, children are a source of sustenance with the permission of God Almighty. *Finally*, children are the most valuable charity that can pray for their parents when they die and will always pray for their parents (Bahraen, 2021).

3. The philosophy of many children, much fortune has an impact on the rejection of the Child-Free Discourse

Of the seven informants who participated in the group discussion, only one informant firmly rejected the child-free discourse, the informant was Dien Amama Rizal. Dien grew up with parents who had six children. Dien, who is the third of six siblings, said that she agreed with the concept of many children, much fortune. Furthermore, Dien explained that in her opinion, all children who are born have their own fortune, so Dien feels that having children is not as scary as people think.

This finding is in accordance with a study entitled "*Analysis of Fertility in Bangsalsari District, Jember Regency Analysis on Fertility in Bangsalsari Jember.*" The results of the study explain that residents in Balangsalsari District have a culture or habit that encourages having many children. The community considers that each child has its own fortune, so if they give birth to many children, their fortune will flow more abundantly (Laily et al., 2012).

The remaining six informants who did not have a family background with many children, had the opposite opinion. The other six informants agreed that the philosophy of many children, much fortune needs to be corrected. Rahmi Lailani said that this philosophy is dangerous. She argued that if parents with an unstable economy depend on the birth of children for their livelihood, they may not be able to meet all their children's needs properly. Meanwhile, Graceilla Mellania said that as parents, they should be prepared to meet the basic needs of their children.

Dedi Irawan said that many people who have children think that they will have a lot of fortune because when they grow up, the child will be successful. In fact, this should be used as motivation to work harder to meet the needs of their children and family. Yunus Asmoro shortened it by saying that what needs to be corrected from the concept of many children, much fortune is that parents must understand their responsibility in raising children so that the birth of children can be used as a strength to work and try harder.

The emergence of the philosophy of 'many children, much fortune' itself came from Javanese society during the *cultuurstelsel* period between 1830-1870. The *cultuurstelsel*

policy imposed by the Dutch colonial on farming communities in the Java region had an impact on the high demographic figures. The high demographic figures were deliberate to meet the large number of workers needed at that time (Izzah, 2017).

## Discussion

This study uses a Stuart Hall reception study to discuss the audience's interpretation of the child-free discourse conveyed by Gita Savitri Devi through social media. According to Stuart Hall's reception theory, the meanings were grouped into three positions: hegemony, negotiation, and opposition. Public reception of child-free is also inseparable from the audience's sociogeographical, sociodemographic, and lifestyle aspects (Pujileksono, 2016). The following is the audience reception table for child-free.

Table 1. Audience Reception Discussion

Audience Position in Stuart Hall's Reception Theory	Audience's Meanging of Child-free Discourse Gita Savitri Devi	Informant	Background Aspect		
			Sociogeographical Aspect	Socio-demographic Aspect	Lifestyle Aspect
Dominant Hegemonic Positions	Informants receiving and wishing for child-free.	Jossie Margaretha Natalia	Living environment (metropolitan city).	-	-
	Informants accept and respect child-free choices.	Graceilla Mellania	Living environment (metropolitan city).	-	Interest and hobbies (information exposure in the community).
		Aulia Rahmatina Sulthoni	Living environment (move from east to west country).	-	Interest and hobbies (information exposure in the community and information exposure from documentary videos).
		Rahmi Lailani	-	-	Interest and hobbies (watching world issue videos).



Negotiated Positions	Informants try to be neutral to child-free discourse.	Yunus	-	Religion,	-
		Asmoro Jati		Education (study at Islamic Boarding School).	
		Dedi Irawan	-	Job (reality of coworkers).	-
Opposition Positions	Informant against child-free discourse.	Dien	Living environment	Religion,	-
		Amama Rizal	(application of Islamic Law).	Education (Islamic based School).	

Note: The meaning is divided into three positions according to Stuart Hall's reception theory into dominant positions of hegemony, negotiation and opposition from the socio-geographical aspects, socio-demographic aspects, and lifestyle aspects owned by the audience.

Based on the discussion table above, the audience's interpretation of the child-free discourse presented by Gita Savitri Devi is divided into four meanings. *First*, the informant accepts and wants to be child-free. *Second*, informants accept and respect child-free choices. *Third*, informants oppose child-free discourse. *Finally*, the informants tried to be neutral in responding to the child-free discourse. In analyzing the meaning of various audiences, the author compares it with the dominant meaning obtained from preferred reading based on an analysis of the message in question. Based on these comparisons, this study generates a variety of audience meanings.

However, the researcher also found that audience reception, according to Stuart Hall's reception theory, is divided into three different positions: dominant, negotiating, and opposition. The dominant position that appears the most shows that the informants agree with what Gita Savitri said, that women have the right to choose whether they want to have children or not. With the child-free discourse that Gita boldly conveyed, the informant considered it education for the Indonesian people so that the discussion about child-free was no longer taboo.

