



ARISAN AS THE REALITY OF MIDDLE-CLASS URBAN MUSLIM WOMEN IN PEKANBARU CITY

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Abstract

The transformation of *arisan* practices in urban society, which initially functioned as a rotating savings activity, has developed into a social space rich in symbols, lifestyle expressions, and status representation. This transformation is evident in one *arisan* group in Pekanbaru City, namely the Kak Jil *Arisan* Group. This study aims to identify the social representations embedded in the activities of the Kak Jil *Arisan* Group and to explain the meaning of sign values displayed through symbolic consumption practices using Jean Baudrillard's Theory of Simulation and Simulacra. A qualitative method with a phenomenological approach was employed to achieve the research objectives through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation techniques. Primary and secondary data were obtained from seven members of the Kak Jil *Arisan* Group selected through purposive sampling, along with two supporting informants to enrich the research data. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model and validated through source and method triangulation. The findings indicate that the Kak Jil *Arisan* Group represents middle-class urban Muslim women who construct their identity and social existence through symbolic consumption. Dress codes, fashion trends, branded accessories, choice of venues, menu selection, and vehicles used to attend *arisan* gatherings function as status markers and as forms of nonverbal communication to demonstrate prestige and group cohesion. The emerging sign values reflect members' efforts to assert social position, financial success, modern lifestyle, solidarity, and conformity. For urban Muslim women, *arisan* is not merely a financial activity but has become an arena of social performativity, a space for identity simulation, and a medium for gaining recognition and positioning within urban group interaction structures.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Arisan has become a popular social practice in which a group of individuals regularly gathers to contribute an equal amount of money or goods. This activity is conducted periodically and uses a lottery system to determine which member receives the collected funds or goods. *Arisan* functions as a simple form of investment as well as a social mechanism to strengthen relationships among its members. A Rotating Savings and Credit Association (ROSCA), locally known as *arisan*, is considered an interesting form of financial institution, particularly in rural areas (Kern, 1986, cited in Anjani Abdullah, 2016). *Arisan* also operates as a regulatory system, as it is governed by specific rules for its members and serves to regulate all financial activities managed within the group. In terms of its forms, *arisan* may involve monetary contributions; however, over time, some *arisan* groups have shifted toward the distribution of gold or luxury goods. Contemporary *arisan* practices have also undergone spatial changes, with members moving from one venue to another, unlike earlier practices where gatherings were held alternately at members' homes. The selection of venues is typically based on comfort and current trends promoted on social media, making these factors central to venue determination. Cafés, shopping malls, and restaurants have thus become common locations for *arisan* gatherings.

Arisan has undergone significant changes. It is no longer perceived solely as an investment mechanism, but also as a space for relaxation, stress relief from daily routines, and an opportunity for individuals to display their social existence (Dewi & Zusyana, 2014). Suyanto (2009) defines *arisan* as an informal rotating savings and credit system based on mutual trust among its members. The term *arisan ladies* refers to female *arisan* participants living in urban areas (Dewi & Zusyana, 2014). These *arisan ladies* seek a more innovative, enjoyable, and attractive format for *arisan* gatherings, aiming to avoid routine and monotonous events. Consequently, dress codes have emerged as a solution to create a distinctive and engaging atmosphere. One of the main purposes of a dress code is to ensure that individuals' appearances align with prevailing social norms or expectations within their social environment. In Pekanbaru City, there is an *arisan* group consisting of fourteen women known as the "Kak Jil *Arisan* Group." Initially, *arisan* gatherings were held alternately at members' homes. Entering its second year, the group shifted its

activities from private spaces to public venues such as cafés, restaurants, and shopping malls. This transition not only created a fresher and more modern atmosphere but also offered greater comfort for all members. Access to the *arisan* venues also became more convenient, as most locations are situated in the city center, reducing travel distance for participants. Within the Kak Jil *Arisan* Group, *arisan* is not a standalone activity but is accompanied by additional leisure activities, including dining at cafés or restaurants, karaoke sessions, and casual walks around shopping malls.

The Kak Jil *Arisan* Group has been established since 2020 and remains active to the present. The monthly contribution for this *arisan* is IDR 1,000,000, and gatherings are held in the second week of each month. Decisions regarding the selection of *arisan* venues are primarily based on suggestions and recommendations from the group leader, such as cafés that are currently trending or newly opened venues in Pekanbaru. By implementing a dress code at every gathering, the Kak Jil *Arisan* Group has emerged as an interesting socialite phenomenon. At each meeting, members wear outfits that correspond to a predetermined theme, creating a lively and stylish atmosphere. The use of varying dress codes transforms *arisan* gatherings into opportunities to showcase the latest fashion trends while simultaneously fostering stronger social bonds among members. Furthermore, the application of dress codes illustrates how *arisan* has evolved into a social event that functions not only as a means of social interaction but also as a form of self-expression aimed at gaining recognition and achieving a certain social status.

