THE ETHICS OF SOLIDARITY FROM HOLLYWOOD TO HOME

Perceptions of Indonesian Youth on Local and Global Celebrity Humanitarianism and its Implications on the Construction of Moral Agency with the Suffering of Distant Others

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ABSTRACT

In the age of post-humanitarianism, famous faces such as Angelina Jolie and Ben Affleck have become a mainstay in humanitarian campaigns. However, current scholarship on celebrity advocacy has predominantly focused on the influence of Hollywood celebrities on Western audiences to act in solidarity with global others. With the recent surge in the involvement of regional celebrities in global humanitarian communication, there exists a crucial void in understanding how audiences in the Global South respond to these local figures in mediating the distant sufferer, in contrast to their Western counterparts. Specifically, this research explores how perceptions of global and local celebrity advocacy influence audiences' capacity to empathise with those in need and decide on ethical responses to mediated crises. A thematic analysis was employed to interpret visual-elicitation interviews with nine Indonesian youths from Jakarta. The visual materials utilised include two short videos featuring UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors —David Beckham from the UK and Nicholas Saputra from Indonesia — as they visit sites of humanitarian emergencies. Findings indicated that the mediation of distant suffering by local celebrities is perceived as more authentic than their Western counterparts, enhancing greater emotional engagement and active participation. However, it was also revealed that at the heart of audiences' moral agency is the politics of irony. Indonesian youths tend to oscillate between being deeply moved by the representation of suffering, which often hinges on reflexive particularism, or distancing themselves with the moral proposals of celebrity mediators through rationalisation. This finding underscores the conditional and multifaceted nature of audience responses to mediated representations of suffering, influenced by the proximity to and reporting style of the celebrity mediator, as well as broader socio-political discourses audiences employ to interpret these events.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past half a decade, Europe has faced its greatest child refugee crisis. In 2022 alone, the Mediterranean and Western Balkan regions — including Italy, Greece, and Spain — witnessed an influx of over 159,000 new arrivals by sea, 22.12% of whom were lone children fleeing conflicts and socioeconomic instability (UNRefugees, n.d.). Nearly half of the children accounted for in the total asylum seekers have travelled from Syria, Afghanistan and Egypt among others, seeking for 'a better life' (IOM Greece, n.d.). This underscores a broader global pattern: most human suffering occurs outside of the Western world. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and International Organizations (IOs) play a pivotal role in directing immediate aid and advocating structural reforms to addressing such global North-South gap. Among these, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) stands out for its targeted interventions and support programs to advance children's health, protection, and education.

Despite their presence, public engagement remains fundamentally crucial for humanitarian organisations to gain legitimacy and operate effectively (Darnton & Kirk, 2011). This support shapes a range of outcomes from policy decisions and funding opportunities to broader acceptance of initiatives. However, engaging the global public to act in solidarity with distant others amid the age of information overload poses challenges, with scholarly research indicating that engagement often results in compassion fatigue and indifference (Tester, 2001; Seu, 2003; Scott, 2015). Solidarity, as these studies suggest, is not innate, but a public disposition cultivated by the time and place in which it exists, and demands continuous effort to sustain.

Central to fostering that connection are mediators, with celebrities assuming pivotal roles in recent decades (Cooper & Turcotte, 2012; Mårtensson Govori, 2018). This rise of celebrity humanitarians is a defining aspect of post-humanitarianism, characterised by market-oriented solidarity marked by irony, subdued emotions, and reflexive particularism (Chouliaraki, 2010; Chouliaraki, 2013). As moral brands, celebrity humanitarians play crucial roles in shaping global citizenship and mutual solidarity, bridging emotional and cognitive gaps between vulnerable areas in the Global South and global audiences (Richey, 2015). However, celebrity philanthropy extends beyond the West, as organisations like the United Nations (UN) increasingly recognize the role of celebrities beyond the

Euro-centric spheres in mediating relations between the global public and distant suffering (Wheeler, 2011).

Despite this, academic focus primarily centres on Hollywood celebrities and their impact on Western audiences (Wheeler, 2009; Samman et al., 2009; Scott, 2015). Further, the lack of audience-centric research in celebrity studies and distant suffering (Cottle, 2009; Joye, 2013; Orgad & Seu 2014), along with ambiguous anecdotal evidence of the few existing (West & Orman, 2003; Huliaras & Tzkifakis, 2010; Panis & Van den Bulck, 2012), highlights a persistent gap in understanding the effectiveness of celebrity advocacy in cultivating transnational solidarity driven by a cosmopolitan sensibility. Engaging with these gaps, this research aims to explore how celebrities of distinct geographical fame — western and non-western — differ in shaping Global South audiences' mediated experiences of distant others. More specifically, it aims to examine the implication of these mediated experiences on the spectators' capacity to construct moral responses to assuage the pain of the sufferer.

This dissertation is structured into three core sections: The first section provides a theoretical exploration, reviewing pertinent literature on humanitarian communication, celebrity influence, and audience engagement, and establishes the research questions and conceptual framework guiding the analysis. The second section elaborates on the methodology and the research design employed. The final section presents and discusses the findings within the broader contexts of global solidarity.

THEORETICAL CHAPTER

Humanitarian Communication in the 21st Century

Definitions and Critiques

Tester (2010) defines humanitarianism as 'paying moral attention to others who are beyond one's own immediate sphere of existence' (p.vii), emphasising the ethical practice of consciously recognising, acknowledging, and actively attending to the needs and suffering of distant others. It is a concept rooted in Kantian ideals of moral cosmopolitanism which recognizes humanity as universally open to experiencing violence and therefore considers every human life equally deserving of care, dignity and respect (Linklater, 1998; Derpmann, 2009; Kleingeld, 2011; Edkins, 2019). Humanitarianism is thus an act that demands a broadened imagination of the world — about the moral relationships between the proximate and distant, and the self and others (Hoijer, 2004; Kurasawa, 2013). It holds a

vision of shared responsibility and accordingly, global solidarity, to help the vulnerable without anticipation of reciprocation. As a principle, solidarity in humanitarianism transcends mere feeling or exhibiting an attitude of care — rather it involves proactive transnational collaboration to address and ameliorate universal human suffering (Kolers, 2012; Ivanovic, 2019; Rozakou, 2020).

Vital to amplifying the call for global solidarity is humanitarian communications, which refers to the 'public practices of meaning-making that represent human suffering as a cause of collective emotion and action' (Chouliaraki & Vestergaard, 2021). From films and videos to social media posts and speeches, each of these can be regarded as humanitarian communication in so far that they render the lifeworld's of vulnerable others into words or visuals. These materials are predominantly produced and disseminated by IOs and NGOs — entities initially emerged in North American and European societies (Jenkins, 2012). Such geographical concentration influences the narrative framework of modern humanitarian communication: Global North as the primary provider of aid and the Global South as the primary site of suffering.

While the ethics of care in humanitarianism is not solely a Western project, the field has been critiqued as being deeply entangled with historic legacies of Western colonialism (Hirono, 2013; Kotilainen, 2016; Richey et al., 2021). The North-South dynamic of contemporary humanitarian communication represents an orientalist subalternity, one that aptly embodies the North acting as the satirical white saviours or 'messengers of peace', and societies in the South as powerless and needy exoticized victims who lack self-sufficiency and is thus, perennially dependent on external aid and intervention (Cole, 2021; Scott, 2015, p.451). This disposition rests on the imperial imagination that Western-style governance and capitalist structures are pathways to modernity and enlightenment for supposedly 'backward' or 'barbaric' societies (Tester, 2010; Kotilainen, 2016). Depictions of malnourished children in crisis relief campaigns and the portrayal of prisoners of conscience as voiceless, inagentic subjects in human rights campaigns (Manzo, 2008; Malkki, 1996), reflects vestiges of such paternalistic rhetoric.

Post-Humanitarianism and New Paradigms of Solidarity

Humanitarian communications has often relied on the imagery of the pain, trauma and imminent victimisation of precarious bodies to evoke a global display of succour, commonly referred to as the spectacle of bodies-in-need (Pieterse, 1992a, b.). Common tropes include the sight of sick and

emaciated children, mourning mothers and injured civilians (Revet and Revet, 2020). Such imagery is significant as they 'contribute to cultivating audiences' dispositions towards human affairs' (Chouliaraki, 2008, p.838). According to Chouliaraki and Vestergaard (2021), this collective knowledge mobilises emotions such as empathy, fostering communities that are socialised into caring for others both within and beyond their own communities. However, this logic of sentimental pedagogy (Fassin, 2011) has faced criticism for what Boltanski (1999) describes as the Crisis of Pity. This crisis stems from the reliance on a politics justified by universal ethics which often resorts to emotion-oriented discourses of suffering (ibid, p.35–54). Such discourses oscillate between indignation, which assigns blame to perpetrators, and sentimental gratitude, which evokes appreciation for benefactors (ibid.).

Post-humanitarianism is an emergent style of humanitarian communication which distinguishes itself by loosening the connection between witnessing suffering and feeling empathy for the sufferer. Instead, it focuses on particularised causes where representations of suffering are detached from moral discourses, relying instead on individual judgement for action (Chouliaraki, 2010). For example, the UN Foundation Girl Up campaign encourages American girls to support their less-fortunate Global South 'sisters' through uploading selfies. While the campaign's focus on low-intensity, personalised engagements as a form of expressing solidarity carries the potency to attract a wider audience, the spotlight on the spectator — their thoughts, feelings and experiences — overlooks the complexities of ongoing political tensions and systemic injustice (Koffman et al., 2015). Therefore, while post-humanitarian communication differs from emotion-oriented ones by shifting away from universal moral imperatives toward a particularised, reflexive approach, both approaches undermine a valid appeal to address suffering as they (1) dehumanise the sufferer by invoking negative emotions or (2) appropriate their experience through the lens of others. Here, solidarity becomes an exercise in irony. This irony lies in the self-referential and narcissistic introspective nature of campaigns, where acts of solidarity become self-serving under the guise of helping others and instigating effective change (Chouliaraki, 2010).

Solidarity as agonism emerges as a compelling alternative; it demands more than empathetic imagination to also include rational judgement of claims of distant suffering (Chouliaraki, 2011; Silverstone, 2006). This nuanced approach hinges on the media's capacity to create what is known as a Proper Distance, defined as 'a space of imagination… beyond the individual and the solitary self'.

This space 'opens the doors to understanding and in turn to the capacity to make judgements in and through the public world' (Silverstone, 2013, p.46). Proper distance involves managing the dual forces of closeness and distance in media representations: empathetic imagination requires a sense of proximity to the sufferer, while rational judgement demands a more contemplative distance that includes providing contextual information that aids in reflective thinking about how one might act upon witnessing suffering (ibid., p.119). This balance is crucial to bringing distant others within the 'cognitive and emotional, and therefore moral reach of spectators' (ibid., p.133). Yet, contemporary media representations of distant suffering often do not achieve the ideal balance of proper distance as outlined by media theorists but rather are influenced by the politics of pity or irony (Chouliaraki, 2006a; 2012).

