

Advocating for social sustainability and legal protection: Jala PRT's Instagram campaign for the domestic worker protection law (RUU PPRT)

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Abstract

Domestic workers in Indonesia are the backbone of many households, yet they remain one of the most vulnerable and overlooked groups in society. Most are women who face daily challenges including lack of legal recognition, inadequate social protection, and economic insecurity. The ratification of the Domestic Workers Protection Law (RUU PPRT) is not just a policy milestone but an urgent step toward ensuring these women's rights, dignity, and wellbeing, key pillars of social sustainability. This study explores how Jala PRT, a dedicated advocacy organization, uses Instagram as a platform to share the stories, struggles, and calls for justice of domestic workers, actively supporting the campaign for the ratification of RUU PPRT from May to November 2025. Through qualitative content analysis of Jala PRT's Instagram posts including captions, images, infographics, and videos the research uncovers how the organization highlights the real-life experiences of domestic workers, pushes for legal reforms, and rallies community support. Findings reveal that Instagram serves as a powerful tool for digital advocacy, enabling Jala PRT to craft compelling narratives of safe work, decent work, justice for domestic workers and empowerment of domestic workers. By blending visual and textual storytelling, the organization raises public awareness, fosters solidarity, and strengthens policy advocacy, thereby contributing to the social sustainability and protection of domestic workers. The study's main insight is that social media can broaden the conversation about sustainability beyond environmental matters, emphasizing labor rights, gender equity, and justice. This research demonstrates the potential of digital communication to amplify marginalized voices and drive meaningful social change.

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Domestic workers, Social sustainability, Digital advocacy, Social justice communication, RUU PPRT

Introduction

Domestic worker is a profession predominantly pursued by women. At its core, domestic workers take on the vital responsibilities of managing and sustaining

households alongside a diverse array of essential domestic tasks. Earlier research reveals that the presence of domestic workers in Indonesia dates back to the era of kingdoms [1]. The term domestic worker was established through ILO Convention 189 to affirm that domestic work deserves recognition as a legitimate profession. Sadly, in many countries including Indonesia, domestic workers have yet to gain formal classification as workers. The term domestic worker as a profession remains merely formalistic, as domestic workers continue to be excluded from labor law protections. No law level regulation exists yet to comprehensively govern and safeguard their welfare [2].

Efforts to formalize domestic workers as legitimate employees have been underway, including the submission of a Draft Law (RUU) on their labor rights and protections. The Draft Law on Domestic Worker Protection regulates recruitment processes, domestic worker's rights, criminal penalties for employers and placement agencies engaging in discrimination, exploitation, harassment, or violence, as well as provisions on working hours, leave, holiday allowances, and social security for health and employment. The Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR RI) has only recently approved it as a Draft Law (RUU) after more than 16 years of delay, despite the urgent need for legal protections among numerous Indonesian domestic workers employed both domestically and abroad [3].

In this context, research on domestic workers in Indonesia is critically important. The ratification of the Domestic Worker Protection Law (RUU PPRT) represents a pivotal step toward achieving social sustainability, as it seeks to ensure the recognition, dignity, and welfare of a workforce that has long been marginalized. Empirical and socio-legal research is essential to document domestic workers lived experiences, assess the effectiveness of emerging legal frameworks, and identify remaining gaps in protection. Without sustained scholarly attention and evidence-based analysis, domestic workers will remain at risk of exploitation and discrimination, undermining the creation of a socially sustainable society [4], [5].

One key community social organization advocating for the ratification of the Domestic Worker Protection Bill is Jala PRT. Jala PRT or the National Network for Domestic Worker Advocacy, was established on July 11, 2004; comprising 26 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals pioneering advocacy for the rights of domestic workers as a vulnerable group facing labor and violence issues. Originating from the Yogyakarta Women's Discussion Forum addressing labor, women's rights, and human rights concerns, this organization has had the primary mandate to push for the enactment of the Domestic Worker Protection Law since its submission to the Indonesian House of Representatives in 2004 [6].

Through their Instagram account @jalaprt, Jala PRT promotes the Domestic Worker Protection Law ratification campaign with advocacy content, documentation of violence cases, and public calls for recognizing domestic workers as formal employees. This campaign engages a national network such as SPRT Sapu Lidi Jakarta and

international partnerships via the International Domestic Worker Federation (IDWF), including hunger strikes and press conferences. This digital strategy strengthens social pressure for the Domestic Worker Protection Law to serve as comprehensive legal protection, while supporting social sustainability through enhanced social inclusion, reduced gender discrimination, and ensured long-term welfare for previously marginalized informal workers.