Arisan among urban Muslim communities is not only related to economic and social activities but also intertwined with religious values that shape women's social interactions. For urban Muslim women, *arisan* functions as a space to maintain social ties while simultaneously expressing religious identity and collective solidarity. Religious-based activities such as communal iftar during Ramadan and open-house gatherings during Eid al-Fitr often accompany *arisan* practices, indicating that religious life remains integrated into everyday social relations. This condition shows that *arisan* operates as a complex social space where lifestyle, symbolic consumption, and religious expression coexist in the lives of urban Muslim women.

Appearance is everything in the age of lifestyle, and matters of appearance are no longer merely a sociological discussion. According to Baudrillard, consumption plays a crucial role in human life. Featherstone, (2007) he argues that consumption does not lead humans to seek happiness, strive for equality, or pursue homogenization; instead, it encourages differentiation, which becomes a reference point for lifestyles and values rather than economic needs. This condition characterizes contemporary society, leading Baudrillard to describe it as a consumerist society.

As explained by Baudrillard, in a consumerist society, consumer goods function as symbols of individual status and prestige (Baudrillard, 2006). Accessories and certain fashion brands worn during *arisan* gatherings reflect personal taste and economic success, thereby creating social hierarchies among members. Consequently, *arisan* functions as an arena in which consumption values are displayed and reinforced, as each individual strives to demonstrate uniqueness and status through the selection of items considered prestigious. This illustrates how consumerist lifestyles have permeated social life, making consumption an integral part of social interaction and individual identity in postmodern society. The focus of this study is the phenomenon of consumer lifestyles emerging within *arisan* activities, with particular attention to how fashion trends and accessories worn by members function as representations of identity and social status.

Lifestyle also becomes a way to play with identity (Ibrahim, 2011). Clothing styles, hijab, fashion preferences, and selected activities form part of the expression of identity, sign value, and individual personality. Thus, one's style can indicate who one is. The *Arisan* Kak Jil group demonstrates a distinctive style in each of its activities and gatherings. The use of style by each *arisan* member contributes to the production of new identities within society. Studies on *arisan* from a lifestyle perspective have been widely conducted, Such studies include research conducted by Anjani Abdullah (2016) entitled "*Arisan* Sebagai Gaya Hidup (Sebuah Kritik Terhadap Masyarakat Konsumtif Perkotaan)" and a study by Purnamsari & Arifiyanti (2020) entitled "*Arisan* Thalia: Gaya Hidup Para Sosialita Jember Thalia Social Gathering: The Lifestyle of Jember Sociality" These studies highlight *arisan* as a social practice in everyday life. However, discussions of *arisan* as a representation of urban women remain relatively limited. Therefore, this study

seeks to fill this gap by examining how *arisan* activities reflect the construction of identity and social dynamics of women in urban settings.

The aim of this study is to identify and analyze the social representations of the *Arisan Kak Jil* group and to explain the meanings of sign values displayed by the group using Jean Baudrillard's theory of Simulation and Simulacra. This theory posits that a simulated society shapes the identities of contemporary individuals, who are constantly preoccupied with the absurdity of codes, signs, and symbols, as well as models as forms of production and reproduction within what Baudrillard terms simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994).

B. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a phenomenological method, focusing on understanding the subjective experiences of members of the *Arisan Kak Jil* group in interpreting *arisan* practices, particularly in relation to social representations and sign values expressed through fashion choices, dress codes, accessories, and the selection of public spaces as *arisan* venues. The phenomenological approach is chosen because it enables an in-depth exploration of the meanings of informants lived experiences as they are perceived, understood, and represented within social interactions (Murdiyanto, 2020).

The research was conducted in Pekanbaru City, Riau Province. This city was selected because it represents the characteristics of a dynamic urban society and serves as a space for the emergence of postmodern *arisan* groups, including the *Arisan Kak Jil* group as the subject of this study. The research subjects consist of 14 members of the *Arisan Kak Jil* group, selected using purposive sampling with specific criteria. From the total members, six individuals were designated as the main subjects, one as a key informant, and two as supporting informants to enrich the research data. The data sources comprise primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews, direct observation of *arisan* activities, and documentation in the form of photographs and records of group activities. Secondary data were collected from the *arisan* group profile, administrative records, social media, scientific literature, and relevant journals and books.