The Rise of Celebrity Humanitarianism

Celebrities in Mediating Suffering of Distant Others

The figure of distant others, central to many accounts of humanitarianism, is a concept that transcends a specific group in a particular region, encompassing individuals who are geographically, and therefore, socio-culturally distant from us as spectators and appear only through media representations (Silverstone, 2006, p.109). In contemporary life, encounters with distant suffering are ubiquitous; people globally witness far-off disasters on news broadcasts or follow unfolding crises and foreign affairs on social media (Kwansah-Aidoo & George, 2017). Yet, as noted above, creating that proper distance is often a challenge. According to the Paradox of Distance, examined in Chouliaraki's (2006b) Analytics of Mediation, the media creates both a sense of proximity and distance to suffering others; it brings distant events perceptually immediate, yet an inherent physical and emotional distance remains.

Central to bridging this communicative gap between viewers and those depicted on the screen is the role of a mediator who proponents of humanitarian aid suggest acquires the capacity to ''authenticate' the victim, channel the emotion generated, and provide both the distance and the link between the spectator and the victim' (Brauman, 1993, p.149). Ideally, they are newsworthy figures who are 'neither diplomat nor guerrilla, half amateur and half expert, both hero and narrator' (ibid.). In the post-humanitarian era, celebrities have assumed the role of primary mediators between the public

and foreign affairs, challenging traditional state-centric diplomacy by lending their famous faces to issues of transnational solidarity (Wheeler, 2018).

Opportunities and Critiques of Celebrity Advocacy

Uzuegbunam (2017) argues that celebrities are popular because they fulfil human beings' innate need for a figure of reflection, affirmation, and authority, to which audiences who identify with celebrities tend to imitate or emulate the figures' saying or doing (Driessens et al., 2012; Goodman & Barnes, 2011, p.75). Leveraging this capacity, celebrity humanitarians can inspire their audiences to engage in similar philanthropic behaviours, demonstrating their audience how individual or policy-driven efforts can make a difference and encourage them into committing more attention to development issues and mobilising resources (Kogen, 2015). Anecdotal evidence of this is celebrity interviews in talk-shows which have significantly boosted charity donations; for instance, a CNN interview with Angelina Jolie led to a $500,000 increase in funds for the UNHCR, and George Clooney's appearance in Oprah resulted in a 20% rise in donations to UNICEF (Boustany, 2007).

Boorstin (1971, p.75) argues that the value of celebrities extends beyond mere recognition and into their capacity to foster popular engagement, a socio-cultural currency Driessens (2013) terms celebrity capital. Accordingly, existing scholarship on celebrity advocacy tends to highlight their unique capability to access news media to popularise issues (Meyer & Gamson, 1995; West & Orman 2003). The involvement of celebrities is indicated to help frame issues in ways that resonate with the public, particularly young audiences, making complex or lesser-known topics more accessible and compelling (Wheeler, 2009; Huliaras & Tzkifakis, 2010, p.260; Panis & Van den Bulck, 2012). Such coverage not only raises awareness of cornered issues but is also touted to influence the national political agenda (West & Orman, 2003, p.74). For example, Mia Farrow's Wall Street Journal op-ed criticising China's role in Sudan led to significant international scrutiny and policy changes, including Sudan's acceptance of UN peacekeepers (ibid.).

However, significant literature expresses scepticism towards celebrity humanitarianism, arguing it perpetuates historical power imbalances. The commodification argument claims that the presence of celebrities in humanitarianism propagates the illusory promise of individual action as a catalyst for social change — that one person can combat deep-rooted injustices (Marks & Fischer, 2002). The result is the reduction of complex development issues into soundbite politics, a communication style that

follows the logic of quick fixes (Collier, 2008). The utilisation of simplistic and easily digestible phrases and imagery degrades complexities of political discourse by appealing through pleasure of recognition, or what Aristotle referred to as Easy Learning (Allen, 2008). This phenomenon causes Ecstatic Communication of suffering, where issues are presented as fleeting spectacles devoid of substantive moral content (Littler, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2011). This not only trivialises the complexity of global issues but also positions celebrities as global 'superstars' (Kellner, 2010). When celebrities put both their wealth and popularity at the service of suffering humanity, they not only amplify the reach and impact of humanitarian causes, but also concurrently benefitting from it (ibid.). Their association with noble causes positions them as exemplars of cosmopolitan citizenship, helping them maintain sustained public relevance beyond typical celebrity coverage cycles (Kellner, 2010; Chouliaraki, 2012). Angelina Jolie, for example, is often seen to focus her narrative on promoting her persona as a moral brand by blending her roles as UNHCR Ambassador, adoptive parent, and human rights actress (Chouliaraki, 2012).

The neocolonial critique positions celebrity humanitarians through an orientalist perspective, reflecting the ideology of the White Man's Burden (Yrjölä, 2009). It argues that the juxtaposition of glamorous individuals with impoverished African communities perpetuates historical power imbalances between Western missionaries and indigenous locals (ibid). By projecting care for the suffering of others while hiding behind the luxuries of their own wealth, celebrity humanitarians overlook the West's complicity in perpetuating structures of injustice built upon aid dependency of third-world countries through charitable acts (Douzinas, 2007). Alleyne (2005), for instance, criticises UN Goodwill Ambassadors as elitist and ethnocentric as they 'give succour to the incapacitated rather than hope for a better life through programs of education, consciousness-raising and cultural affirmation'. He further argues it reflects US-centric political marketing methods that utilise propagandist tactics to enhance the UN's image while concealing its failures in promoting values, conduct, and credibility (ibid.).

Spectatorship of the Suffering

Conceptualising Audiences as Witnesses and Moral Agents

The effectiveness of humanitarian communication is frequently assessed based on its immediate influence on audiences (Kyriakidou, 2019). This approach, however, adopts assumptions that align

with the media effects paradigm, a model that has been largely rejected in modern audience studies due to its overly simplistic understanding of how media affects people (ibid). Kyriakidou (2019) emphasises the need to rethink the traditional view of audiences as simply receivers of media messages and suggests recognizing them as 'participants in a mediated global civic space', where exposure to the vulnerability of suffering others can lay the groundwork for moral relationships and solidarity across boundaries (ibid). Essentially, she acknowledges the audiences' active role in interpreting and responding to media messages of human atrocities as occurrences they should care about and act upon — a process referred to as Witnessing.

The concept of witnessing extends beyond simple observation or voyeurism; being a media witness involves being present, confronting 'painful knowledge' and making imaginative connections with distant victims represented on screen (Ellis, 2000, p.11). This idea of audiences as witnesses is centred on how media texts such as television news and documentaries enable pseudo-eyewitnessing due to their discursive and aesthetic qualities which convey a sense of 'liveliness, immediacy and co-presence' (Frosh, 2009, p.52). Kyriakidou (2015) provides a comprehensive framework for this discourse, identifying four ways audiences engage with media portrayals of distant suffering: Affective, Ecstatic, Politicised and Detached (Appendix A).

Academics argue that witnessing suffering leads to a moral imperative beyond the confinement of cognitions: the need to take action on suffering based on cosmopolitanism, also known as Moral Agency (Boltanski, 1999; Bandura, 2002). Volunteerism is the most critical resource, yet most limited form for crisis response (UNVolunteers, n.d.). Instead, two primary forms of distant actions typically arise as moral responses to representations of suffering (Boltanski, 1999, p.17; Chouliaraki, 2006a, p.201). Paying involves monetary contributions to relief efforts and is favoured by NGOs due to its straightforwardness and ease of implementation. Speaking, on the other hand, requires engaging public opinion and political institutions to address the suffering. This involves activities such as protests, demonstrations, and petitions, which make suffering a public concern.

Audience Reception Towards Celebrity Advocacy: Cultures of Authenticity and Denial

Research shows that the perceived authenticity of celebrity mediators and their messages is essential in influencing how audiences respond to the suffering of distant others (Boltanski, 1999; Silverstone, 2006; Brockington, 2014). Authenticity within the realm of celebrity humanitarians is the adoption of

performative strategies that render the displays of altruism as both credible and legitimate (Chouliaraki, 2012). When celebrities are perceived as inauthentic, audiences often react with scepticism, suspecting these public figures participate in causes chiefly to promote their own image (Panis & Van den Bulck, 2012). This scepticism towards inauthenticity frequently serves as a basis for discursive strategies of denial, allowing audiences to dismiss the moral claims made by celebrities (Scott, 2015). Seu (2010) further illuminates this dynamic by examining how audiences, akin to critical consumers, scrutinise both the mediator and their message, deciding whether to accept or reject the appeal based on its perceived sincerity and relevance. Seu (2010) identifies three repertoires of neutralisation that audiences use to distance themselves from the suffering shown in media: Shoot the Messenger, Medium is the Message, and Baby and Bathwater (Appendix B). These mechanisms are conceptually similar to and expanded from Cohen's (1996; 2001) strategies of denial which sustain human rights violations and influence responses: Literal, Interpretative and Implicatory (Appendix C).

Researchers have noted that although authenticity is essential, it remains a double-edged sword in influencing audience moral reactions to the portrayal of distant suffering. For example, Scott (2015) discovered that a key element for authenticity is the display of 'everyday ordinariness' by celebrities, regardless of their exceptional status. Yet, this aspect often leads audiences to relate more to the celebrities themselves rather than the distant sufferers, fostering self-reflection rather than empathy for those in distress (ibid). Moreover, even when audiences perceive celebrities as inauthentic, this perception does not necessarily diminish the efficacy of celebrity advocacy in enhancing public awareness and engagement with humanitarian issues. Fletcher (2012, p.3) posits that public reception of celebrities is typically marked by ambivalence, characterised by a blend of 'reverence and ridicule, deference and deprecation'. This ambivalence is frequently perceived as indicative that celebrities are not regarded with seriousness, hence lacking authority and influence. Nevertheless, Fletcher argues that this ambivalence does little to undermine the celebrities' capacity to shape public sentiment as audiences might yet remain captivated by the mystique of celebrity even when they see through it. Similarly, Žižek (1989, p.25-26) discusses the concept of Cynical Reason, where 'one knows the falsehood very well, one is well aware of a particular interest hidden behind an ideological universality, but still, one does not renounce it'.

Research Aims, Objectives and Questions

There exist few limitations with the present literature. Firstly, the focus has continued to be placed on celebrities of Western/Euro-centric backgrounds, particularly Hollywood (Wheeler, 2009; Samman et al., 2009; Scott, 2015). This not only highlights the perpetuation of Western cultural hegemony in humanitarian scholarship, but also excludes the voices of audiences beyond the Anglosphere and neglects the evolving narratives of celebrity humanitarianism — which increasingly recognise Global South figures' contributions to distant suffering, as exemplified by UNICEF's regional and national Goodwill Ambassadors. Further, there is an acute lack of empirical studies of audience responses to celebrities in mediating distant suffering (Cottle, 2009; Joye, 2013; Orgad & Seu, 2014), to which current theorization of the spectator is rather conflictual as seen above.

