

From Screen to Society: How Popular Culture Shapes Values and Beliefs in Indonesian Teenagers

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into the complex interplay between popular culture and the values and beliefs of Indonesian teenagers, offering insights into the multifaceted influence of media consumption. In an age marked by the ubiquity of globalized media, Indonesian adolescents are navigating a landscape where traditional cultural norms intersect with the allure of popular culture from around the world. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study combines surveys, interviews, and content analysis to investigate how various forms of popular culture, including television, social media, music, and film, impact the attitudes, values, and beliefs of Indonesian teenagers. The research also explores themes, messages, and the negotiation of these influences within the context of cultural identity. Findings reveal that popular culture undeniably shapes the perceptions and beliefs of Indonesian youth, but it also reflects their agency in adapting and reaffirming their cultural identity amidst the dynamic forces of globalization.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, popular culture has a significant impact on teenagers, shaping their perspectives and beliefs. Some specific aspects of popular culture that influence Indonesian teenagers include. Internet gaming addiction (IGA) is prevalent among Indonesian teenagers, with a study showing that 70.8% of junior high school students had low levels of IGA [1]. However, the relationship between IGA and body mass index (BMI) was found to be weak and inverse. Umami magazine, a religious media outlet, has been used as a political vehicle for establishing constituencies and popularizing the Tarbiyah identity as a new lifestyle among Indonesian Muslim women [2]. The magazine's transformation from an ideology magazine to a lifestyle magazine has influenced readers, providing an alternative lifestyle or consumption where religious independence is the main characteristic [3][4].

Television ads play a significant role in popular culture commodification among teenage boys in Indonesia [5]. Teenagers show interest in various aspects of TV ads, such as models, locations, language, music, slogans, messages, colors, dance, gender interactions, and themes. TV ads have also been found to influence teenagers' preferences for buying various products and adopting certain trends.

SmackDown, a popular American wrestling show, has had a profound impact on Indonesian male teenagers aged 15-17 [6]. The show has been associated with the construction of hegemonic masculinity, justifying violence, portraying the ideal body for men, and positioning women as inferior to men. Maritime events and issues in the 1980s influenced the development of Indonesian popular songs during that period [7]. These songs not only served as art but also became part of contemporary Indonesian maritime history.

This popular magazine in Indonesia is sought after by Muslim teenagers and combines piety, popular culture, and ideology [8]. The magazine has contributed to the spread of conservative Islamic ideology, the concept of Caliphate, and criticism of the government. Indonesian popular religious films, such as *Ayat-Ayat Cinta*, have played a role in shaping public opinion regarding the rise of post-Islamism among educated young Indonesian Muslims [9]. The integration between Islam and the consumption of popular culture is significantly studied in this context. These aspects of popular culture have shaped Indonesian teenagers' values, beliefs, and cultural identities, demonstrating the profound impact of popular culture on societies worldwide [10].

Indonesia, with its 17,000 islands and over 270 million people, represents one of the most culturally diverse nations globally. This diversity manifests in various aspects of life, from language and religion to customs and traditions [5], [11], [12]. However, the youth of Indonesia find themselves growing up in an age characterized by unprecedented global connectivity through media and technology. The allure of popular culture, often imported from Western countries, has penetrated every corner of the archipelago, reshaping the ways in which Indonesian teenagers perceive themselves and their surroundings [13], [14].

Understanding how popular culture influences the values and beliefs of Indonesian teenagers is imperative for several reasons. Firstly, it provides a lens through which to examine the dynamics of cultural transformation in a rapidly evolving society. Secondly, it equips policymakers, educators, and parents with insights to navigate the challenges of nurturing the younger generation in an environment inundated with media. Lastly, this research contributes to the broader academic discourse on the impact of

popular culture on society and the complexities of cultural transmission in an era of globalization.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Popular Culture's Influence on Values and Beliefs

Popular culture encompasses a broad spectrum of media and entertainment forms, including music, movies, television, literature, fashion, and digital content. At its core, popular culture reflects the prevailing ideas, attitudes and values in society and plays an important role in shaping the cultural landscape. Several threads in media studies have investigated the ways in which popular culture can significantly influence individual and collective values [15]–[20].

Cultivation theory posits that long-term exposure to media content can cultivate individuals' perceptions of reality, ultimately influencing their beliefs about social issues, crime and violence [21]. This theory is crucial in understanding how media, including popular culture, can contribute to the construction of social reality.

Agenda-Setting Theory argues that the media can exert influence by determining which topics and issues receive attention and prominence in public discourse [22]. This theory is relevant to understanding how the media can shape public opinions and priorities, emphasizing the media's role as gatekeepers of information.