Data collection techniques employed three main methods. First, participant observation was conducted to directly examine symbolic practices within *arisan* activities, such as the use of dress codes, accessories, fashion, types of vehicles, selection of *arisan* venues, menu choices, as well as communication and interaction among group members. Second, in-depth interviews using a semi-structured format were carried out to explore informants' interpretations of identity, status, symbols, and sign values displayed by the *arisan* group. Third, documentation was collected in the form of photographs of *arisan* activities, recordings, screenshots of social media content, and internal group archives. To ensure data validity, source triangulation and method triangulation were applied. Data analysis was conducted throughout the research process using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This process was carried out iteratively until valid and consistent findings aligned with the observed field phenomena were obtained.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the *Arisan* Group

The *Arisan* Kak Jil group was established in 2020 in Pekanbaru City. The group consists of 14 women living in urban areas who regularly hold monthly *arisan* gatherings. The name “*Arisan* Kak Jil” has a unique story inspired by a viral social media phenomenon. The group was named after “Kak Jil,” a curtain seller who became widely popular on TikTok during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her entertaining and outspoken content about the curtain-selling business attracted significant public attention and even became a topic of discussion during *arisan* gatherings. The group decided to adopt the name Kak Jil as their *arisan* identity because of the cheerful and familiar impression she conveyed. The organizational structure of the group is led by a coordinator who serves as the chairperson and is responsible for organizing activity schedules, assisted by a treasurer who is in charge of holding and managing the *arisan* funds.

The level of member attendance in the *Arisan* Kak Jil group is crucial for maintaining *arisan* activities as a routine and meaningful space for social interaction. These *arisan* gatherings are held regularly at the beginning of the month, either in the first or second week, with time and venue determined flexibly through

collective agreement. This pattern of attendance illustrates how urban middle-class women reorganize their time and domestic roles in order to remain present and actively engaged in social activities they perceive as enjoyable and meaningful.

Members who reside within the city demonstrate more consistent participation, with high attendance rates at each meeting. For group members, *arisan* is not merely a forum for collecting funds, but also a space for sharing stories, strengthening emotional bonds, and maintaining social existence amid busy schedules and daily routines. *Arisan* has evolved into a dynamic social arena rich in symbolic meaning beyond its economic function. This is reflected in the various activities regularly carried out by the *Arisan* Kak Jil group in addition to the main activity of drawing *arisan* funds. These additional activities enhance relationships among members and strengthen their social representation as urban middle-class women who actively construct their identities through collective social spaces. The inclusion of activities such as family gatherings or leisure trips, communal iftar meals, birthday celebrations, and open-house events during Eid further demonstrates that *arisan* has shifted from a purely economic function toward a more complex social practice.

The *Arisan* Kak Jil group has established a set of agreed-upon rules to maintain order and comfort in the implementation of *arisan* activities. Membership is closed, primarily limited to alumni of SMA Negeri 1 Selatpanjang, class of 1997, although members' children may join under registration in their mothers' names. The monthly contribution is set at IDR 1,000,000 and must be paid in full before the *arisan* day, with no installment system. Payments may be made in cash or via bank transfer to the treasurer's account, and late payments are subject to a fine of IDR 500,000. The lottery process is conducted using a digital spinner application to ensure fairness, and members who have already won are automatically removed from the system. The selection of *arisan* venues is carried out participatively through voting in the group's WhatsApp chat, taking into account comfort, accessibility, menu options, and the attractiveness of the venue, such as cafés or restaurants that are currently trending. All coordination and group information are communicated through the WhatsApp group as the primary communication medium.

Social Representation of the Group in *Arisan* Activities

Social representation essentially refers to the ways individuals or groups present their identities, values, and social positions in everyday interactions (Garcia & Winduwati, 2023). The social representations within the *Arisan* Kak Jil group do not emerge naturally; rather, they are consciously constructed by members through practices of consumption and lifestyle. In line with Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) concept of distinction, the uniformity of taste and the cohesiveness of appearance demonstrated by members of *Arisan* Kak Jil constitute forms of habitus and symbolic strategies aimed at maintaining cultural dominance. Through a visual language shaped by these consumption practices, the *Arisan* Kak Jil group represents a collective identity as urban women who are fashionable, economically established, and oriented toward postmodern values. The social representation of the *Arisan* Kak Jil group is evident through the symbols they employ, such as dress codes, branded accessories, the selection of venues, menu choices, types of vehicles used to attend *arisan* gatherings, and styles of interaction during meetings. These representations are no longer merely expressions of personal preference, but rather form part of a collective strategy to display shared identity, social status, and their position within the broader society.