This research aims to explore how celebrities of varying geographical fame impact Global South audiences' perceptions of distant suffering. The study has two main objectives: (1) to analyse Global South audiences' perceptions of both global and local celebrities as mediators of distant suffering, focusing on how these audiences interpret and identify with celebrities and their moral stances, and (2) to evaluate how these perceptions affect their empathy and ethical responses to crises. Indonesia, with its diverse media landscape and dynamic cultural setting, serves as an ideal case study. The youth demographic is also emphasised due to their high media consumption and celebrity involvement, surpassing prior generations (Ofcom, 2023). This research is guided by two questions:

> RQ1: How do Indonesian youths perceive the mediation of suffering others in distant places by local Indonesian celebrities in comparison to their Western counterparts?

> RQ2: What implications do the audience's perceptions have in their constructions of moral agency (i.e., concomitant modes of engagement), if any, vis-à-vis the suffering other?

By emphasising the ethical dimensions of mediation in consumption contexts, this study intends to enrich academic discourse on media and morality. Additionally, this study will contribute to the growing body of work that critiques the dominance of Western figures in global humanitarianism (Repo & Yrjölä, 2011; Chouliaraki, 2013), and re-politicise the binary between 'the West and the rest' by focusing on local capacities and leadership of celebrities in Global South societies in driving global humanitarian efforts. Furthermore, this research acknowledges Indonesia's colonial history under Dutch rule, which studies found has shaped contemporary perceptions of authority and societal

values, indicating a persistent preference for whiteness and Westernization (Doubleday, 2019; Karunia & Permana, 2022). Situating the study within this historical context will deepen our understanding of how colonial legacies and contemporary media dynamics intersect to influence public perceptions of celebrity advocacy in Indonesia, further contributing to discussions on postcolonial identities and global solidarity.

Conceptual Framework

This research adopts a multifaceted conceptual framework through which I will analyse and interpret the data to be gathered. Kyriakidou's (2015) Discursive Practices of Media Witnessing serves as the foundational element of this framework (Appendix A). This categorization adeptly maps the spectrum of emotional and cognitive engagement that media content can evoke, forming the basis for interpreting how Indonesian youth initially respond to and perceive local and global celebrity-driven humanitarian initiatives (RQ1). Building on this, Chouliaraki's (2011) Paradigms of Solidarity is integrated to delve deeper into the moral underpinnings of audience responses (Table 1).

Table 1. Paradigms of Solidarity (Chouliaraki, 2011)

Type of Solidarity	Characteristics	Impact on Action
Solidarity as Pity	Characterised by a depoliticized sense of common humanity, invoking unconditional empathy.	Motivates action but often overlooks systemic causes of suffering, leading to simplistic and ephemeral responses.
Solidarity as Irony	Defined by a 'feel-good' activism rooted in an individualist and narcissistic morality, focusing on personal gratification.	Results in superficial or symbolic gestures that supports the emotional fulfilment of the donor rather than the vulnerability of others.
Solidarity as Agonism	Emphasises empathetic engagement coupled with reflexive judgement with the pain of distant others.	Pushes audiences to critically address and act upon structural injustices, re-politicizing solidarity towards a pursuit of justice.

While both Chouliaraki and Kyriakidou's framework address public engagement with distant suffering, the former extends our understanding of audiences from modes of witnessing to the nuances in construction of moral proximity between the self and distant others (RQ2). Accordingly, this study synthesises these concepts to map how initial reactions — as categorised by Kyriakidou —

might translate into deeper ethical stances vis-à-vis the suffering others — as categorised by Chouliaraki — based on the depth and nature of engagement (Figure 1).
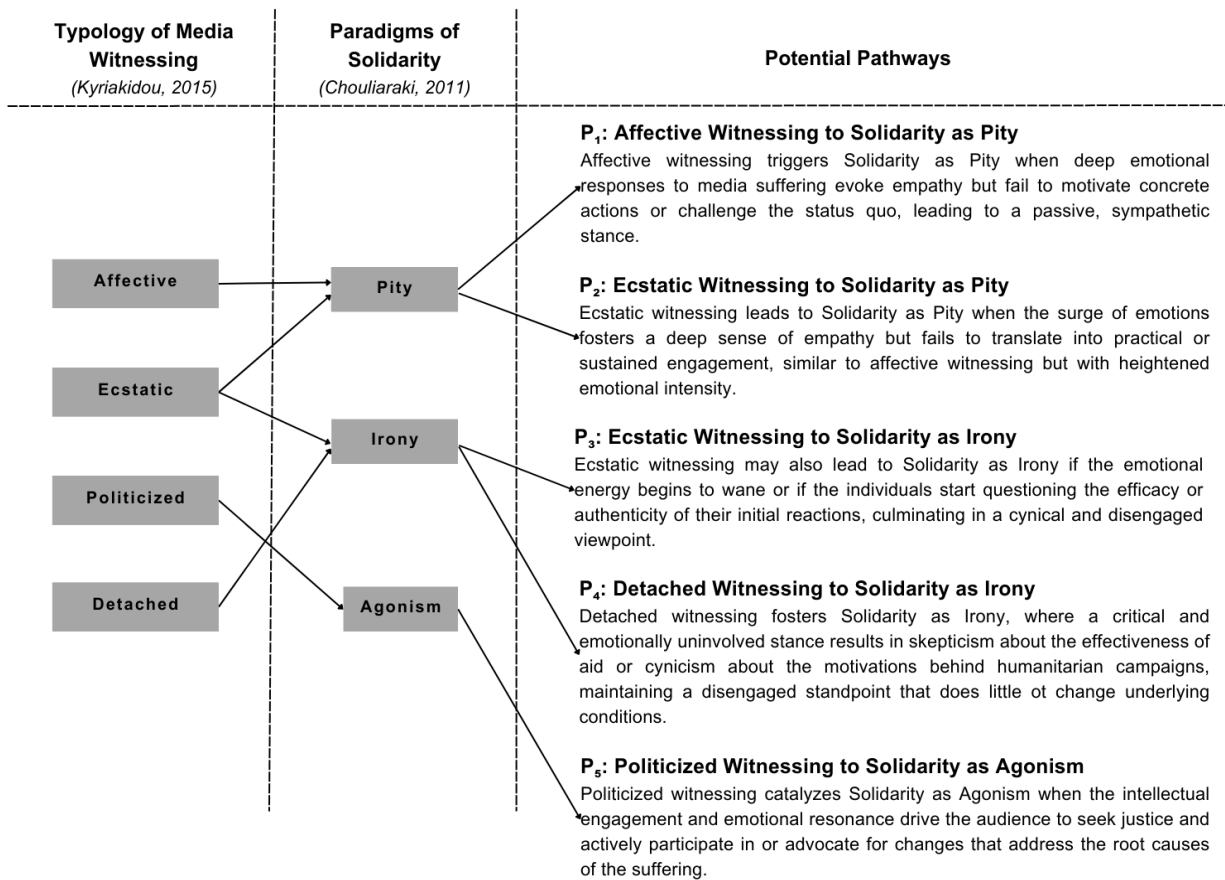
Figure 1. Potential Pathways from Modes of Witnessing to Solidarity

Furthermore, the literature highlights that Cultures of Authenticity significantly influence audience attitudes toward suffering, guiding this study to explore how celebrity mediators' perceived authenticity affects spectators' moral agency. Key questions include how a celebrity's geographical origin affects their credibility, the indicators of (in)authenticity, and the resulting impact on audiences' willingness to act. This will help frame the underlying mechanisms driving audience perceptions and engagements — illuminating why they respond as they do. The analysis will also examine potential Strategies of Denial and Neutralization (Cohen, 1996; 2001; Seu, 2010) — the mechanisms and argumentative resources through which audiences employ to justify inaction when witnessing the suffering of distant others (Appendix B, C). Understanding these strategies is crucial for identifying barriers to effective solidarity, explaining why some audiences do not progress beyond pity or irony, despite the emotional and cognitive influences of celebrity humanitarians.

METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Methodoloy

This study employed an online interview, which involves a structured, focused, and interactive dialogue between two or more individuals (Brennen, 2017; Kvale, 1996). Qualitative interviews adopt a constructivist epistemology, recognizing knowledge as actively constructed through lived experiences and regards participants as creators of meaning instead of 'passive conduits for retrieving information from an existing vessel of answers' (Warren, 2002, p.83). Thus, a qualitative interview is less about deriving facts or laws, and more about gathering insights into a subject's 'deeply nuanced inner worlds' (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002, p.57). This method aligns with the study's objective to examine youths' perceptions and attitudes on humanitarian crises as mediated through celebrities. In particular, a visual elicitation interview (VE-I) was employed, where visuals (i.e., video campaign) were utilised to complement direct questioning (Barton, 2015). VE-I is well-suited for examining the study's focus on two archetypes of celebrity humanitarians: Western and Southeast Asian. Grounding the interview on specific visual cues can aid me to overcome participant illiteracy and provide a shared frame of reference for participants to express their thoughts (Collier & Collier, 1986).

Beyond merely triggering emotional responses (Harper, 2002), this approach proves particularly effective in fostering productive talk, prompting socio-cultural references that might not be easily accessed through verbal questioning alone (Crilly et al., 2006, p.343). These references do so by breaking the participants' normal frame of reference and arousing dormant or latent thoughts into the interviews' 'here and now' interaction (Törrönen, 2002; Meo, 2010; Bates et al., 2017). Leonard and McKnight (2015) illustrated the power of photographs in eliciting Belfast youths' implicit perspectives on ethnic and religious divisions. A photograph of Belfast City Hall with a Union Flag initiated discussions on identity and belonging where several participants linked it to British identity and cultural heritage, while others perceived it as a symbol of exclusion. In this study, VE-I can prompt audiences to adopt a reflective stance in relation to the often-unquestioned aspects of celebrity-mediated representations of distant suffering.

Visual aids also help overcome power imbalances in interview methods (Hemy & Meshulan, 2020). Kvale (2006) posits that qualitative interviews are not inherently egalitarian but rather unilateral dialogue in which interviewers wield significant authority, setting discussion topics, shaping the

environment and managing the initiation and conclusion of the conversation. VE-I helps mitigate these power dynamics by transforming participants from mere subjects into active contributors and creators of knowledge (Ali-Khan & Siry, 2014; Leonard & McKnight, 2015). When participants are prompted to respond to visual stimuli, the focus of the discussion shifts from the interviewer to the images. This shift can alleviate the pressure and judgement often found in traditional interviews, enabling participants to showcase their knowledge and expertise as they assess and collaboratively construct meanings from visual materials (Seidman, 2013; Bates et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Zoom was selected as the platform for conducting interviews due to its Share Screen function, which facilitates the direct display of images and videos, and its Record button, which records sessions seamlessly, ensuring accurate data capture. Conducting interviews online pragmatically eliminates the need to consider travel distances and associated logistical challenges, thereby allowing the study to include a more diverse and geographically dispersed group of participants (Stewart, 2000).