Previous studies indicate that social media serves as an effective platform for advocacy movements to strengthen worker solidarity, raise public awareness, and influence legislative changes [7], [8]. Previous research has also illustrated the vast potential of digital platforms to empower domestic workers to speak out and advocate for their rights. However, research focusing on domestic worker advocacy movements through social media remains very limited. Thus, this study fills a gap in the literature on digital advocacy for PRT in the context of social sustainability and legal protection in Indonesia.

Social sustainability for domestic workers refers to their ability to maintain long-term social welfare, centered on fulfilling key pillars: accessibility (social security and health guarantees), participation (social dialogue with government and partners), justice (fair wages and equal maternity rights), connectivity (formal labor organizations), and inclusive social action (formalization of the informal sector) [9]. Meanwhile, digital advocacy for domestic workers refers to the use of social media for awareness campaigns on domestic worker's rights, fostering solidarity, and exerting pressure on legislators through public opinion mobilization. This study integrates social sustainability concepts with digital advocacy strategies to highlight how media campaigns can strengthen social inclusion, reduce domestic worker's vulnerability, and promote legal recognition in the informal labor sector, which has traditionally been marginalized from formal protections.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research method. Through this approach, the researcher serves as the primary research instrument, enabling data collection, direct interaction, and comprehensive understanding of the processes and meanings emerging from the research subjects or objects [10], [11]. This qualitative approach is considered appropriate because it allows an in-depth exploration of meanings, narratives, and advocacy strategies conveyed through digital content. This aligns with the objectives of this study, which examines how the digital advocacy campaign regarding the ratification of the Domestic Worker Protection Law on the Instagram account @jalaprt, emerges as an effort to advance social sustainability and legal protection for domestic workers in Indonesia.

The object of this study is the Instagram account @jalaprt. The researcher conducted observations on this account by collecting data in the form of videos, photos, text, or narratives related to the ratification of the Domestic Worker Protection Law. From the observation results, 88 pieces of content uploaded by @jalaprt during the period of

May–November 2025 were obtained as units of analysis. The period of May–November 2025 was selected because it corresponds to the peak of online advocacy activities surrounding the ratification process. These contents utilize hashtags indicating support for the ratification of the RUU PPRT, including: #PRTPunyaHak, #SahkanRUUPPRT, #PRTberserikat, #KerjaLayak #KerjaNyata.

Additionally, the researcher conducted a review of previous studies related to the domestic worker profession in Indonesia, as well as societal and governmental perceptions toward women in this profession. The research data were analyzed using thematic coding to categorize emerging themes from field observations, which were then interpreted through relevant theories and concepts. Thematic coding was conducted by identifying recurring keywords, narratives, and visual representations across the collected content. Data validity in this study was ensured through source triangulation, comparing information obtained from multiple sources at different times. This triangulation was used to enhance the credibility and consistency of the findings.

Results and discussion

Results

The Instagram account @jalaprt is owned by the social organization of Jala PRT or the National Network for Domestic Workers Advocacy. This social organization plays an active role in pushing for the ratification of the Domestic Workers Protection Law (RUU PPRT). The account @jalaprt was created in July 2020. Currently it has 1,537 posts and 4,191 followers.

A thematic analysis conducted on 88 units of content related to the ratification of the Domestic Worker Protection Law revealed revealed four prominent themes in the communication campaign supporting the ratification of this law. The identified themes encompass: safe work, decent work, justice for domestic workers, and empowerment.

The first theme is safe work. Safe work entails the formalization of employment through transparent recruitment, mandatory contracts, and mutual identity verification to ensure legal certainty and accountability from the outset. This theme focuses on procedure, contract, and transparency. Indicates that safe work is not just about preventing physical violence, but also about legal certainty for domestic workers, verification and accountability for both employer as well as domestic workers; and proper recruitment processes which include transparency. The concept of safe work is a fundamental prerequisite for social sustainability; as it focuses on protection, recognition, and risk prevention in the workplace. [Figure 1](#) is the example of Instagram content in the safe work theme category:



Figure 1. @jalaprt Instagram content for safe work

The safe work theme featured in 8 posts across May, June, and July 2025. Content in this theme underscores that domestic workers are entitled to genuine workplace security. For this reason, transparency in recruitment emerges as essential for job-seeking domestic workers. They deserve full insight into their employer's identity and the specific duties assigned to them. Particularly given how often these workers fall victim to violence and crimes at the hands of their employers. Although the content in this category isn't abundant, it delivers core knowledge on safe working basics for domestic workers, making it truly valuable.