The appearance of *arisan* members through clothing often reflects a particular image they seek to project rather than fully representing their everyday lives. This aligns with Baudrillard's notion, as discussed in Utopia & Khairussalam (2023), that a condition of hyperreality emerges when what is displayed is an artificial construction that appears more real than reality itself. The clothing worn by *arisan* members can thus be understood as a form of simulation used to create a specific impression. Baudrillard argues that symptoms of hyperreality appear across many modern cultures (Utopia & Khairussalam, 2023). This is clearly evident in the way *arisan* members use dress codes and branded clothing to convey an image of cohesion and elegance, even though such appearances may not reflect their everyday lives.

Dress codes and clothing function as essential elements in constructing the social representation of the *Arisan* Kak Jil group. This is clearly evident in the way *arisan* members use dress codes and branded clothing to convey an image of cohesion and elegance, even though such appearances may not reflect their everyday lives.

Dress codes and clothing function as essential elements in constructing the social representation of the *Arisan* Kak Jil group. Most members emphasize that dress codes are determined through collective agreement and are perceived as symbols of group cohesion. Each member makes an effort to prepare specific outfits, avoid repeating clothing within a short period of time, and select brands that carry prestige value (Zurbrugg, 1993). Most members emphasize that dress codes are determined through collective agreement and are perceived as symbols of group cohesion. Each member makes an effort to prepare specific outfits, avoid repeating clothing within a short period of time, and select brands that carry prestige value.

The consumer displays what he buys, in order to differentiate himself socially (Habib, 2018). Accessories function as visual signs that not only enhance appearance but also serve as tools for communicating identity and social prestige. Based on the research findings, the social representation of the *Arisan* Kak Jil group is not only reflected in the use of dress codes as symbols to project a group image to the wider society, but also through the use of accessories that form an essential part of the group's visual identity. Accessories play a significant role in shaping the social representation of the *arisan* group. The wearing of bracelets, rings, branded watches, and expensive handbags is not merely regarded as a complement to appearance, but is also perceived as a symbol of group identity that reinforces the group's image in the public sphere. The impressions of status, existence, and prestige displayed by the group are largely determined by the price and prestige of the accessories worn. Accessories thus function as symbolic media that not only enhance the appearance of group members but also sustain the social identity of the *arisan* group as an exclusive, refined, and socially recognized community within a broader social structure.

The choice of location for *arisan* activities is not merely understood as a technical matter of gathering space, but also carries the intention of representing the group. The selected venue reflects the image the group seeks to present both to its members and to the wider public. Nowadays, consumerism has become the center of social life, consumption being the central preoccupation of culture (Petrušić, 2021). The more exclusive, comfortable, and prestigious the chosen location, the higher the status of the *arisan* group that is represented. The selection

of venues with particular atmospheres functions as a collective symbol that signifies taste, social class, and the group's position within society. The choice of *arisan* location is regarded as a collective decision that holds social and symbolic meaning beyond technical considerations. Through group discussions, locations are selected to demonstrate solidarity and organizational order within the *arisan*. The designated venues facilitate comfortable interaction among members, strengthen group solidarity, and convey a specific image intended for public recognition. Locations considered representative reflect an orientation toward comfort, prestige, and social identity. Therefore, the selection of *arisan* venues cannot be viewed merely as a practical matter; rather, it can be understood as a social strategy that reinforces group identity and strengthens the social representation of the *Arisan Kak Jil* group within broader social life.

Menu selection generally follows collective preferences, current culinary trends, and compatibility with the *arisan* venue. When compared with studies employing Baudrillard's perspective on consumer society, such as the research conducted by Djalal et al (2022), a common thread emerges in the understanding of consumption as something that transcends biological needs. Baudrillard explains that consumption is driven more by the logic of signs, in which food, clothing, and other commodities function as symbols of status or lifestyle. The dishes served are then enjoyed within a shared atmosphere, demonstrating that menus also function as a form of group representation in *arisan* activities. Consumeristic life that occurs in humans cannot stand alone (Farid & Saputra, 2021). In addition to menu selection, the *arisan* payment system plays an important role in group dynamics. A simple system is commonly applied, whereby members pay according to their individual orders. However, variations also reflect social dynamics, such as instances when a member chooses to pay for or treat the entire group. The selection of menus in *Arisan Kak Jil* has thus evolved into a significant medium of social representation. Patterns of food and beverage consumption within *Arisan Kak Jil* no longer merely fulfill biological functions or provide pleasure; rather, they have transformed into consumption practices closely associated with aesthetics. Criteria such as "best seller" status and strong aesthetic considerations indicate that the group presents food as an expression of taste and as a symbolic marker.