Looking at the current conditions in Indonesia, many couples still decide to have children without proper mental and financial preparation. Dominant informants appreciate those who choose child-free more because they see the reality that they feel they are not ready to have children compared to deciding to have children without preparation so that the child will become a victim in the future.

As stated by Gita, dominant informants agree that being child-free is not selfish. Instead, making children as parents' investment is considered selfish. Not having children does not make women inferior to other women. Choosing child-free is not selfish because women are free to make decisions for themselves. The case of deciding not to have children has nothing to do with the person's closed or open mind.

Two informants are in a negotiating position. Those in the negotiating position agree with Gita that everyone has the right to choose what they want, including child-free, but there are points regarding child-free that they disagree with. Even though it is a woman's choice, the informant assumes that if someone is married, the choice must be an agreement between the two partners.

There is only one informant who is in the opposition position. Informants think that the presence of children in the family can be the glue for both parents. In addition, the informant considers that if a couple decides to get married, they must accept the consequences, and one of those consequences is having children.

Reception analysis showed diverse audience interpretations influenced by geographic, demographic and lifestyle factors. Most participants were in the dominant-hegemonic position, which supported Gita's views on women's autonomy. This finding is in line with Stuart Hall's theory that audiences can reconstruct media messages based on their individual and collective experiences (Couldry, 2012; McQuail, 2010).

The main factors that influence audience reception include:

1. **Geographical Context:** Informants living in urban areas tend to be more accepting of progressive views, consistent with the findings of (Pujileksono, 2016) and (Matthews, 2021). The environment in which the audience lives can shape the diversity of the audience's mindset. Each region has different customs, habits, norms, values, and belief systems. Audiences who stay long in an area will think according to the perspective of what they see and hear while living in the area.
2. **Demographic Factors:** Religious and educational backgrounds have a significant influence in shaping negotiation and opposition positions, as noted by (Rawlins, 2021). The audience's religious background, education, and occupation also color the audience's meaning of a message. For example, religion is used as a guide for someone in life. In addition, in education, knowledge learned is then absorbed and applied by the public to the mindset of looking at many things.
3. **Lifestyle Influences:** Media exposure and personal interests play an important role in shaping diverse interpretations (Giles, 2018). The audience's lifestyle can be seen from their activities, interests, and opinions. Lifestyle becomes a description of the whole self of the audience in interacting with their environment. The audience's lifestyle reflects how the audience acts and interacts in life.

Research on the meaning of the audience for a message does not stop at dividing the audience's position in interpreting the message but also what causes diversity in the meaning of the audience. Three factors cause the diversity of audience meanings in this study: sociogeographical, sociodemographic, and lifestyles.

The results of this study are directly proportional to what was stated by Stuart Hall that in the encoding-decoding process, the audience does not only directly receive the message conveyed by the sender of the message. So, the audience does not play a passive role but can also be seen as a cultural agent who can actively interpret the message (Adi, 2012). The meaning of the message can be reconstructed by the audience interpretively so that the audience can interpret and even reproduce the message (McQuail, 2010). The results of the interpretation of the active audience then produce various meanings in interpreting the child-free discourse presented by Gita Savitri Devi.

This research shows how audiences with aspects of their background interpret a message. The meaning can be overt, and even the meaning has the potential to get conflicting responses from messages made by the sender of the message. Some audiences will agree with the message conveyed. According to Stuart Hall's reception theory, the different audiences' meanings form dominant, negotiated, and oppositional positions. The tendency of a dominant position does not mean that the audience has the same meaning as the child-free discourse conveyed by Gita Savitri Devi through the Instagram and YouTube platforms.

In addition, this study highlights the influence of cultural and spiritual values in Indonesia. The belief that children are a blessing from God and an important part of family harmony underlies many oppositional attitudes. In Eastern societies such as Indonesia, spiritual doctrines and communal traditions often shape views on marriage and motherhood (Suryadinata, 2017). These cultural nuances provide an alternative narrative to the global discourse on child-free, emphasizing spiritual fulfillment over individual choice. This research contributes to the broader discourse on media reception and cultural agency, by highlighting the active role of audiences in shaping social narratives.

### Conclusion

The results of the analysis of audience reception on child-free discourse presented by Gita Savitri Devi have answered the formulation of the research problem. The background that colors the informants in interpreting the message is the sociogeographical aspect (where the informant lives), the sociodemographic aspect (religion, education, work), and the lifestyle aspect (hobbies, the way the informant spends his free time). Furthermore, according to Stuart Hall's reception theory, the audience's position on the child-free discourse presented by Gita Savitri Devi resulted in a position of meaning. Four informants are in a dominant position, two informants are in a negotiating position, and one informant is in an opposition position. Generally, public reception of the child-free discourse presented by Gita Savitri Devi tends to be dominant. It can be a development material for further researchers in examining the other side of the child-free phenomenon that has not yet appeared in this study.

### Conflict of Interest

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organization related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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