JURNAL ILMIAH GURU MADRASAH (JIGM)
Volume 4, Nomor 1, Januari-Juni 2025
https://jigm.lakaspia.org

A Netnographic Analysis of ASMR Consumption on YouTube Among Individuals with Sleep and Anxiety Disorders

[*]Yulia Triani[1], Ade Ikhsan Kamil[2], Awaludin Arifin[3], Ibrahim Chalid[4], Dwi Fitri[5], Faizul Aulia[6]
[1-6]Universitas Malikussaleh, Lhokseumawe-Aceh, Indonesia
[*]Email: ade.ikhsan.kamil@unimal.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) content has become increasingly prevalent on digital platforms, particularly YouTube, and is often utilized by individuals seeking relief from sleep and anxiety disorders. This study employs a qualitative netnographic approach to examine the patterns, motivations, and perceived effects of ASMR consumption among individuals coping with insomnia and anxiety. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with ten informants and supported by observation of user interactions within the ASMR community. The findings indicate that ASMR is commonly integrated into daily routines as a personalized strategy for relaxation and anxiety reduction, particularly before sleep. Participants reported that regular engagement with ASMR content helped them fall asleep more easily, diminished intrusive or anxious thoughts, and provided a sense of emotional comfort. However, the effectiveness of ASMR varied, with some informants experiencing significant benefits and others describing only modest or temporary relief. Social acceptance of ASMR use was also mixed, influencing whether participants chose to discuss their practices openly or keep them private. This study highlights the individualized and adaptive use of ASMR as a digital self-care tool for managing sleep and anxiety disorders. While not a substitute for professional intervention, ASMR offers an accessible and flexible resource within the broader spectrum of mental health strategies. Further research is recommended to better understand the long-term efficacy and mechanisms of ASMR, as well as its integration with traditional therapeutic approaches.

KEYWORDS: *ASMR, sleep disorders, anxiety, YouTube, netnography, digital self-care*

***

A. INTRODUCTION

Sleep is a fundamental human necessity, playing a crucial role in maintaining both physical and psychological well-being. Adequate, restorative sleep underpins cognitive functioning, emotional balance, immune response, and general quality of life, while persistent sleep deprivation is linked to heightened risks of depression, anxiety, cardiovascular disease, and diminished productivity (Jairom, 2022). Sleep disorders, particularly insomnia and anxiety-related conditions, remain widespread global health concerns, affecting individuals across age groups, social strata, and cultural backgrounds (Woods & Turner-Cobb, 2023).

From both biological and cultural perspectives, sleep is shaped by social norms, collective routines, and individual habits. In contemporary society, disruptions in sleep are increasingly associated with changes in lifestyle, digital media consumption, and environmental stressors. The expansion of digital platforms has transformed sleep behaviors: late-night screen exposure, irregular schedules, and online social engagement have all contributed to the growing prevalence of insomnia and anxiety in modern populations.

Amid these shifting patterns, individuals are increasingly turning to digital interventions to manage sleep and anxiety-related issues. One phenomenon that has gained remarkable traction is Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR)—a sensory experience triggered by specific audio-visual stimuli such as gentle whispers, tapping, or soft, repetitive sounds (Barratt & Davis, 2015; Kim et al., 2024). ASMR content, readily accessible through platforms like YouTube and TikTok, is widely sought for its ability to evoke deep relaxation and a characteristic tingling sensation, often described as both soothing and therapeutic (Poerio et al., 2018).

Growing bodies of research highlight the psychological and physiological benefits of ASMR. Several studies suggest that ASMR consumption can go beyond mere entertainment or escapism, providing a form of self-administered relaxation that supports sleep quality and alleviates anxiety (Engelbregt et al., 2022). For instance, Eid et al. (2022) found that regular engagement with ASMR content was associated with significant reductions in anxiety and improved emotional calm. Park and Lim (2022) likewise reported measurable positive effects of ASMR on anxiety, stress, and sleep quality among university students. More recent research by Kim et al. (2024) further corroborates the impact of sound and visual elements in ASMR on both emotional and physiological states.