Research Design

The sample for this study consists of nine Indonesian youths, living in urban and suburban areas around Jakarta, Indonesia. This number was chosen based on achieving data saturation, where further data collection would not yield new insights. In compliance with LSE's ethics policy, this study focuses on Indonesian youths aged 18-24. Access to participants was facilitated through a snowball sampling, a nonprobability method which involves leveraging existing social networks to recruit other units (Noy, 2008). The recruitment began with selecting three participants from my Indonesian social networks to establish initial links (ibid). These participants were invited to recommend others who met the study criteria, and this chain referral technique continued iteratively. To build trust and engagement, participants were requested to briefly explain the research to their referrals. This strategy also minimises confirmation bias from existing alliances (i.e., acquaintanceship with seed participants) and provides access to hard-to-reach or unknown populations, ensuring a culturally diverse and representative sample of the target population (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013).

The interview utilised a semi-structured guide (Appendix D) that facilitated open-ended questioning, allowing participants to express freely while enabling interviewers to probe further into intriguing responses (Hyman & Sierra, 2016). The subject guide followed a funnel format, beginning with broad,

generic questions and progressing to more narrowed questions related to the main topics of the study. The opening questions were intended to build rapport by encouraging participants to introduce themselves, share any prior humanitarian engagements and first impressions on celebrity participation (Roller, 2015).

The primary analysis involved the presentation of two short videos, each featuring a male UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador: David Beckham from the UK and Nicholas Saputra from Indonesia. By selecting celebrities who both exemplify the 'Strong Men Doing Good' archetype, as identified by Richey and Brockington (2020), and are affiliated with the same organisation, this strategy effectively controls for variations in celebrity influence and organisational power, providing a standardised basis for comparison. For each video, a set of questions is designed to capture the participants' initial reactions and thoughts, focusing on the celebrity mediators' authenticity and their understanding of the depicted suffering. The comparative section deepens the inquiry by prompting participants to critically analyse differences in message delivery and content between the videos and reflect on how these representations influence their engagement with humanitarian causes. The interview ends by exploring questions of moral engagement, asking participants to reflect on global responsibility, moral obligations, and political accountability within humanitarian aid.

Analytical Approach

The method of analysis is Thematic Analysis (TA), which involves 'identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data' (Clarke & Braun, 2017). In this context, a theme captures a common, recurring pattern or relationship across a dataset (Braun & Clark, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). TA adopts an inductive, bottom-up approach, organically developing themes based on participants' narratives and lived experiences (Frost, 2021; Hammond & Wellington, 2012). TA's capacity to remain open to data, coupled with its participant-centric attribute, facilitates a more authentic and nuanced inquiry into young people's perceptions of and engagement with celebrity humanitarians, one that is free from potential biases that could arise from more rigid analytical frameworks. Although not bound to one single theory (i.e., neither realist or essentialist), TA operates within a constructivist paradigm, recognizing the complexity of human experience and the subjective nature of meaning-making (Finlay, 2021). This underpinning is especially relevant to the current study, as it can reveal underlying socio-cultural and contextual influences that shape

youth's subjective experiences and moral inclinations to humanitarian communication mediated by celebrities of global and local fame.

The TA process began by transcribing audio recordings verbatim and closely reading the transcripts to familiarise with the data. Using NVivo14, I reviewed the texts to identify and code prevalent sentiments into meaningful groups based on the quality and frequency of responses. This initial coding yielded several key codes, which were later organised into broader themes such as Authenticity, Emotionality, Action, and Rationalisation. These themes captured the primary aspects of how participants perceived celebrity involvement in humanitarian campaigns and their moral responses. I then systematically re-read the transcripts to tag excerpts corresponding to these themes and their associated codes. Sub-themes were developed to further dissect and elucidate the nuances within each main theme by clustering related codes, allowing for a detailed examination of the intricate aspects of each category. The final phase involved an iterative review of the themes, sub-themes, and codes to ensure they accurately represented the data and provided insightful answers to the research questions (see Appendix E).

Ethical Considerations and Reflexivity

Interested participants received a detailed information sheet outlining the study's scope and provided an electronic informed consent upon agreement (Appendix F). All personal information was kept strictly confidential, stored using encrypted solutions with access limited to me, the researcher. Pseudonyms (i.e., alphabetical labels) are used in study outputs to maintain anonymity. Due to the sensitive nature of VE-I, particularly when dealing with humanitarian issues that often involve themes of crisis and adversity, the selection of campaign videos was approached with the highest level of care. However, the inclusion of celebrities in humanitarian communications helps to ease these ethical concerns. As noted in the previous section, celebrities — with their idealized and likeable personas — bring forth an era of post-humanitarianism driven by subdued emotions and feel-good altruism (Chouliaraki, 2011). Nonetheless, participants were informed of potential emotional reactions and were offered a debriefing session post-viewing if necessary.

Furthermore, it's crucial to acknowledge that power dynamics in VE-I can manifest as a Monopoly of Interpretation, where researchers' interpretations become the dominant lens through which the subject's experiences and viewpoints are understood and communicated. This issue is particularly

relevant in thematic analysis, where themes are shaped by the researcher's own theoretical understanding (Carey, 2017), potentially compromising the validity and reliability of findings. Thus, ethical interviewing necessitates researcher reflexivity. Recognizing my position as an able-bodied, Southeast Asian woman with a tertiary education in strategic humanitarian communications, I ought to remain open to diverse ways of seeing and understanding. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of reflexivity and confirmability were employed to ensure research rigour (See Appendix G).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perceived Authenticity of Celebrity Humanitarians

The general trend found is marked by a preference for local celebrity, Nicholas Saputra, who was often seen as more authentic than his Western counterpart, David Beckham. This study uncovered three enhancers of authenticity. Aligning with Scott (2015), *Ordinariness* was frequently observed, with numerous participants noting Saputra's 'down-to-earth' and 'sincere' demeanour, despite his fame in the Indonesian entertainment business. Participant C, for instance, praised Saputra's hands-on approach with the community, which they viewed as evidence of his genuine commitment to understanding and addressing local issues from the ground level:

> *He tried to go to their house, sat on the floor with the local people, and spent time with them, asking the villagers, the 'Kepala Desa' (Village Headman), the students, and the teachers. He really tried to get to the bottom of the issue.* (Participant C)

This account demonstrates how the perceived authenticity of the celebrity was contingent on Saputra's ability to physically align himself with the locals and engage with them on an equal footing. This positioning not only appears him as approachable, but also constructs him just like ordinary people — a fellow Indonesian who cares about his community. It is through this strategy of humanization that Saputra was able to domesticate his extraordinariness as an actor and display an altruistic self that appears credible and legitimate. This approach effectively embodies Brockington's (2014) second strategy of celebrity humanitarians, affinity — emphasising structural similarity with others. Yet similar to Scott's (2015) findings, this factor of ordinariness leads several of the participants to identify with the celebrity rather than the plights of distant others. This is particularly evident in Participant E's reflection on Saputra, stating, 'I think seeing myself in Nicholas Saputra is the greatest

thing. He was really trying to connect with the locals and that really resonates with me'. The implied result is that the gap between 'us' (Indonesian youths) and distant strangers persists, with the mediator guiding audiences toward a form of 'indulgent contemplation' that remains disconnected from the subject (Chouliaraki, 2008, p.92).

Cultural Relatability is another enhancer of authenticity which also aligns with Brockington's (2014) second strategy of celebrity humanitarians. Participants often cited Saputra's Indonesian heritage and their shared nationality as reasons for their trust in him to mediate the faraway suffering. They emphasised that because 'it's his home too', Saputra can 'better engage with locals in their native language' and 'speak with an understanding from immersing himself in these challenges' (Participants A, C, H, I). Participant F articulates this distinction by emphasising the necessity of profound local engagement for genuine advocacy:

> *There's a complexity to the issues in these countries that cannot be fully grasped just by visiting… if you do not really live here or just come from a brief exposure, I don't think their [foreign celebrities] participation can come off as genuine.* (Participant F)

Participant A further elaborated on this by stating that because Beckham was neither African nor Filipino, his understanding of the issues in those regions is 'sort of like how we would look at it as an *outsider*.' (Participant A). These sentiments reflect an 'Us Vs. Them' mentality, with Indonesian audiences viewing local celebrities as part of the ingroup, and Western celebrities as the outgroup. This division is rooted in the belief that non-local celebrities lack the necessary cultural and experiential connections to engage and understand meaningfully of geographically specific issues. Occasionally, cultural relatability is discussed in terms of the celebrity mediator's proximity to the suffering. Saputra, being local to the issue, is perceived to be more authentic than Beckham:

> *While it's not too close, there is some distance between Nicholas Saputra and what they're trying to fix, the distance is less intense… so you believe it more and it feels more genuine. Even though it might be, it might not, who knows? Whereas in the first video, you kind of see like, okay, cool, 'David Beckham'. But realistically, would he, specifically out of the top of his head be like, 'Oh, the Philippines'?* (Participant B)

Of particular interest is Participant B's hint at the inherent disingenuousness of all celebrities, including local ones — a sentiment that aligns with Participant I's view that Saputra 'might have the

advantage of acting better' than Beckham, known mainly as a footballer. However, in both cases, scepticism is quickly renounced, using geographical and cultural proximity as a rationale to justify their beliefs in the authenticity of Saputra. For Participant B, this was vividly highlighted through their rhetorical questioning of Beckham's involvement in the Philippines, which appears arbitrary, contrasting sharply with Saputra's engagement in Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT), which is viewed as more plausible given its occurrence within his home country. This reflects Žižek's (1989) concept of enlightened false consciousness, where individuals might recognize falsehoods but choose to ignore them, embracing the narratives with even greater sincerity.

The third enhancer of authenticity identified is *Issue Awareness*, which pertains to a celebrity's depth of understanding and ability to articulate the nuances of relevant issues. Participants often recognized Saputra's authenticity due to his profound grasp of the water hygiene issue in NTT and specific interventions needed for the children affected:

> *The information that he brings to the table, it's more concrete…where the funds would go and how it's going to be put to use. They talk about different kinds of pipes and different types of it used to pump water, and how that's needed to bring clean water to secluded communities.*(Participant F)

Evidently, the authenticity that the celebrity mediator offers in this case is an expert authority (Brockington, 2014), exemplified by their intellectual knowledge of the sufferer's condition. However, findings also suggest that this criterion may not resonate as strongly with Indonesian youth as ordinariness and cultural relatability. This divergence is attributed to the prevailing scepticism among participants, who often perceive the messages disseminated by both celebrities not as a manifestation of their own knowledge, but rather as scripted content provided by the organisation themselves (Participants F, A, B).

On the contrary, audiences perceived Beckham as less authentic than Saputra, noting his approach as performative, with descriptions like 'gimmick', 'practised', and 'scripted' frequently used to characterise his involvement (Participants A, C, D, I). This perception stemmed from his advocacy appearing *commercially focused*, serving more as a promotion platform than a genuine commitment to humanitarian causes. Participant A criticised the commercialised nature of Beckham's advocacy video, noting the excessive focus on selling UNICEF as a brand:

I felt that the video was sort of like a promotion for the brand… "UNICEF does this", and "UNICEF helped this" … like the name on the shirt is enough to know that like, oh, you can donate here. (Participant A)

Further, consensus emerged that Beckham's advocacy often served as a platform for his self-branding. Participant F criticised the overly polished production ('well-produced video with perfect shots') as a strategic manoeuvre to enhance his reputation. Adding to this scepticism, Participant B questioned Beckham's motives, asking, 'would he have done all of that if not for an ad? Probably not.'. The assumption is that without advertising incentives Beckham's involvement would likely diminish, suggesting it is driven more by contractual obligations than genuine philanthropic intent. While literature often credits celebrity humanitarians with the concurrent benefit of increasing issue visibility and enhancing their own image (Kellner, 2010; Chouliaraki, 2012), this study suggests that engagements like Beckham's do not necessarily secure sustained public relevance or admiration. Instead, it might erode their credibility and foster scepticism among viewers, particularly when their advocacy seems self-serving. This scepticism supports Kyriakidou (2019) call for recognizing audiences as active, critical participants in a global civic space, rather than passive consumers.