Arisan is no longer primarily used as a means of saving money, but rather as a form of self-image display within society (Purnamsari & Arifyanti, 2020). Vehicles are not merely modes of transportation to *arisan* venues; instead, they constitute part of personal appearance that contributes to the construction of self-image. The presence of private cars serves as a symbol of existence and social status, signaling prosperity and wealth. The choice of particular vehicles reflects how *arisan* members wish to be perceived by society and indicates that mobility to *arisan* gatherings forms part of a strategy of identity display. The vehicles used to attend *arisan* gatherings have become an important element in the social representation of the *Arisan Kak Jil* group. Patterns of four-wheeled vehicle use whether private cars, being driven by husbands, or utilizing car-based online transportation services demonstrate a collective awareness of the importance of projecting a certain image. This consistency not only reflects individual identities as established urban women but also shapes a group identity that distinguishes the *Arisan Kak Jil* group from other *arisan* communities in Pekanbaru City. Vehicles no longer function merely as means of transportation; rather, they have transformed into a medium of social representation that reinforces the collective narrative of affluence, postmodern lifestyles, and the social position of the *Arisan Kak Jil* group within the urban social structure.

The communication patterns established among members cannot be viewed merely as accompanying activities; rather, they constitute a form of social representation that contributes to the construction of the group's collective identity. Even habitual practices such as smiling can no longer be regarded as trivial. A smile may function as symbolic capital in everyday social interactions, in professional settings, and in the business world (Hendariningrum & Susilo, 2008). Interaction and communication serve as media through which the group's social reality is constructed via daily conversations, topics of discussion, and the communication styles that are developed.

These communicative practices not only reflect social relationships among members but also function as instruments for maintaining group cohesiveness and affirming their social position within the stratification of urban society. The communication patterns formed involve specific topics of discussion that focus on the dynamics of domestic life, such as family, children, and spouses, as well as

consumption-related practices, including newly purchased goods, vacation destinations, and preparations for *arisan* gatherings. Interactions within the *Arisan* Kak Jil group are performative in nature; each conversation functions not only as a means of information exchange but also as a way to display social identity, demonstrate prestige, and foster intimacy among members. A strong group identity is further reinforced through the consistent use of the Selatpanjang Malay dialect as the group's primary mode of communication.

In addition to functioning as a space for symbolic consumption and social representation, the *Arisan* Kak Jil group also reflects the religious identity of urban Muslim women through several collective religious-oriented activities. Although *arisan* gatherings are predominantly characterized by lifestyle performances and symbolic displays, religious values remain embedded in the group's social interactions. Members of the *Arisan* Kak Jil group regularly organize additional activities such as communal iftar gatherings during the month of Ramadan and open-house visits during Eid al-Fitr.

Activities indicate that religious practices are not separated from their social lives, but rather integrated into the structure of group interaction. For the members, religious moments serve as important occasions to strengthen social bonds, reaffirm group solidarity, and maintain moral legitimacy within their urban social environment. In this context, Islam functions not only as a belief system but also as a cultural framework that shapes patterns of togetherness, hospitality, and mutual care among group members.

However, within Baudrillard's framework, these religiously framed activities may also be understood as part of symbolic representation in urban Muslim life. Religious gatherings such as iftar events and Eid open houses are not merely acts of worship or tradition, but also become performative social practices that are documented, shared, and displayed within the group's social networks. As such, religious activities operate simultaneously as expressions of faith and as signs that reinforce the group's image as harmonious, respectable, and socially established Muslim women in the urban middle class.

The Meaning of Sign Values Displayed by the *Arisan* Group

The ways in which members of the *Arisan* Kak Jil group behave at each gathering demonstrate sign values. Clothing, accessories, food choices, venue selection, vehicles, and modes of interaction are perceived as symbols of status and social identity rather than merely practical necessities within the *Arisan* Kak Jil group. Every displayed aspect from appearance and meeting venues to the conversations conducted is not incidental; instead, these elements function as signs that carry particular meanings collectively agreed upon by the *arisan* group. Baudrillard argues that consumption in contemporary society has shifted toward the consumption of signs. Goods and services are no longer viewed primarily in terms of their utility, but rather in terms of the signs and symbols attached to them (Saumantri, 2022). The research findings indicate that the signs displayed by the *Arisan* Kak Jil group such as dress codes and clothing styles, accessories, menu choices, venue selection, modes of transportation, and patterns of interaction convey meanings related to social position, financial success, cohesion, conformity, and contemporary lifestyle orientation.