Despite the increasing visibility of ASMR as a digital self-care practice, scholarly examination of its mechanisms, efficacy, and limitations—especially in non-Western contexts such as Indonesia—remains in its infancy. The potential of ASMR as a non-pharmacological, accessible tool for improving sleep and managing anxiety is promising, yet the field still lacks comprehensive, context-specific analysis and theoretical integration (Suni, 2023). In this study, we investigate the patterns and perceived effects of ASMR consumption among individuals who self-identify as survivors of sleep and

anxiety disorders. Drawing on a netnographic approach, we examine how ASMR is used in everyday routines, the motivations underlying its use, and its role in supporting mental health and quality of life. This research is premised on the idea that ASMR content, as part of digital therapeutic practices, offers a viable coping strategy for those grappling with insomnia and anxiety.

B. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative netnographic approach to explore how individuals with sleep and anxiety disorders use ASMR content on YouTube as part of their routines. Netnography, as described by Kozinets et al. (2014), is suited for examining behaviors and interactions in online communities, and was chosen here due to the digital and community-driven nature of ASMR consumption.Participants were identified through purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who reported frequent engagement with ASMR videos for sleep or anxiety relief. The sample included ten informants, representing a range of ages and backgrounds, such as students, teachers, and a content creator. Recruitment was informal, relying on personal networks and online outreach. All participants self-identified as having experienced insomnia or anxiety and regularly used ASMR as a means of relaxation.

Data collection centered on semi-structured interviews, which invited participants to share their experiences, motivations, and viewing habits. The interviews were conducted online and varied in length, depending on participants' availability and willingness to share. To supplement these narratives, observations were also made of user comments and community discussions within selected ASMR videos on YouTube, with attention to recurring themes and social perceptions around ASMR use. Additionally, informal conversations were held with an Indonesian ASMR content creator to provide context on production and audience engagement from the creator's perspective.

Analysis was carried out through manual coding of interview transcripts and observational notes, identifying patterns and recurring topics such as triggers for ASMR use, types of content preferred, and perceived benefits or limitations. The process was iterative but remained descriptive, given the modest sample size and the exploratory aim of the research. Findings were compared across sources to check for consistency, but the study did not aim for theoretical saturation or broad generalization. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from all informants and anonymizing identifying

details in reporting. Online data were limited to publicly accessible content, and the privacy of all individuals was respected throughout the research.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. ASMR for Sleep Content on the YouTube Platform

The popularity of ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) content on YouTube has grown rapidly over the past decade, particularly among individuals seeking non-pharmacological approaches to relaxation and sleep improvement. According to Shou Niu (2022), the number of ASMR videos on YouTube increased from approximately 5.2 million in 2016 to more than 13 million by 2019. The term "ASMR" continues to rank among the most frequently searched keywords, reflecting substantial user interest in this type of content.

ASMR videos designed specifically for sleep represent one of the most prominent genres within this digital phenomenon. Content creators, often referred to as "ASMRtists," produce videos utilizing a wide variety of gentle auditory and visual triggers—such as whispered speech, tapping, scratching, nature sounds, and slow, repetitive hand movements—intended to elicit a sensation of relaxation and help viewers fall asleep (Emily, 2018; Lueck, 2020). The following table summarizes several common types of ASMR content for sleep, based on both participant accounts and previous research:

Table 1. Popular Types of ASMR for Sleep Content on YouTube

ASMR Type	Description	Source
ASMR Whispering	Softly spoken or whispered speech, either conversational or in a roleplay format, often intended to promote calm and induce drowsiness.	Shall, 2023
ASMR Tapping	Gentle tapping on objects such as glass, wood, or plastic, producing rhythmic, soothing sounds.	Lueck, 2020
ASMR Scratching	The sound of soft scratching on various surfaces, like fabric or paper, which can evoke tingling sensations and relaxation.	Shall, 2023
ASMR Roleplay	Interactive scenarios where the creator pretends to provide personal care, such as a doctor's visit or relaxation session, fostering a sense of safety.	Shall, 2023