The second detractor of authenticity is *Level of Fame*. Observations suggest that the higher a celebrity ranks in the hierarchy of fame, the less authentic they are perceived to be. For many participants, A-list celebrities are not real people, but merely an image without substance. Participant I described Beckham as a 'fantasy', questioning his authenticity: 'How do I know he's real? How do I know he's not an industry plant? What are the chances they actually care for issues?'. Participant H's observation further underscores this point with a compelling description of alienation that can accompany fame, noting: 'They're so well known that it somewhat makes them feel unfamiliar in a way. …just so out of touch.' (Participant H). This highlights the irony of celebrity culture, where despite their omnipresence in the media, the public remains distanced from the true complexities of celebrities, paradoxically constructing them as enigmatic figures detached from ordinary realities.

While participants view both local and Western celebrities as higher beings, they discern their authenticity by associating their level of fame with varying degrees of accessibility and relatability. This distinction is evident in Participant B's reflections: 'I wouldn't say he's [Nicholas Saputra] untouchable. He's still a celebrity. But at the end of the day with foreign celebrities, there's more distance between you.' (Participant B). While 'distance' might imply geographical or cultural gaps, it

also metaphorically reflects social status hierarchies. Foreign celebrities are seen to occupy an elevated stratum, appearing vastly different and more privileged than the average audience. Conversely, local celebrities occupy a middle tier in this hierarchy, less distant than international stars but still above the general populace, making them appear not so much as objects of wonder but more as flawed human beings.

Audience Emotionality

The analysis revealed a pronounced tendency for negative emotional responses, particularly when campaigns were mediated by Western celebrities. Sentiments of *indifference* was a common recurrence, with many participants reported feeling 'disconnected' and 'desensitised' when the celebrity-led campaign did not effectively communicate the lives and stories of those affected (Participant A, E, H). Participant F openly acknowledge their ineptness to emotionally invest in the campaigns' messaging vis-a-vis the suffering other due to David Beckham's failure to delve into the complexities of the crises:

> *Honestly, I don't know what's the specific issue… All I know is that it's in the Philippines, and then in Central African Republic where people are experiencing crisis, but that's it. Because I don't really know exactly what's going on, it's kind of hard for me to feel something.* (Participant F)

Some discussions revealed that diminished emotional responsiveness was less about emotional numbing and more due to familiarity with common aid narratives. Participant I reacted to the campaign video, saying, 'Oh, damn these kids'. However, they quickly noted that this sentiment predates and is independent of David Beckham's narration: 'But that's already a fact outside of what David Beckham told me'. This suggests that the celebrity's involvement does not enhance their emotional engagement to distant suffering, but rather, serves as a superficial layer added to already known facts. While the discussant did express a sense of empathy for the victims, this emotion appears to be banal — an unreflective, transient feeling that does not bridge the gap between the spectator and the sufferer. This indifference is pertinent to Kyriakidou's (2015) Detached Witnessing, which positions audiences as disengaged spectators who fail to develop the empathetic imagination required for distant suffering to resonate within their moral and reflective realms.

Indifference was further commonly compounded by feelings of *indignation* which encompasses feelings of frustration and disillusionment, whether towards the presentation style of the mediator or

provoked by perceived injustices within the content. This was vividly captured by Participant H who expressed weariness over the generic plea for help trope, which they believed underscored ongoing negligence of issues in less developed regions:

> *It's something I see so often, it's nothing new. So it's like, a bit iffy seeing this kind rhetoric of "oh, save the children". But it also reminds me how long these issues have been ongoing and that they're still not resolved? Like, I think how this issue still happens in other Southeast Asian and African countries says a lot about what the leaders of the world prioritises.* (Participant H)

The first line reflects the compassion fatigue phenomenon (Moeller, 1998), where the continual exposure to crises results in a desensitisation to the message. The discourse evolves into cynicism and disillusionment, underscoring an interpretative framework of conflict between 'us' and 'them' — the latter viewed as the architects of persistent suffering, be they states, international organisations, or global powers. This shift from narratives of suffering to a critical assessment of the circumstances surrounding their suffering accords with Kyriakidou's (2015) Politicised Witnessing, which highlights the attribution of blame to perpetrators. Participant F's quote below further exemplifies indignation through a poignant critique on the dissonance between the publicised compassion of celebrities and their private lives of luxury. They noted that celebrities such as Beckham, can easily disengage and return to the comfort of their own homes when immersed in an intense experience of suffering. This juxtaposition underscores the assumption that their substantial wealth turns their sporadic visits into mere piecemeal efforts from moments of spectacle, which can appear condescending.

> *These mega-rich, glamorous white celebrities try to speak about issues in third world countries, but at the end of the day, they could just go back home to their, you know, big mansions. And I think it's a bit patronising.* (Participant F)

Despite generally negative reactions, participants exhibited more positive responses to the campaign video mediated by local Indonesian celebrities, with *empathetic concern* emerging as the most prevailing response. This was marked by the presence of emotionally charged language which were absent when audiences viewed the Beckham video ('disheartening', 'touching', 'heartfelt'). For many, empathetic concern was due to Saputra's informative presentation style. Participant C noted how

Saputra's ability to articulate detailed and clear exposition of the facts around the scarcity of safely managed drinking water and sanitation in NTT made the dire situation palpable, helping them to grasp the severity of the situation:

> *He [Saputra] pinpointed the issue pretty well, I understand it much better and — to lack a basic human need to have clean water — that really saddens me… I know their issue better than the last video…And it made me relate to them more… it made it easier for me to imagine to be in their situation.* (Participant C)

Here, it is evident that Saputra's adept conveyance of children's lives in NTT fosters a space of reflexivity, where audiences are enabled to mentally and emotionally position themselves within the context of those affected, and the traditional distinction between ingroups (audiences as Jakartan youths) and outgroups (children in NTT) are blurred (Beck, 2006, p.6; Kyriakidou, 2009). This sense of constructed commonality, achieved through empathetic identification with the suffering depicted on screen, is a hallmark of Kyriakidou's (2015) concept of Affective Witnessing. However, this form of affective witnessing may also reveal a degree of narcissism, as it hinges on the ability to see oneself in the plight of others rather from an altruistic understanding of the other's unique experience. This is also seen in the case of Participant G who noted: 'It's really saddening to see how Elgi has no home to go back to… that's like, seeing the hardships your younger self might have faced in that position'. This quote illustrates how the discussant views Elgi as extensions of themselves, expressing empathy through 'a terrain self-reflection' (Chouliaraki, 2010, p.119). Further, it reflects the problem of discursive specification and particularisation where the audience engages deeply with singular, personalised accounts of suffering (i.e., the image of Elgi) rather than the issue as a whole (ibid).

Sentiments of empathetic concern were amplified by perceived proximity to the scene of suffering, which many audiences believed were vitalizing factors in building their emotional bond to distant others. This dynamic is clearly articulated by Participant F, who, while acknowledges the severity of the issue in Beckham's video, articulated how the geographical and contextual relevance of the issues presented by Saputra made the suffering more palpable:

> *It [Beckham's video] seems to bear more weight…it's literally about being displaced. But I think it's just it felt too distant, almost like it was happening in a different world. But*

the issues that Nicholas talks about…, are much closer to home for me. So, I think they're more real and presen. (Participant F)

Inspirational affect emerged distinctly in responses to Saputra's campaign, a dynamic not observed in reactions to Beckham's involvement. Participants claimed to feel more 'hopeful', 'optimistic' and 'motivated' by the proactive portrayal of change in Saputra's campaign (Participant D, F). Participant E highlighted this shift, stating: 'The first video because the first video is like, 'Oh my God, there's so many things going wrong' and that kind of stuff. But with this view, it's like oh, they're implementing change.' (Participant E). This renewed sense of possibility prompts the discussant to further reflect on their role in societal development: 'So it's also our job and our responsibility to hold those in power accountable… and see the growth because, ultimately these people are just doing their best'.

Action at a Distance

Analysis revealed a uniform consensus among participants that addressing complex humanitarian issues is a collective responsibility, which includes themselves as part of the solution. However, it was observed that campaigns led by local celebrities typically inspired more active audience involvement than those led by Western celebrities. As the literature has shown, volunteering remains a rarely highlighted engagement by participants (UNVolunteers, n.d.). Participant E is one of the few who noted feeling 'more moved to go out and volunteer after the second video', feeling a strong connection to Saputra as the mediator.

Instead, audiences were more inclined to Pay or Speak (Boltanski, 1999, p.17; Chouliaraki, 2006a, p.201). The tendency for hands-on engagement was evident in their willingness to *Donate*. Participants C, D and G all noted feeling 'more compelled to contribute when given the opportunity', viewing it as the most feasible and effective means to act given their circumstances as full-time professionals. This finding pragmatically reflects Boltanski's (1999, p. 18) notion that monetary contributions are appealing in that they allow donors to gauge the impact of their contribution clearly and effectively. This simplified calculation of one's charitable impact may particularly resonate well with spectators who acquire occupational demands but still wish to see the investments they make as meaningful.

Such heightened willingness was mainly attributable to Saputra's clear presentation of the issue, making the needs and urgency of the situation more apparent. This contrasted with Beckham's video, which was described as 'vague' and 'marketized' (Participant B and F), illustrating Seu's (2010) The Medium is the Message repertoire where the style of presentation can impede the message's impact. For others, the identification with Saputra and admiration for his self-presentation was cited as motivation behind their increased commitment to donate. These findings reveal that the impetus to act was largely influenced by the celebrity's media portrayal rather than an altruistic concern for the humanitarian cause. This shift in focus from the actual suffering to the media-created spectacle is a consequence of modern humanitarianism integrated with media logic, where the celebrity mediator becomes the focal point of audience action (Cottle & Nolan, 2007).

The preponderance of audiences referred to light-touch engagements for both campaigns, especially when direct intervention is impractical due to geographic or logistical constraints. *Spreading Awareness* emerged as a key strategy, exemplified by Participant G, who highlighted the use of social media as an effective tool for disseminating information and personal narratives following exposure to the Saputra campaign:

> *I guess I'll be more likely to go on Instagram, share my thoughts on my story and maybe*
> *put a link to the UNICEF donation page. It's about using the platforms we have to make*
> *a real impact — even from afar.* (Participant G)

This finding presupposes audiences' ability to act as agentic speakers on behalf of distant others (Boltanski, 1999, p.40; Chouliaraki, 2006a, p.45). However, the act of care by Participant G is seen to remain within the boundaries set by new media mechanisms embedded with logics of self-visibility and reflexivity. This dynamic is particularly evident in the actions of Participant G, who opts to 'share *my* thoughts' on Instagram. Here, the discourse primarily circulates the viewpoints of the discussant as an Indonesian youth who is geographically and experientially external to the areas of crises. Consequently, the voices of bodies-in-need are obscured and perhaps rendered invisible within these narratives. This finding indicates a shift in humanitarian gaze where the act of doing good revolves around the question, 'how do I feel?' and personal gratification (Chouliaraki, 2013).