The second theme that emerged from the data is decent work. The concept of decent work is central to social sustainability, particularly aligning with SDG 8, decent work and economic growth. It addresses the well-being, equality, and human capital development of domestic workers. Decent work establishes the fundamental rights of domestic workers, requiring formal contracts, standardized wages, legal recognition, humane treatment from employers, and the right to professional development.

From this viewpoint, JALA PRT champions the decent work agenda by viewing domestic workers as true professionals, because of their weighty responsibilities and crucial roles in employers' families. As such, they deserve standing equal to other domestic professions, with rights on par with professionals given the scale of their duties. Few Instagram content which included in this theme as follows Figure 2.



Figure 2. @jalaprt Instagram content for decent work

The decent work theme surfaced in 9 posts across May, June, and November 2025. Such content highlights that domestic workers go beyond simple household assistance. They embody professionals with substantial roles and duties in employers' lives. Domestic workers keep employers' households running smoothly, deserving the same respect as any professional despite their domestic role. Content in this theme highlights the tough realities that they faced, for example rights overlooked by employers, unacknowledged contributions to family life, and unfair treatment they too often endure. These posts remind us that decent work principles can break down the persistent stigma surrounding the profession.

The third theme emerging from the research data is justice for domestic workers. Justice for domestic workers centers on demanding government accountability for the ratification of the Domestic Worker Protection Law. It emphasizes that domestic workers are a vulnerable group who deserve the same protections as other workers, highlighting urgency of the ratification. The concept of justice is a determinant of social sustainability, as it directly addresses issues of equity and human rights. Justice ensures that domestic workers be protected like other workers. That is the core of social equity. Content in this theme underscores urgent calls on the Indonesian government, particularly the President; to honor his pledge and advance the Domestic Worker Protection Law through legislative ratification.

Figure 3 shows the @jalaprt Instagram contents included in the justice for domestic workers theme:



Figure 3. @jalaprt Instagram content for justice for domestic workers

Research findings show that content in this theme holds a prominent position in the campaign to ratify the Domestic Worker Protection Law. 25 posts surfaced in May, June, August, and November 2025. This impressive tally makes clear that justice for domestic workers theme is the driving force behind the push for approval; as these posts share key knowledge on why the law matters so much for helping domestic workers gain truly safe and decent working conditions. Additionally, content in this theme shares insights into what the Domestic Worker Protection Law covers. It raises questions about the lengthy ratification process and calls on authorities to live up to their promises in passing the legislation. The “justice for domestic workers” theme shows that @jalaprt’s social media advocacy is rooted in the fairness these workers truly deserve given their heavy roles and duties, which aren’t backed by their basic rights as workers. This core gap highlights why ratifying the Domestic Worker Protection Law is so vital.

The fourth theme is empowerment of domestic workers. The concept of empowerment is the kinetic force behind social sustainability, it directly addresses the process of building agency, capacity, and collective strength within a marginalized community. It ensures that the transition to a sustainable social structure is driven by and for the people affected. Empowerment focuses on mobilizing domestic workers and the wider public for collective action and self-improvement.

This includes actively encouraging unionization for self-protection, socializing the critical importance of the draft Law, urging skills enhancement through learning forums, inviting participation in advocacy efforts for the Law’s ratification, and utilizing testimonials to amplify the urgency from various stakeholders. Figure 4 shows some @jalaprt Instagram contents which categorized in this theme:



Figure 4. @jalaprt Instagram content for empowerment of domestic workers

The research findings reveal that throughout June, July, August, and September 2025, 46 contents related to empowerment of domestic workers were posted on the Instagram account @jalaprt. During August and September 2025, coinciding with Indonesia's Independence Month, all uploaded contents focused on the theme of empowerment of domestic workers. These posts align with Jala PRT's empowerment concept, emphasizing domestic workers' freedom to unionize, assemble, and express opinions in accordance with the 1945 Indonesian Constitution mandate.