ASMR Nature Sounds	Recordings of rain, ocean waves, wind, or forest ambience, often used for their calming effect throughout the night.	Lueck, 2020
ASMR Binaural	Sounds recorded with two microphones to create a three-dimensional, immersive audio experience, simulating real-life proximity.	Lueck, 2020
ASMR Personal Attention	Simulated gestures and sounds that mimic personal care (e.g., facials, hairstyling), creating a sense of direct attention and comfort.	Lueck, 2020
Ambient Sound ASMR	Continuous background noises such as white noise or fan sounds, scientifically known to help mask disruptive noises and support better sleep.	Shall, 2023
ASMR Guided Meditation	Whispered or softly spoken meditation instructions combined with calming background sounds, designed to promote relaxation and sleep readiness.	Lueck, 2020

Source: Data analysis, 2025

Each type of ASMR content offers a unique approach to supporting relaxation. Many viewers experiment with different triggers to discover which styles work best for them. For some, whispered or tapping videos consistently help induce sleepiness, while others prefer nature sounds or long-form ambient tracks that can play throughout the night. The flexibility and diversity of ASMR content on YouTube allow users to customize their routines according to personal needs and preferences. It is worth noting that the effectiveness of these triggers varies among individuals. While many participants in this study reported finding specific types of ASMR videos beneficial for sleep, others described more mixed or modest effects. These findings are consistent with prior research suggesting that ASMR's utility as a relaxation tool is highly individualized and influenced by factors such as personality, mood, and prior experiences (Barratt & Davis, 2015; Kim et al., 2024). The accessibility of ASMR on YouTube is also a key factor in its widespread adoption. The platform's recommendation algorithms and vast content library make it easy for users to discover new creators and triggers, which may reinforce habitual viewing and engagement. However, it is important to recognize that ASMR should not be regarded as a replacement for clinical treatment in cases of chronic insomnia or severe anxiety, but rather as a supplemental, self-directed tool.

2. ASMR Content Consumption Behaviors by Survivors of Sleep and Anxiety Disorders

a. The Experiences of Survivors of Sleep Disorders and Anxiety

The experiences of individuals dealing with sleep disorders and anxiety often trace back to critical transitional periods in their lives, particularly late adolescence and early adulthood. Table 2 summarizes the backgrounds of the study's informants, who ranged in age from their late teens to early thirties, and captures the complex interplay of factors underlying their insomnia and anxiety.

Table 2. Backgrounds of Informants with Sleep and Anxiety Disorders

Initials	Age	Occupation	Age at Onset (Years)	Factors Contributing to Insomnia	Factors Contributing to Anxiety
AA	33	Content creator	24	Overthinking, caffeine	Work stress
TS	23	Fresh graduate	15	Use of gadgets before bed, overthinking	Work stress, personal issues, traumatic events
SY	23	Student	18	Use of gadgets before bed, overthinking	Worries about the future
MPN	19	Student	17	Caffeine, gadgets before bed, overthinking	Personal issues, traumatic events
RT	27	Teacher	25	Overthinking, caffeine	Personal issues
ARS	19	Student	18	Overthinking	Personal issues, traumatic events
LR	30	Teacher	25	Caffeine, gadgets before bed, overthinking	Personal issues, work stress
DP	32	Self-employed	28	Gadgets before bed, overthinking	Traumatic events
FHS	20	Student	18	Gadgets before bed, overthinking	Worries about the future
AP	21	Student	20	Gadgets before bed, caffeine, overthinking	Personal issues

Source: Data analysis, 2025

Most informants reported the onset of insomnia or anxiety between the ages of 15 and 25—a developmental window often associated with academic pressures, professional uncertainty, and the challenges of forming new social relationships. This period was

typically characterized by heightened stress, frequent changes in routine, and the first prolonged exposures to adult responsibilities. These findings highlight the vulnerability of individuals at this life stage to both sleep and anxiety disorders.