In response to Western celebrity mediators, *word-of-mouth* represented the extent through which audiences engaged in spreading awareness, leveraging personal and direct channels within their

social networks. Following their viewing of the Beckham video, Participants D, F, and H felt little motivation for direct action, envisioning their involvement primarily as 'talking with friends and family' — a level of engagement largely confined to casual conversation within their private spheres. This approach contrasts significantly from Boltanski's (1999) framework, which posits that effective speech in humanitarian contexts must assume the element of 'publicness' where opinion is made with the intent to be heard by others, including political institutions. When spectators restrict their engagements to private discussions, the issues of suffering may fail to emerge as matters of public concern that compel broader societal action.

Researching emerged as the least significant form of engagement, particularly after viewing Beckham's video. Participant I articulated a subdued intention to engage by exploring UNICEF's online resources and 'look through it more'. For others, the approach to research involved staying informed through news media:

> *I think the biggest one is probably reading up on the news regarding the coverage of those crises. Since it's so far away…the most you can do is just to have more awareness for yourself. That video is the little seed that is planted within you to help and look for more resources.* (Participant E)

While researching is indicative of a preliminary step towards deeper understanding, it remains a relatively isolated form of involvement where awareness is directed more towards educating oneself about the crises. As Participant E's comment suggests, the perceived geographical distance to the Beckham video reinforces the notion that enhancing personal awareness is the most viable action. This perspective is problematic as it treats researching as an end goal, rather than a means to catalyse substantive intervention to alleviate the pain of faraway others. The act does not bridge the gap between awareness and moral action, but rather, remains an intellectual exercise confined within the spectator's private sphere, detached from the immediacy and reality of the suffering they aim to address. Unlike responses to Beckham's video, participants felt adequately informed by Saputra's presentation which diminishes the need for additional information seeking. These findings reveal that the ostensibly higher status of Western celebrities, as discussed in section 4.1, does not guarantee increased authority or admiration. Instead, these celebrities often exert less influence, challenging the

current assumption that whiteness and Western ideals significantly shape authority and value perceptions in Indonesian society (Doubleday, 2019; Karunia & Permana, 2022).

Rationalisation: Critical Denial Dynamics

Rationalisation emerges as audiences employ various denial strategies (Cohen, 1996; 2001) to avoid the moral imperatives posed by the celebrity mediator, a dynamic that closely aligns with the findings of Seu (2010). Boltanski (1999) suggests audiences facing distant suffering either act or justify inaction; this study finds participants often chose the latter, especially in response to Beckham's campaign. A common thread identified within this theme is the *Displacement of Accountability*, wherein participants deflect the responsibility to act upon external parties to justify their non-involvement. Participants often assign responsibility to Western nations for crises in economically disadvantaged regions, emphasising colonialism and geopolitical manoeuvres as primary drivers of current hardships. Adopting an accusatory tone, Participant B linked the crises they witnessed in the campaigns to these historical legacies, suggesting that Global North nations are 'most likely responsible for whatever's going on'. Participant I expand on this idea by naming the P5 countries — US, Russia, France, China, and the UK — as maintaining a continuous, albeit indirect, role in the perpetuation of present-day human rights issues. These statements reflect a broader consensus among participants that Western powers, due to their historical actions, should largely contribute to alleviating the suffering in these regions. Participant I, for instance, asserted that the P5 countries still 'owe these countries resources, assistance, and mobility'. The word 'owe' elevates the discourse from one of voluntary aid or charity to one of a reparative obligation, indicating that these nations have incurred a debt through their actions that must now be amended.

Resources is the second rationale through which audiences displace accountability to Western entities. There is a prevailing assumption among participants that wealthy Western nations possess sufficient means to solve global issues without compromising their local commitments. This notion was encapsulated by Participant B who highlighted the disparity in challenges faced by the West compared to less affluent regions:

> *They don't necessarily have as much issues locally that they would have otherwise pour more of their resources towards…. But with the case of Indonesia … there are places within the country that desperately need help.* (Participant B)

In a similar note, Participant H noted the impracticality of extending resources abroad, stating, 'we have our own problems to look at'. This shared awareness of their country's resource limitations and urgent local challenges leads to the argument that Indonesians must prioritize addressing internal crises. Such a shift in focus further underscores that the relative stability and resource surplus in Western nations not only enable, but arguably morally obligate them to contribute more substantially to international aid efforts. Participant E directs attention to the responsibilities of influential figures in the Global North, emphasising that effective change involves more than just the public's financial donations; it requires the active engagement and policy advocacy of those who control significant financial assets and possess the authority to reshape international aid policies:

> *Although we as, quote, unquote, normal humans, can help when it comes to monetary issues, he [David Beckham] should be talking to the people in power there and using his voice to create awareness to them as they are the ones who are able to actually make change. You can throw as much money as you want on there… you can only do so much watching just behind the screen.* (Participant E)

In this categorical argument, Participant E wholly attributes the onus for meaningful change to 'people in power', leaving no space for individual agency. The witness does not position themselves as an active participant in the discourse in any case, and instead, construct themself as impotent pawns in the equation, relegated to the role of mere spectator ('you can only do so much watching just behind the screen'). Moreover, through the pronoun 'you' instead of 'I', Participant E attempts to distance themselves from the argument, suggesting that their feeling reflects a broader societal discourse rather than a personal viewpoint.

Critique of Action is the second most common strategy of denial identified, covering evaluations concerning the effectiveness and integrity of proposed or implemented actions by the celebrity mediator. Participants tend to express a deep scepticism regarding financial contributions, questioning the transparency and actual impact of the funds. This sentiment is vividly captured in the words of Participant F regarding the call to donation in Beckham's campaign:

> *I wouldn't do anything because I don't think even David Beckham himself say where I can donate, or to who will the funds go to. And I don't really believe in doing anything*

> *blindly. It's like, just putting a band-aid to solution. I don't think there's much meaning*
> *to it.* (Participant F)

Participant F's response is characterised by a prevailing sense of mistrust, clearly articulated in their reluctance to donate 'blindly'. This stems from Beckham's lack of guidance as a mediator on where and how donations are utilised. Not only does this breed mistrust but also doubts on the effectiveness of distant actions. This scepticism is seen in Participant F's view of the efforts as either counterproductive temporary fixes ('putting a band-aid on') or as wholly unnecessary acts ('I don't think there's much meaning to it'). In essence, this reluctance reflects a protective stance against the fear of wasted or misused money, diminishing the perceived value of these charitable actions.

For others, the critique of action reflects a broader sense of futility, driven by systemic issues in global humanitarian efforts. This sentiment is exemplified by Participant A who highlights how pervasive corruption, and the dominant influence of major corporations and governments foster a sense of powerlessness, undermining the value of individual efforts:

> *Just the fact that we know that a lot of corruption goes on in the world… you're literally*
> *fighting against big companies, or like countries trying to insinuate war, so it does feel*
> *like a losing battle. So now I don't always feel like it's our responsibility to help. I know*
> *it sounds bad in that way, but I just meant that it feels as though our help wouldn't have*
> *much of an impact.* (Participant A)

This statement reveals how participants negotiate their agency within complex systemic challenges. Participant A describes powerful entities as primary drivers of corruption and conflict, thereby victimising individual efforts as futile ('our help wouldn't do much of an impact'). However, their narrative lacks any mention of the actual cause at hand. As a spectator, Participant A does not position themselves relative with the victims on screen, nor do they consider their own agency in alleviating the pain of others. Instead, Participant A situate themself relative to big organisations and powerful nations of the Global North, to whom their agency is passive. The discussant's sense of powerlessness in the political environment serves as a rationale for their detachment from the suffering others. Moreover, both cases of critique of action align with Seu's (2010) Baby and Bathwater strategy, wherein individuals reject the mediator's moral claims ('the baby') due to specific perceived inadequacies ('the bathwater') like transparency issues in fund allocation (Participant F) or superficial

solutions (Participant A). This rejection occurs even though parts of the effort could potentially be effective and beneficial.

Faraway Dismissal is the last mechanism used to justify inaction, with participants citing geographical distance from the suffering in Beckham's video as diminishing their moral compulsion to act. This dynamic is clearly illustrated by Participant D who stated they feel no obligation to engage with issues outside their national vicinity due to perceived lack of impact:

> *I don't feel like it's my concern… especially because I think it's a little bit distant from me. It's showing sick and displaced children in the Philippines and as well as in Africa. Since I'm from Indonesia I don't feel like there's any effect on me on that matter.*
> (Participant D)

Here, spatial reference is used to distance the audience and those on screen, rendering the plight of distant others inconsequential to the spectator's lived experience and therefore outside of the spectator's moral space of concern. This dynamic aligns with Cohen's (1996; 2001) Implicatory Denial, where the facts and their conventional interpretation are recognized, yet the psychological, political, and moral implications that follow are minimised. Participant D left the existence of suffering undisputed ('sick and displaced children'). However, it is the issue's significance to the spectator's life that is downplayed due to the external factor of distance ('I don't feel like there's any effect on me'). The logistical challenges posed by such geographical distance are also often cited as a barrier to acting. Participant E demonstrates this point, noting, 'it's not like I'm going to be able to fly tomorrow to Syria and then help for a week and then fly to the Philippines'. This comment highlights the impracticality of engaging directly in remote relief efforts due to having to 'fly' to the scene of suffering, a process which bears significant time and financial costs. Such challenges lead the viewer to perceive themselves as 'powerless' in relation to controlling their contribution to the cause. By negating the possibility of any viable action they can take, Participant E does not recognize the suffering of distant others as an impetus for action.

Implication of Findings: Solidarity as Irony

This section delineates how the four identified themes interlink and their cumulative implications for the research questions posed. Addressing RQ1, findings reveal that Indonesian youths view local celebrities as more authentic mediators of distant suffering compared to their Western counterparts.

Saputra's perceived authenticity, characterised by his ordinariness (Scott, 2015), cultural relatability (Brockington, 2014), and issue awareness, effectively facilitates affective witnessing (Kyriakidou, 2015). This engagement is evidenced by significant emotional involvement, marked by participants' use of emotionally charged verbs and expressions. In contrast, Beckham's commercial focus and higher fame detracts his perceived authenticity, leading to detached witnessing — where audiences acknowledge the scene of suffering but remained emotionally unengaged — and politicised witnessing — demonstrating cynicism towards entities perceived as culpable such as Global North nations or corporations.