The physical appearance of members of the *Arisan* Kak Jil group has evolved into a symbol of social position, rather than merely serving as bodily covering. This finding aligns with Baudrillard's concept (1998), which suggests that objects of consumption have transformed into signs that constitute a system of social communication. At the level of signs, every element of appearance ranging from clothing and branded handbags to the vehicles used and accessories worn has been successfully constructed as powerful signifiers of particular meanings. The meanings of social position attached to the signs displayed by the *Arisan* Kak Jil group, such as clothing styles, accessories, and modes of transportation used when attending *arisan* activities, do not function solely to fulfill practical or aesthetic needs. Instead, they operate as symbolic representations of complex social positions. The signs displayed by the *Arisan* Kak Jil group carry meanings not only for fellow group members but are also directed toward the public and the broader society. Through the display of branded clothing, the use of luxury accessories, and the practice of attending *arisan* gatherings in four-wheeled vehicles, the *Arisan* Kak Jil group asserts its social position as part of the upper middle-class urban female community.

For members of the *Arisan* Kak Jil group, these signs serve as symbols of recognition and equality of social status among peers, while for the wider public, such appearances construct an image of a group of women who are established, fashionable, and economically empowered.

Style is understood not merely as habit, but as a patterned mode through which group members consciously display actions by means of the objects they use when attending *arisan* activities, functioning as symbolic value and sign value. In Baudrillard's perspective, consumer society is inseparable from simulation, simulacra, and hyperreality. Simulation refers to the ongoing process of manipulation in which a reality that does not actually exist is made to appear real. Simulacra, meanwhile, denotes the process of creating a reality that is essentially nonexistent and transforming it into something perceived as real (Nurza & Susanti, 2025). The money spent on items used to attend *arisan* activities serves not only a practical function but also acts as an investment aimed at acquiring certain symbolic values. Accessories and vehicles function as visual markers of financial success within the *Arisan* Kak Jil group. The value of accessories lies in the ability to use branded goods as evidence of prestige, while the meaning of vehicles is shaped by asset ownership such as possessing two private vehicles economic independence, and a strong claim of financial stability as urban residents. Visual symbols such as branded accessories and the use of private vehicles are not only interpreted by *arisan* members as representations of affluence, but are also clearly read by the wider public who observe the activities of the *Arisan* Kak Jil group.

The contemporary style displayed by the members is evident in the way they adapt to developments in fashion, taste, and social habits that are currently popular among urban communities. The evolution of thought over time continues to undergo changes in various aspects, which is inseparable from human desires for transformation as challenges and needs increase (Setiawan & Sudrajat, 2018). Attention to detailed appearance, the documentation of activities on social media, and efforts to remain aligned with the changing times demonstrate that the *Arisan* Kak Jil group possesses symbolic awareness in presenting themselves as a group of women who are fashionable, active, and up-to-date with trends. In line with Fitria (2016) study, which explains that urban society is inundated with images and information, simulation and imagery become the most attractive and closely

attended aspects of postmodern culture. Based on the research findings, the study reveals that the meaning of contemporary style constitutes one of the meanings attached to the signs displayed by the *Arisan* Kak Jil group. Through clothing choices, the use of accessories, and the selection of *arisan* venues and menus, the *Arisan* Kak Jil group projects an image of postmodern women who follow current trends and lifestyles. Fashionable appearances, the use of branded goods, and the habit of gathering in aesthetically appealing places function as forms of self-expression that reflect openness to change and a desire to remain relevant in the contemporary era.

Arisan has now developed into a modern lifestyle practice that grows within a culture of consumerism (Anjani Abdullah, 2016). Social gatherings are no longer oriented solely toward economic functions, but also serve as arenas for displaying social identity and strengthening relationships among members. In this context, cohesion emerges as one of the most prominent symbolic meanings in the activities of the Kak Jil *arisan* group. Cohesion is not merely understood as togetherness in carrying out *arisan* activities, but also as a form of social representation that affirms the unity of identity and group solidarity. The meaning of cohesion within the Kak Jil *arisan* group is reflected through symbolic uniformity and social togetherness manifested in three main aspects: dress codes, the selection of meeting locations, and interactions and communication among members. Uniform dress codes signify solidarity and a sense of togetherness through coordinated appearances that function as the group's visual identity. The selection of *arisan* venues through collective deliberation reflects a shared spirit and collective decision-making, while interactions and communication conducted using the Selatpanjang Malay dialect demonstrate cultural closeness that strengthens interpersonal bonds among group members.

Appearance is a manifestation of the lifestyle chosen by each individual (Purnamsari & Arifiyanti, 2020). Compliance emerges as one of the social values in the dynamics of the Kak Jil *arisan* group, marking the way members interact and adjust to the rules that have been formed. This compliance appears in the form of social awareness to submit to shared norms and agreements in order to maintain group harmony, even though these rules are not always formal. The meaning of compliance in the Kak Jil *arisan* group is reflected through members' behavior in

following every group agreement, especially in terms of dress code and the selection of *arisan* locations. These two aspects become concrete symbols of collective awareness to comply with joint decisions as a form of respect for the group and an effort to maintain social cohesion. This compliance does not merely indicate obedience to rules, but also reflects loyalty, solidarity, and an awareness of maintaining the group's image so that it remains cohesive and harmonious.