A detailed analysis of insomnia triggers reveals three recurring themes: the use of digital devices late at night, excessive caffeine consumption, and pervasive overthinking. These are behaviors and habits that have become more common with the demands and distractions of modern life. For anxiety, major contributing factors include chronic work stress, ongoing personal issues, and unresolved traumatic events. Notably, several informants experienced both insomnia and anxiety, and often these conditions appeared to reinforce each other—creating a self-perpetuating cycle of sleep deprivation and psychological distress.

b. ASMR Content Consumption Behaviors and Habits on YouTube

Habits surrounding the use of ASMR content among survivors of sleep and anxiety disorders are complex, shaped by individual preferences, the times of day they engage with content, and their immediate emotional needs. The frequency with which ASMR is used to support sleep or reduce anxiety underscores its significance in the lives of these informants.

Table 3. Frequency of ASMR Content Consumption for Sleep

Initials	Frequency of Consumption for Sleep
AA	2–3 times per week
TS	Nearly every day
SY	Nearly every day; needs help to fall asleep
MPN	More than 10 videos a day
RT	Every day
ARS	Every night before bed
LR	Five days a week
DP	One or two times a day, sometimes more
FHS	Three times a week
AP	Several times a week

Source: Data analysis, 2025

A striking feature in the data is the prevalence of high-frequency ASMR use, with the majority watching content on a daily or near-daily basis. One informant, for instance, reported watching over ten videos each day—a level of use that goes beyond occasional entertainment. For these individuals, ASMR content has become a mainstay in their nighttime routines, providing a sense of comfort and predictability at the end of often

stressful days. This routine use is motivated not only by the pursuit of sleep, but by a desire to regulate mood, manage stress, and create a consistent sense of calm. The diversity in frequency also suggests varying levels of dependence or habituation: some users rely on ASMR only during periods of acute stress, while others incorporate it into their everyday self-care, regardless of mood or circumstance.

c. Content Preferences and Selection Patterns

Participants' methods of selecting ASMR content reflect both intentionality and experimentation. Many reported a specific time and context for use—most commonly, the period before bed, but also during moments of stress, sadness, or mental fatigue. Selection patterns ranged from following favorite creators or channels to exploring YouTube recommendations and seeking out novel triggers that match their current state of mind.

Table 4. ASMR Content Consumption Patterns for Sleep

Initials	Typical Moments of Use	Content Selection Pattern
AA	Before bed	Random selection
TS	Before bed, when stressed	Prefers ASMR with wigs as trigger
SY	Studying, sadness, tiredness, before bed, overthinking	Subscribes to favorite channels; relies on recommendations
MPN	Before bed	Subscribes to several favorite ASMRtists
RT	Before bed	Follows channels like Deria ASMR; prefers object-based sounds
ARS	Stressful situations, difficulty sleeping	Follows comfortable and relevant creators
LR	Before bed	Rarely follows specific creators; prefers exploring
DP	Before bed	Prefers makeup/skincare; explores diverse creators
FHS	Before bed, when under stress	Watches random videos
AP	Before bed	No subscriptions; prefers natural/ambient atmospheres

Source: Data analysis, 2025

This diversity illustrates the deeply personal nature of ASMR consumption. For some, content selection is tied to loyalty—regularly returning to specific creators or triggers that reliably promote relaxation. For others, there is a continual search for novelty, driven by changing emotional states or the desire to avoid habituation. The flexibility in content choice allows users to adapt ASMR use to their unique needs, making it a highly individualized coping strategy.

d. Motivations and Preferences in Choosing ASMR Content

Participants identified a range of motivations for choosing particular ASMR content, the most common being the desire to fall asleep quickly and to achieve a deep sense of relaxation. Others cited using ASMR to calm their thoughts, alleviate stress or sadness, or create a peaceful mental environment before sleep.