In response to RQ2, this variance in perception of celebrity humanitarianism significantly influences the audience's moral responses to crises. The depth of emotional connection fostered by local celebrities and their perceived authenticity enhances the audience's willingness to engage in proactive behaviours such as donating and volunteering. Conversely, the indifference fostered by Western celebrities and their lack of authenticity leads to a more passive engagement, where discussions and minimal research predominate. This trend illustrates the Shoot the Messenger repertoire (Seu, 2010), where scepticism towards the messenger's credibility and legitimacy can become a barrier to the message's acceptance amongst others. Just as Seu (2010) and Boltanski (1999) predict, participants adopted the role of critical consumers rather than moral agents, meticulously rationalising their inaction or lack of direct engagement with suffering mediated by Western celebrities. They preserved their dignity using denial mechanisms (Cohen, 1996; 2001; Seu, 2010) such as displacement of accountability, faraway dismissal, and critiques of action efficacy and integrity.

Despite initial observations, a closer examination reveals a paradox in the involvement stimulated by Saputra and Beckham. Although Saputra's engagements might appear to foster active moral participation in alleviating suffering, they often transcend mere altruistic concern. As seen from sections 4.1-4.3, these engagements are equally shaped by narcissistic introspection and relational dynamics with the celebrity, relegating the actual suffering to a secondary role within the narrative. Instead of 'authenticating' the victim's suffering, the celebrity's persona often dominates, shifting attention away from universal moral imperatives towards a particularised, reflexive approach, which ultimately fails to sustain a legitimate claim to action on suffering (Brauman, 1993; Scott, 2014, p.4). This divergence culminates in an ironic form of spectatorship, epitomised by utilitarian ethics of feel-

good activism, where the distant sufferer becomes obscured from the moral imagination (Chouliaraki, 2011).

Parallel dynamics are evident in responses to Beckham's mediated portrayals, which invoke politicised witnessing. Audiences engage critically with underlying structures exacerbating suffering but often fail to integrate empathetic resonance adequately (as seen in section 6.2). Just as Chouliaraki (2006; 2013) argues, audiences were unable to sustain a dialectic engagement of imagining themselves within the crisis scene, evoking either visceral or deep emotional responses, while simultaneously articulating reasoned perspective that considers broader contexts. This reflects a continued gap in contemporary media's portrayal of humanitarian issues, often failing to achieve that 'proper distance' necessary for meaningful engagement towards the pursuit of justice, as theorised by Silverstone (2006, p.45-6). Thus, it is evident that both local and global celebrities face significant challenges in bringing distant others within the 'cognitive and emotional, and therefore moral reach' of spectators.
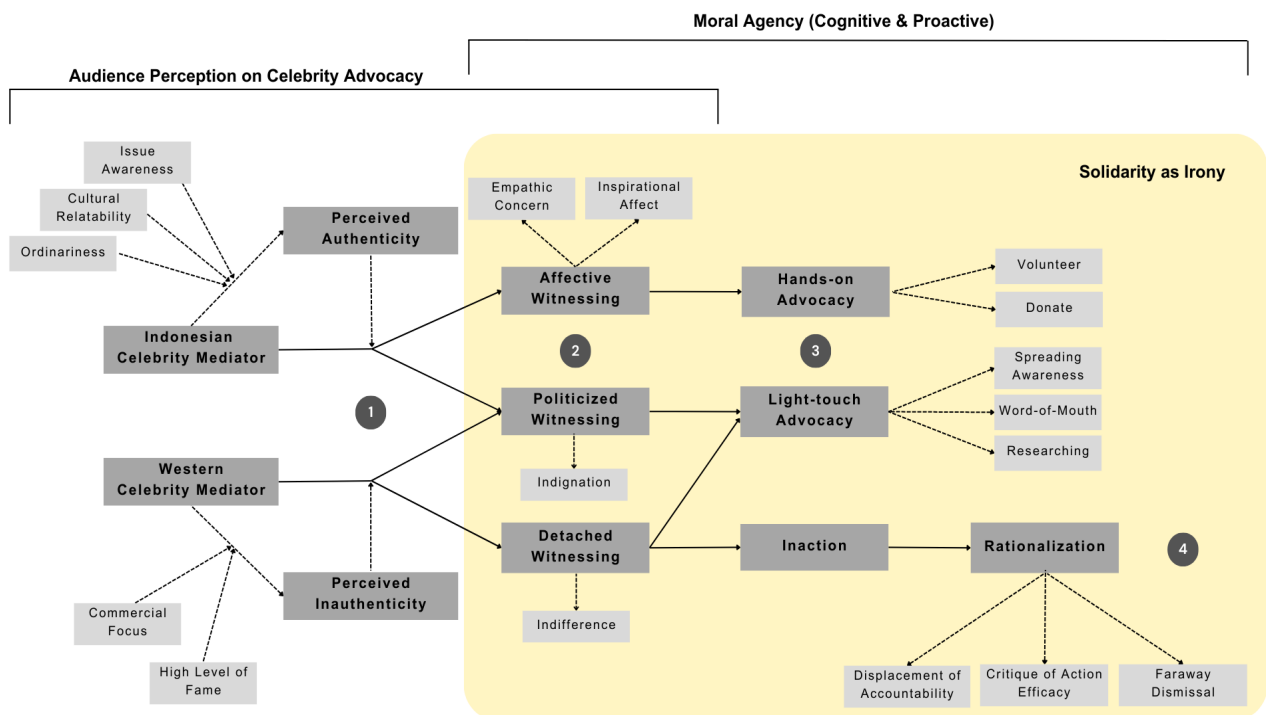

Figure 2. Flow Chart of Celebrity Mediation Effect on Audience Perception and Moral Agency

CONCLUSION

This dissertation examined how celebrities of varying geographical fame impact Global South audiences' mediated experiences of distant suffering and its implication on the spectators' capacity to construct moral responses. Through a VE-I with nine Indonesian youths, the study reveals that the

mediation of distant suffering by local celebrities is perceived as more authentic than their Western counterparts, enhancing greater emotional engagement and active participation. However, analysis also suggests that establishing a moral connection driven by cosmopolitan sensibility between spectators and distant sufferers remains a challenge. The audience's moral agency was observed to embed politics of irony, oscillating between being deeply moved by the representation of suffering, which often hinges on reflexive particularism, or distancing themselves with the moral proposals of celebrity mediators through rationalisation.

This variability highlights the conditional and complex nature of spectator's responses to mediated representations of suffering, which could not be predetermined exclusively by the suffering's nature or how it is presented. Instead, media witnessing, as explored in this dissertation, is influenced both by the proximity to and reporting style of specific disasters by the mediator — commonly seen in affective witnessing — and by the broader social and political discourses that viewers use to interpret these events, as observed in politicised and detached witnessing. This finding underscores the importance of humanitarian organisations carefully selecting culturally attuned celebrities whose public personas align with campaign goals. It also recommends refining message delivery methods to emphasise providing substantial information that enhances audience understanding of issues and elevates the voices of vulnerable populations, ensuring celebrities amplify rather than overshadow these narratives.

Nevertheless, there are constraints within this study that warrant attention when considering the implications and generalisability of the findings. Firstly, this study concentrated on the influence of one specific celebrity archetype among the six outlined by Richey and Brockington (2020). Because different celebrities perform different roles within these tropes, which may allow for certain public responses and support and not others, findings of this study may not be generalised across all celebrity archetypes used in humanitarian communications. This invites further investigation into how different celebrity archetypes, such as Global Mothers, might differ in influencing humanitarian engagement.

Secondly, this study predominantly involved Indonesian youths in Jakarta with high educational backgrounds. As participants were recruited through referrals from seed participants, the sample naturally evolved to include individuals within their social networks. This homogeneity is significant as highly educated persons tend to develop more ideologically coherent and critical views (Tsui, 2003),

making them particularly attuned to nuances in media representation and manipulation. Given only 27% of Indonesian youths attain secondary education and 4% are in tertiary education programs (OECD, n.d.), the findings of this study may not reflect the general youth population. Future research should expand beyond urban centres like Jakarta to include participants from more remote areas to broaden demographic diversity and enhance representativeness of current findings.

Lastly, due to the time-constrained setting of this study, the scope of research was confined to assessing the audience's immediate reactions to celebrity-led humanitarian campaigns. Yet, according to Frosh (2011), moral sensibility also develops from a sustained media interaction that he terms 'phatic morality'. Instead of being merely 'engaged spectators' who respond to specific events, audiences are part of a 'diffused audience' whose moral grounds and shared sense of humanity is continually shaped through habitual and ambient interaction with media overtime. Therefore, future research could benefit from longitudinal methods such as ethnography or diary-interview studies to explore how prolonged exposure to and interaction with celebrity humanitarian campaigns affect long-term perceptions and actions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Kyriakidou's (2015) Typology of Media Witnessing

Type of Witnessing	Description	Example
Affective	Emphasises the emotional impact of media, often prioritising sentimentality over critical reflection.	Viewers might feel overwhelmed with sadness or tear up, strongly reacting to the emotional weight of the story.
Ecstatic	Involves deep immersion and empathy, focusing on the immediacy and urgency of the situation, often at the expense of critical distance.	Individuals could feel a surge of emotional connection, experiencing deep empathy or personal distress.
Politicised	Encourages audiences to contextualise media content within broader socio-political frameworks, fostering analytical and critical responses.	Viewers might feel provoked or challenged, leading to heightened curiosity or scepticism about the information presented.

Detached	Maintains an emotional and moral distance, limiting deeper engagement with the suffering depicted.	Observers may remain unaffected or indifferent, maintaining a neutral or unemotional response to the content.

Appendix B. Seu's (2015) Repertoires of Neutralization

Repertoires of Neutralization	Description	Example
Shoot the Messenger	Shifting focus from the message to the deliverer to discredit the information based on the source's perceived biases.	Dismissing environmental concerns because the activist is a celebrity, questioning their credibility rather than addressing the issues.
The Medium is the Message	Focusing on how the message is delivered rather than the content itself, which detracts from the severity of the issue.	Criticising a documentary on famine for its dramatic music and cinematography rather than discussing the humanitarian issues it highlights.
Baby and Bathwater	Rejecting an entire argument or campaign due to some flawed parts, ignoring the potentially valid or effective elements.	Disregarding a valid social campaign because some statistics presented were outdated or incorrect.

Appendix C. Cohen's (1996;2001) Strategies of Denial

Strategies of Denial	Description	Example
Literal	Outright rejection of the fact, the knowledge, or the interpretation of the event.	Denying the occurrence of documented war crimes.
Interpretative	Acknowledges the facts but reinterprets them to absolving oneself or others from moral responsibility.	Reframing forced evictions as voluntary relocations.
Implicatory	Involves recognizing both the facts and their conventional interpretation but rejecting the psychological, political, or moral consequences that generally arise from them.	Recognizing the harm of child labour but justifying it as a necessary economic practice.

Appendix D. Interview Guide

The Ethics of Solidarity from Hollywood to Home: Perceptions of Indonesian Youth on Local and Global Celebrity Humanitarianism and its Implications on the Construction of Moral Agency with the Suffering of Distant Others
Interview Topic Guide

Introduction
- When you hear the term 'humanitarian work,' what's the first thing that comes to mind?
- What kinds of social or humanitarian issues are you most passionate about, if any?
- Have you ever volunteered or been involved in a cause before? Can you tell us a bit about that experience?
- Before we get into the videos, how do you usually feel about celebrities being involved in charity or social causes?
- Can you think of a time when a public figure made a positive impression on you with their advocacy or humanitarian efforts?