The representation of the Kak Jil *arisan* group is no longer merely a display with practical functions, but has transformed into simulacra, namely image representations that replace actual social reality. Branded clothing, luxury accessories, and aesthetic *arisan* locations are no longer simply necessities or symbols of real economic status, but rather part of an image simulation that is consciously created and reproduced to signify lifestyle, financial success, group cohesion, and postmodernity. The identity of the Kak Jil *arisan* group is formed through visual signs that are consistently displayed by the group in both social and digital spaces, until this image ultimately becomes a new reality that is believed by both members and the wider public. This phenomenon illustrates how social values such as position, prestige, and stability no longer originate from material reality, but from the reproduction of signs and symbols of consumption. *Arisan* is not merely an economic or social activity, but a symbolic arena in which individual and group meanings are constructed through appearance.

Within Baudrillard's framework (1983), these signs have surpassed their representational function and become a form of hyperreality, where the image of a postmodern and affluent socialite group becomes a reality that is both displayed and believed. Through Jean Baudrillard's concepts of simulation and simulacra, it can be concluded that the *arisan* practices within the Kak Jil group have moved far beyond their original function as a rotating savings activity. *Arisan* has become a symbolic space that produces a new social reality through appearance, consumption, and the continually represented image. Hyperreality is created when visual documentation, venue selection, and uniform dress codes shape the *arisan* experience in a way that dominates the everyday reality of the members.

The overall findings of the study regarding the social representation and the meaning of sign values displayed by the Kak Jil group in their *arisan* activities can

be understood and visualized in the form of patterns, which are presented in the table as follows:

Table 1. Patterns of Social Representation and the Meaning of Sign Values in the Kak Jil *Arisan* Group

Social Representation of the Group in Arisan Activities	The Meaning of Sign Values Displayed by the <i>Arisan</i> Group
Dress Code and Clothing Style	Social Position, Financial Success, Cohesion, Compliance, and Contemporary Style
Accessories	Social Position, Financial Success, and Contemporary Style
Vanue Selection	Cohesion, Compliance, and Contemporary Style
Menu Choice	Contemporary Style
Vehicles for Attending <i>Arisan</i>	Social Position, Financial Success
Interaction and Communication	Cohesion

Source: Processed Primary Data, 2025

Representation of the Kak Jil *Arisan* Group in the Hyperreality Approach

Baudrillard’s concept of simulation concerns the creation of reality through conceptual models or “myths” whose truth cannot be verified in actual reality. Jean Baudrillard states that a society of simulation shapes the identity of contemporary society in daily life, constantly preoccupied with the absurdity of codes, signs, and symbols, as well as model forms of production and reproduction in what he terms the theory of simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994).

In simulacra, essentially, humans do not exist in actual reality but constantly think imaginatively and inhabit delusions when perceiving reality within spaces where simulation mechanisms operate. This condition creates a wide and ambiguous distance between truth and falsehood, reality and fabrication, making them appear similar. Consequently, what emerges in this reality is a pseudo-state and falsity resulting from simulation (hyperreality) (Baudrillard, 1994). Simulation represents a reality; however, in simulacra, the represented reality has already lost its reference. It becomes unclear what is true and what is false, what is real and what is merely illusory (Baudrillard, 1983). Using this theoretical framework, this study elaborates on how the Kak Jil *arisan* operates within the forms of simulacra

and hyperreality. These concepts help explain how members construct, display, and exchange identity and status through symbolic consumption in their daily social interactions. Baudrillard's ideas of simulacra, simulation and hyper-reality basically stresses that the constant bombardment of images by the media shapes our perceptions of reality in such a way that it seems authentic and real when in reality they are just simulated and fake (Chaudhary & Zahid, 2021).

The development of thought over time continues to undergo changes in various aspects, which is inevitably driven by human desire for change due to increasing problems and needs (Setiawan & Sudrajat, 2018). At this stage, *arisan* is no longer understood as a financial activity but rather as a medium for producing the desired self-image, thus reversing its original function, as explained by Baudrillard in the process of simulacra (Baudrillard, 1994).

In the first stage of simulacra, the Kak Jil *arisan* still adopts the basic structure of traditional *arisan*, such as regular meetings and fund collection. These functions merely serve as a backdrop for a more dominant purpose: displaying postmodern image and social status. The selection of *arisan* venues in cafés, restaurants, or upper-middle-class shopping centers reflects the desire to showcase an urban lifestyle. The main objective is no longer the circulation of money, but rather how the Kak Jil *arisan* group appears as a community of affluent women aligned with urban trends. This illustrates a fundamental difference between conventional *arisan* and the Kak Jil group's *arisan*, where the latter is no longer an economic space but a venue for symbolic representation.