Table 5. Motivations for Watching ASMR Content for Sleep

Initials	Motivation for Watching ASMR for Sleep
AA	To fall asleep faster
TS	Relaxation, reduced anxiety
SY	Relaxation during overthinking, sadness, or insomnia
MPN	Faster sleep onset, greater relaxation
RT	Sleep induction
ARS	Anxiety reduction
LR	Relaxation, easier sleep
DP	Relaxation, improved sleep, reduced anxiety
FHS	Relaxation for mind and body, avoid negative thoughts
AP	Stress relief, relaxation

Source: Data analysis, 2025

The use of ASMR as a tool for self-regulation is clear. While for most participants, sleep remains the primary motivation, others also appreciate ASMR's utility in mitigating anxiety, regulating mood, and diverting the mind from negative ruminations. This multi-functionality reflects the broader therapeutic potential of ASMR in users' daily lives.

e. Social Experiences and Perceptions of ASMR Use

Informants reported a wide range of experiences regarding how their ASMR use was perceived by family, friends, and peers. Some received support and understanding, while others encountered skepticism or simply kept their habits private due to concern over negative judgment. The following table summarizes these varied social perceptions:

Table 6. Public Perceptions of ASMR Content for Sleep

Initials	Public Perception of ASMR for Sleep
AA	Understanding
TS	Not known by others
SY	Mostly skeptical or judgmental, especially among those without sleep issues
MPN	Understanding; "good to listen to"
RT	Not known by others
ARS	Support from close contacts
LR	Supportive
DP	Skeptical
FHS	Highly supportive; even recommended by others

AP	Skeptical

Source: Data analysis, 2025

This variation in social response highlights the ongoing challenge of normalizing ASMR as a legitimate relaxation or self-care practice. In environments where ASMR is misunderstood or stigmatized, users may be less likely to disclose their viewing habits or may feel discouraged from making ASMR a regular part of their coping toolkit. Conversely, supportive environments can reinforce the perceived legitimacy and benefit of ASMR.

f. The Effects of Watching ASMR Content in Overcoming Insomnia and Anxiety

Before discovering ASMR, the majority of informants experienced severe and persistent sleep disturbances. Data show that 90% struggled to fall asleep at night, while many suffered from excessive daytime drowsiness or frequent nighttime awakenings. These challenges significantly disrupted daily functioning and contributed to a cycle of fatigue and anxiety.

After incorporating ASMR into their routines, nearly all participants reported notable improvements in both sleep quality and anxiety management. Many described a marked decrease in the time required to fall asleep and an increased sense of calm and comfort during the night. Informants consistently referenced the unique value of ASMR sounds and visuals—such as soft whispering, repetitive tapping, or nature ambience—in helping to “quiet the mind” and foster a sense of emotional security. Some individuals found that ASMR helped reduce the frequency and intensity of anxious thoughts, not only before sleep but also during moments of stress or sadness throughout the day. For these users, ASMR became an essential coping mechanism—accessible, non-pharmacological, and adaptable to changing needs.

Nevertheless, several participants acknowledged that ASMR was not a panacea. While the effects were generally positive, their magnitude sometimes diminished with repeated exposure or during periods of acute psychological distress. Most saw ASMR as a supplement rather than a replacement for professional therapy or medical intervention, appreciating its role as part of a broader toolkit for mental and emotional self-care. Thus, these detailed findings illustrate how ASMR content consumption is intricately tied to the lived experiences of individuals with sleep and anxiety disorders. Habits are deeply personal, shaped by daily challenges, emotional states, and social contexts. The perceived

effects of ASMR—improved sleep, reduced anxiety, and increased relaxation—underscore its promise as a flexible, accessible intervention, even as its broader acceptance and sustained impact continue to evolve.

D. CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore how individuals living with sleep and anxiety disorders utilize ASMR content on YouTube as a coping mechanism and source of relief. Through qualitative netnographic inquiry, the findings reveal that ASMR has become deeply integrated into the daily routines of many users, functioning as a personalized tool for promoting relaxation, reducing pre-sleep anxiety, and facilitating sleep onset. Participants consistently reported that ASMR videos helped them manage persistent insomnia and mitigate anxious thoughts—particularly in the period leading up to sleep. These benefits were most pronounced among those whose sleep difficulties were linked to overthinking, digital device use at night, and heightened life stressors. For many, ASMR content offered an accessible, flexible alternative to medication or formal therapy, and its appeal lay largely in the ability to tailor both triggers and routines to individual needs and changing emotional states.

The effects of ASMR, however, were not uniform. While several users described substantial improvements in their sleep quality and emotional regulation, others found the benefits to be intermittent or to diminish over time with repeated exposure. Moreover, social perceptions around ASMR use remained mixed, with some participants experiencing support or curiosity from their networks, and others encountering skepticism or choosing to keep their habits private. These results suggest that ASMR's role in the self-management of sleep and anxiety disorders is best understood as dynamic, context-dependent, and highly individualized. While not a substitute for professional treatment, ASMR represents a meaningful element in the spectrum of digital self-care practices, valued for its immediacy, adaptability, and the sense of control it affords users over their psychological and physiological states.

***

REFERENCES

Jairom, P. (2022). The Effects of Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) Videos and ASMR Group on State Anxiety. JURNAL PSIKOLOGI MALAYSIA, 35(3).

Woods, N., & Turner-Cobb, J. M. (2023). 'It's like Taking a Sleeping Pill': Student Experience of Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) to Promote Health and Mental Wellbeing. International journal of environmental research and public health, 20(3), 2337.

Barratt, E. L., & Davis, N. J. (2015). Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR): A flow-like mental state. PeerJ, 3, e851. https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.851

Poerio, G. L., Blakey, E., Hostler, T. J., & Veltri, T. (2018). More than a feeling: Autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) is characterized by reliable changes in affect and physiology. PloS one, 13(6), e0196645.

Engelbregt, H. J., Brinkman, K., Van Geest, C. C. E., Irrmischer, M., & Deijen, J. B. (2022). The effects of autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR) on mood, attention, heart rate, skin conductance and EEG in healthy young adults. Experimental Brain Research, 240(6), 1727-1742.

Eid, C. M., Hamilton, C., & Greer, J. M. (2022). Untangling the tingle: Investigating the association between the Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR), neuroticism, and trait & state anxiety. PloS one, 17(2), e0262668.https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0262668

Park, S. A., & Lim, H. S. (2022). The effect of ASMR on anxiety, stress, sleep quality in university students. The Journal of the Convergence on culture technology, 8(2), 321-327.

Kim, Y., Cho, A., Lee, H., & Whang, M. (2024). Impact of Sound and Image Features in ASMR on Emotional and Physiological Responses. Applied Sciences, 14(22), 10223.

Suni, E. (2023, juli 18). How Lack of Sleep Impacts Cognitive Performance and Focus. Dipetik februari 26, 2024, dari sleep foundation: https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-deprivation/lack-of-sleep-and-cognitive-impairment

Kozinets, R. V., Dolbec, P. Y., & Earley, A. (2014). Netnographic analysis: Understanding culture through social media data. Sage handbook of qualitative data analysis, 262-275.

Shou Niu, H. S. (2022). Close-up and Whispering: An Understanding of Multimodal and Parasocial Interactions in YouTube ASMR videos. Publication rights licensed to ACM , 1.

Emily, S. (2018). The Rise of ASMR on YouTube: An Exploratory Study of Its Popularity and Potential Benefits. medical journal , 1.

Shall, J. (2023, November 23). Impact of ASMR on Mental Health. Dipetik September 20, 2024, dari psychologs : India's first mental health magazine: https://www.psychologs.com/impact-of-asmr-on-mental-health/

Lueck, M. (2020, Desember 16). The Mental Health Benefits of ASMR. Dipetik September 20, 2024, dari HealthyPace: https://www.healthyplace.com/blogs/toughtimes/2020/12/the-mental-health-benefits-of-asmr