Video 1: Western Celebrity (David Beckham)
- After watching the video, what's the first thought or feeling that comes to you? What stood out to you during the video and then share them with us?
- What grabbed your attention the most—the person speaking, the message they were sharing, or something else?
- Did the video seem like it was speaking to you personally? Who do you think was the intended audience?
- Did you learn anything new from this, or did it make you think about something you already knew?
- Are you curious to learn more about the subject?
- Do you believe in the message that was delivered? Do you trust the person delivering it?
- Has this video inspired you to take any action or do you think something should be done about the issue?
- If you think action should be taken, who do you believe should be responsible? Does it feel like your concern?

Video 2: Local Celebrity (Nicholas Saputra)
- Let's switch gears to the second video. What's your immediate reaction to this one?
- [Repeat the same structured questions as above for consistency]

Comparative Analysis
- Having watched both videos, did you find any notable differences? Perhaps on how the message was delivered, or maybe the message itself?
- Do you think the impact of a humanitarian campaign changes depending on whether the figure is Indonesian or Western? Why or why not?
- Does the background/ knowledge you have of the celebrity affect your trust in the message or willingness to support the cause? Why do you think that is?

Questions on Moral Engagement
- In your view, is it right for us or our community to help people who are suffering in distant places?
- Under what circumstances should we extend our help?
- Do you think Western countries have some political responsibility for the situations in less wealthy countries? Why/ why not?

Beckham Video: https://youtu.be/ivhi99kquac?si=1U8H2o3i4yKzia48
Saputra Video: https://youtu.be/tKORKY4iXXQ?si=poWepmxhzpHV-XcK

Appendix E. Thematic Analysis Grid

Theme	Sub-theme	Code	Description	Sample Extract
Authenticity	Enhancers of Authenticity	Ordinariness	Highlights the authenticity perceived in presenters who appear ordinary and approachable, underscoring their genuine and relatable demeanour.	"He tried to go to their house, sat on the floor with the local people and try to spend time with them and ask them - the villagers, the "Kepala Desa", the students, and the teachers, so...he really tried to get to the bottom of the issue." (Participant C)
		Cultural Relatability	Focuses on the alignment of campaign content or presenters with participants' cultural identities or backgrounds, enhancing authenticity through shared experiences or values.	"There's a complexity to the issues in these countries- like Indonesia, that cannot be fully grasped just by visiting... if you do not really live here or just come from a brief exposure, I don't think their [foreign celebrities] participation can come off as genuine." (Participant F)
		Issue Awareness	Indicates a deep understanding and articulation of issues by presenters, boosting their credibility and strengthening their connection to the cause.	"The information that he brings to the table, it's more concrete...where the funds would go and how it's going to be put to use. Like, they talk about different kinds of pipes and different types of it used to pump water, and how that it's needed to bring clean water to secluded communities." (Participant F)
	Detractors of Authentic	Commercial Focus	Addresses concerns that campaigns are driven by commercial motives, which may overshadow the humanitarian objectives and reduce perceived authenticity.	"I don't know, like, the video seem to focus on like the brand. Like, I don't really know exactly what they're doing. Like, how do I know where the money I give goes to? The only thing I remember is, like, just David Beckham saying, please donate to UNICEF- that's it, so, you know, I think it's, um, it's very- such marketized way, in my opinion." (Participant H)
		Level of Fame	Discusses how a presenter's high profile can affect authenticity perceptions, potentially creating a sense of disconnect due to their celebrity status.	"I mean, A-List celebrities are much more of a fantasy to people than they are real. I mean, they reached out to all- people all over the country, how do I even know he's real? How do I even know he's on a industry plant? You know, like, what are the chances they actually care for issues that they're working with? Or they're trying to push forward?" (Participant I)
Emotionality	Negative Emotional Responses	Indifference	Captures a lack of emotional engagement or superficial comprehension of the issues, where participants show apathy or fail to understand the depth and implications of the situations presented	"Honestly, I don't really- kind of like, sure what's the specific issue being, like, discussed? All I know is that in the Philippines, and then the video is like about in Central African Republic where people are experiencing crisis, but I think that's it. Because I don't

		Description	Quote
		typically through communication channels that do not require direct interaction with the cause.	*UNICEF donation page. It's about using the platforms we have to make a real impact, even from afar."* (Participant G)
	Word-of-Mouth	Describes informal sharing of information through personal networks.	*"Not to the point where I'm gonna like do something about it, but maybe it's enough for me to talk to spread the word maybe like discuss it with my friends or if my family."* (Participant D)
	Researching	Indicates efforts by participants to understand issues through personal study, emphasizing an advocacy approach grounded in knowledge acquisition.	*"I think the biggest one is probably reading up on the news regarding the coverage of those crises. Because, since it's so far away…the most you can do is just to have more awareness for yourself. It's as if that video is the little seed that is planted within you to help and look for more resources."* (Participant E)
Rationalization	Displacement of Accountability	Refers to the shifting of responsibility for taking action to external entities, such as governments or large organizations, as a justification for personal non-involvement.	*"I think I've always said this, in the case of like, in the case of like, the Western world, for instance, I believe they have a bigger responsibility in helping out far distant countries and far- because they first of all, they have a bigger reach. Second of all, most likely they're responsible for whatever's going on. And third of all, they don't necessarily have as much issues locally that they would have otherwise pour more of their resources and right. But with the case of like, say, Indonesia, you see stuff like- you see the video, stuff like that, like there's far reach- there are other places within the country that desperately need help. And so from a resources standpoint, it doesn't seem like it's worthwhile to help out foreign countries."* (Participant B)
	Critique of Action Efficacy	Covers evaluations concerning the effectiveness and ethical integrity of proposed or implemented actions, questioning their impact and the motivations behind them.	*"I do think that like, as someone who can help, in a way I do feel a sense of responsibility to help people. But at the same time, I feel like with a lot of these causes, and just the fact that we know that, like, a lot of corruption goes on in the world, or like, you're literally fighting against big companies, or like countries trying to insinuate war, it-it does feel like a losing battle. So now I don't always feel like it's, it's our responsibility to help. I know, it sounds, it sounds bad in that way, but I just meant the like, it feels as though our help wouldn't do much more of an impact. That's how it feels in a way."* (Participant A)
	Faraway Dismissal	Describes the tendency to dismiss issues as irrelevant due to geographic or emotional distance, affecting engagement levels.	*"I don't feel like it's my concern, but maybe, especially because I think it's a little bit distant from me, as seen from the visuals, the video, you know, it's showcasing children in Philippines and as well as in Africa. So, since I'm from Indonesia, you know, I don't feel like there's a connection with that."* (Participant D)

Appendix F. Unsigned and Anonymized Information Sheet and Consent Form

The Ethics of Solidarity from Hollywood to Home: Perceptions of Indonesian Youth on Local and Global Celebrity Humanitarianism and its Implications on the Construction of Moral Agency with the Suffering of Distant Others
researcher name
Department of Media and Communications, LSE

Information for Participants

Thank you for considering participating in this study which will take place 25 June 2024. This information sheet outlines the purpose of the study and describes your involvement and rights as a participant, if you agree to take part.

1. What is the research about?

This research is about understanding how young individuals interpret and respond to celebrity advocacy of global and local fame in humanitarian campaigns. Through a visual elicitation interview, where you will be shown short videos of these celebrities in action, we aim to explore your perceptions and emotional responses to these figures in humanitarian crises. There is no external funder for this research; it is being conducted as part of an academic study at the London School of Economics

2. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether to take part. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you do decide to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form which you can digitally sign and return in advance of the interview via email.

3. What will my involvement be?

Your involvement will consist of participating in a one-on-one interview, which will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes of your time. During the interview, you will watch two short UN campaign videos featuring local and international celebrities involved in humanitarian efforts. After viewing each clip, you will be asked to share your thoughts, interpretations, and emotional reactions to the content. The interview will be conducted in a safe setting, and you will have the opportunity to discuss your views in depth.

4. How do I withdraw from the study?

You can withdraw from the study at any point until 25 June 2024, without having to give a reason. If any questions during the interview make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. Withdrawing from the study will not affect you. If you withdraw from the study, I will not retain the information you have given thus far, unless you are happy for me to do so.

5. What will my information be used for?

The information you provide during this study will be used for a dissertation project as part of the MSc PostGraduate programme at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

6. Will my taking part and my data be kept confidential? Will it be anonymised?

The records from this study will be kept as confidential as possible. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the files and any audio tapes. Your data will be anonymised – your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. All digital files, transcripts and summaries will be given codes and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of participants. Any hard copies of research information will be kept in locked files at all times.

7. Who has reviewed this study?

This study has undergone an ethics review in accordance with the LSE Research Ethics Policy and Procedure.

8. What if I have a question or complaint?

If you have any questions regarding this study please contact the researcher, *researcher name*, at xxx@lse.ac.uk.
If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the conduct of this research, please contact the LSE Research Governance Manager via research.ethics@lse.ac.uk.

If you are happy to take part in this study, please sign the consent sheet attached/below.

CONSENT FORM

The Ethics of Solidarity from Hollywood to Home: Perceptions of Indonesian Youth on Local and Global Celebrity Humanitarianism and its Implications on the Construction of Moral Agency with the Suffering of Distant Others

PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY

I have read and understood the study information or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	YES/NO
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.	YES/NO
I agree to the interview being audio-recorded.	YES/NO
I understand that the information I provide will be used for *researcher name*'s dissertation and that the information will be anonymised.	YES/NO
I understand that any personal information that can identify me will be kept confidential and not shared with anyone other than the researcher.	YES/NO

Once completed please email this back to me. Thank you.

Researcher name: *researcher name*

Email address: xxx@lse.ac.uk

The LSE Research Privacy Policy can be found here: https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Secretarys-Division/Assets/Documents/Information-Records-Management/Privacy-Notice-for-Research-v1.2.pdf

Appendix G. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) Quality Indicators of Rigour in Qualitative Research Framework

Rigour Criteria	Purpose
Credibility	Analogous to internal validity in quantitative research, credibility assesses the believability of findings from the perspective of the participants. Achieving credibility involves prolonged engagement with participants, using multiple sources of data (triangulation), consulting peers for their insights (peer debriefing), and verifying findings with participants (member checking).
Dependability	Corresponding to external validity or generalizability, transferability concerns the extent to which findings can be applied to other contexts. Researchers enhance transferability by offering detailed descriptions of the research setting and participant contexts, allowing others to evaluate whether the results are applicable in different settings.
Confirmability	This principle parallels the concept of reliability, focusing on the consistency of the research results over time. Dependability is demonstrated through an audit trail that documents the research process in detail, allowing for an external review of both the procedures and the outcomes.
Transferability	Similar to objectivity, confirmability ensures that the findings stem from the participants' experiences and perspectives rather than the researcher's biases. This is accomplished by keeping a reflexive journal and thorough documentation, enabling others to trace the findings back to the original data.