Through observation, content themed around empowerment includes socialization efforts, calls to action, participation invitations, and motivation for domestic workers to unite their strength by joining domestic worker unions. By joining, they gain safe spaces to voice their concerns—a rarity for domestic workers. Unionization also serves as their advocacy tool to rally support at the macro level and amplify the importance of ratifying the Domestic Worker Protection Law to the public. This is evident in several contents featuring video testimonials from activists and union members who express their concerns over the government's neglect of domestic workers' rights.

Additionally, content within this theme also includes motivation and encouragement for domestic workers to continuously learn and expand their knowledge about the macro conditions of domestic workers in Indonesia. With this knowledge, they are expected to advocate for their peers, including employers. The empowerment theme also encompasses invitations for domestic workers to participate in various training programs to enhance work competencies and other skills, such as public speaking and foreign languages. This aims to enable domestic workers to position themselves on equal footing with other workers in terms of professional competencies and professionalism. Mastery of these diverse skills is anticipated to break negative societal stigmas regarding domestic workers as uneducated individuals.

Discussion

Jala PRT's digital advocacy campaign strategy regarding the ratification of the Domestic Worker Protection Law on the Instagram account @jalaprt can be categorized into four main themes: safe work, decent work, justice for domestic workers, and empowerment of domestic workers. These four themes aim to foster foundational thinking about the domestic worker profession and the importance of legal protection for this profession as a prerequisite for achieving social sustainability.

The themes of safe work and decent work aim to establish the primary foundation for reducing domestic workers' vulnerability. Campaign content under these themes includes transparency in recruitment processes, social security guarantees for domestic workers, and fair working conditions. Knowledge and awareness of safe work and decent work principles enable domestic workers to mitigate risks as a marginalized group. This aligns with previous studies explaining that vulnerability reduction begins with enhanced self-awareness, allowing workers to proactively protect and safeguard their rights. Understanding core principles of safe and decent working conditions facilitates avoidance of high-risk situations such as exploitation or violence [9], [12], [13].

Next, Jala PRT also raises the theme of Justice for Domestic Workers in their digital advocacy strategy. Content within this theme strengthens legal recognition for the domestic worker profession by emphasizing basic rights as workers equal to other domestic workers. This theme builds the foundation of social justice as a pillar of sustainability for the domestic worker profession. The concept of justice for domestic workers has also been addressed in various previous studies [4], [14], [15]. However, in this context, Jala PRT emphasizes the concept of justice through fulfillment of the government's promise delayed for over 20 years to ratify the Domestic Worker Protection Law. This emphasis highlights the intentional neglect of domestic workers' basic rights by the state. This approach differs from previous studies, which focused more on structural protection, by stressing political demands on the government.

The theme of empowerment of domestic workers concludes Jala PRT's digital advocacy campaign by promoting social inclusion through education, training, and stigma reduction, ensuring domestic workers are integrated as long-term contributors to social cohesion. These campaign themes form a coherent narrative suited for digital platforms while strengthening sustainable social impact by progressing from risk mitigation to inclusive empowerment.

However, the data indicates that significant digital engagement has not yet fully materialized, as evidenced by low interaction metrics, with comments being minimal and likes ranging only between 40 and 200. This suggests that the conversion of awareness and collective action regarding ratification of Domestic Worker Protection Law remains limited.

Conclusion

The communication campaign regarding the ratification of the Domestic Worker Protection Law on Instagram is led by Jala PRT through their account @jalaprt. Their digital advocacy strategy consists of posting various content across four main themes, which are safe work, decent work, justice for domestic workers, and empowerment of domestic workers. These themes coherently formed a comprehensive narrative for social sustainability of domestic workers. The visual and text storytelling of the campaign consist of reducing vulnerability through self-awareness and decent working conditions, strengthening legal justice for domestic workers, to empowerment for domestic workers. Thereby reinforcing long-term social cohesion as the core of social sustainability. This approach builds on previous studies by highlighting government accountability and the narrative of rights being ignored on purpose, making structural analyses more complete and helping create stronger social bonds.

The study's main insight is that social media can broaden the conversation about sustainability beyond environmental matters, emphasizing labor rights, gender equity, and justice. This research demonstrates the potential of digital communication to amplify marginalized voices and drive meaningful social change. Nevertheless, low digital engagement indicates that the conversion of awareness and collective action for the ratification of the Domestic Worker Protection Law remains limited, thus requiring interaction amplification strategies for optimal impact. A more comprehensive digital advocacy strategy can be achieved by integrating interactive content aligned with social sustainability principles that demand active community participation

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