In the second stage of simulacra, the construction of the group's identity becomes increasingly strong. The Kak Jil *arisan* group then produces a collective identity as a socialite group with a set of unwritten values and rules mutually agreed upon. Baudrillard's work is often associated with postmodernism, analyzing consumer society in relation to the system of signs (sign value). According to him, signs have become one of the essential elements in contemporary consumer society (Djalal et al., 2022). One manifestation of this value is the regulation of vehicle use. Members explicitly avoid using two-wheeled vehicles when attending *arisan* activities, as this is considered inconsistent with the image they wish to project. Choosing four-wheeled vehicles symbolizes middle-class mobility, making members' attendance part of a status performance. The decision to avoid two-

wheeled vehicles demonstrates how the Kak Jil *arisan* group constructs boundaries of identity through consumption and symbolic use of vehicles, transforming transportation from a mere means of mobility into a representation of status that must be maintained.

Jean Baudrillard (1994) explains that hyperreality is a condition in which the boundary between reality and representation becomes blurred, so that what is displayed and believed by society is no longer the actual reality, but a constructed image. This state of hyperreality is clearly evident in the *arisan* practices carried out by the Kak Jil group. For the group, *arisan* is no longer merely an economic activity or a gathering space, but a site for creating a new reality that is deliberately produced and showcased. In the postmodern era, where nothing holds a single, fixed meaning and everything is ambiguous and detached from purely scientific reference, the existence and development of mass media are also affected (Fitrianti, 2021). *Arisan* meetings are held in aesthetic and prestigious locations such as cafés and upscale restaurants. These spaces are chosen not only as activity venues but also as visual backdrops that help construct a desired image. Fancy locations function not merely as sites but as signs that the Kak Jil group occupies a distinct social class, even though the everyday reality of some members may not always reflect such a premium lifestyle. The meeting spaces of the *arisan* thus play a crucial role in producing hyperreality, a reality that is no longer based on actual living conditions but on the representation the group wishes to present to the public.

The *arisan* practices of the Kak Jil group indicate that *arisan* is no longer conducted according to its original function as a rotating savings system, but has transformed into a space for shaping identity and social image. This study aligns with research conducted by Anjani Abdullah (2016), which shows that urban *arisan* has evolved into a practice of symbolic consumption, where members use appearance, fashion style, and venue choices as markers of social status. The similarity with Kak Jil *arisan* lies in how *arisan* is used to display a specific image and lifestyle that the members wish others to see. Findings from the research by Purnamsari & Arifiyanti (2020) also correspond with this study, emphasizing that *arisan* is filled with practices of symbolic consumption, such as the use of branded items and selection of prestigious venues. This parallels Kak Jil *arisan*, where branded accessories, luxury bags, and cars are used as indicators of status.

A subsequent study conducted by Dewi, Zusyana (2014) showed that *arisan* uses dresscodes as symbolic rules to display uniformity, cohesion, and group identity. The similarity with Kak Jil *arisan* lies in the deliberate standardization of clothing as a visual sign that constructs the group's image. From a simulacra perspective, this dresscode becomes a simulation of identity that no longer reflects the everyday reality of the members but is created for the purpose of performance and image projection. However, this differs from the study by Ragiska (2019), which views *arisan* as a lifestyle practice of middle-class women still strongly connected to social structures such as domestic roles, patriarchal ideology, and everyday consumption reflecting the members' actual conditions. *Arisan* is understood as a social space that strengthens relationships, reinforces gender roles, and demonstrates consumption patterns within the middle-class environment. In contrast, the Kak Jil *arisan* study considers *arisan* as a space of symbolic representation, where clothing, accessories, venues, and vehicles serve as signs to construct the image and identity of urban women.

D. CONCLUSION

The study on the Kak Jil *Arisan* group shows that *arisan* for modern urban women is no longer merely a financial activity, but also a symbolic space to construct and display social identity. Through dress codes, branded accessories, choice of location, menu, vehicles, and communication patterns, members consciously assert social position, financial success, solidarity, compliance, and contemporary style. These practices reflect Jean Baudrillard's concepts of simulation, simulacra, and hyperreality, where representations of lifestyle take precedence over underlying reality. *Arisan* has become a social arena that produces a new reality through symbolic consumption, influencing the self-perception of members and society at large. These findings imply that social activities can be strategically used to reinforce group identity, cohesion, and social status within the community.

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