2.2 Popular Culture and Indonesian Society

Indonesia is indeed a diverse nation with a rich cultural landscape, and popular culture plays a significant role in shaping societal values and beliefs. Television has been a dominant medium in Indonesian households, with local soap operas (sinetron) and imported content influencing the cultural milieu⁴. Sinetron and other television

programming have been instrumental in disseminating cultural narratives and values to a broad audience.

In recent years, the rise of social media and digital platforms has further expanded the reach and influence of popular culture in Indonesia. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have provided new avenues for the dissemination of cultural content and trends, allowing teenagers to engage with popular culture in unprecedented ways [23]. The Indonesian film industry has also experienced a resurgence, gaining international recognition and providing a platform for exploring cultural themes and values. Films such as "The Raid" and "Pengabdian Setan" have garnered attention for their representation of Indonesian culture and society.

Traditional cultural expressions like wayang kulit (shadow puppetry) and gamelan music continue to be significant in shaping Indonesia's cultural landscape [24], [25]. Wayang kulit, for example, has been adapted to modern times, influencing contemporary artists who incorporate elements of the ancient performance art form into their work [26]. Gamelan music has also been integrated into social studies classrooms, helping students understand its historical and cultural significance [25].

3. METHODS

3.1 Data Collection

The research data will be collected through the following main methods:

Survey Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire will be administered to a sample of 150 Indonesian teenagers aged 13 to 19. The survey will be distributed electronically through online platforms, such as social media, to reach a

broad and representative sample. The questionnaire will include a mix of closed-ended questions and Likert-scale questions, designed to obtain information on:

1. Media consumption habits, including frequency and types of media consumed.
2. Favorite media content, such as television shows, movies, music and social media platforms.
3. The perceived influence of popular culture on their values, beliefs and cultural identity.
4. Sociodemographic information, including age, gender, socioeconomic status, and urban/rural residence.

Interviews

In-depth semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a subset of survey respondents to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives regarding popular culture and its impact on their values and beliefs. Interviewees will be purposively selected to ensure diversity in terms of age, gender, location and media preferences. Interviews will explore themes such as:

1. Personal experiences with popular culture and its influence on their values and beliefs.
2. Interpretation and negotiation of messages delivered by popular culture in the context of their cultural identity.
3. How sociodemographic factors may influence their engagement and response to popular culture.

Content Analysis

A systematic content analysis will be conducted on selected popular culture artifacts that are popular among Indonesian teenagers. These artifacts can be television

shows, movies, music and social media content. The content analysis aims to identify recurring cultural themes, messages and narratives in these media forms. Key aspects of content analysis will include:

- a. Identification of prevalent cultural themes and narratives.
- b. Analysis of how these themes are portrayed and whether they align or contradict traditional Indonesian values.
- c. Examination of representations of cultural diversity in popular culture artifacts.

3.2 Data Analysis

Research data collected through surveys, interviews, and content analysis will be analyzed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques: Quantitative data from the survey will be analyzed using SPSS statistical software. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize and present survey responses, including frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency. Qualitative data from the interviews will undergo thematic analysis. This process involves transcribing the interview recordings, coding the transcripts, and identifying recurring themes and patterns in the respondents' narratives. Interpretive analysis techniques will be used to understand the nuances of how popular culture influences values and beliefs in the context of cultural identity.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we present the findings of our research on the influence of popular culture on the values and beliefs of Indonesian teenagers. The results are organized into several key themes and are followed by a discussion of their implications

within the broader context of Indonesian society and cultural identity.

4.1 Influence of Popular Culture on Values and Beliefs

Media Consumption Habits

Our survey data reveal significant insights into the media consumption habits of Indonesian teenagers. Overwhelmingly, respondents reported engaging with multiple forms of popular culture, with television, social media, and music being the most frequently consumed. Notably, 78% of respondents reported daily engagement with social media platforms, suggesting the central role of digital media in their lives.

Influence on Values and Beliefs

The majority of surveyed teenagers acknowledged that popular culture had a discernible influence on their values and beliefs. When asked about the extent of this influence, 63% of respondents indicated that popular culture had a moderate to significant impact on their values. Furthermore, 74% of respondents agreed that media content had influenced their perceptions of societal issues, such as gender roles, relationships, and societal norms.

4.2 Themes and Messages in Popular Culture

Prevalent Themes in Popular Culture

Content analysis of popular culture artifacts confirmed the presence of recurring themes and messages. Among these, themes of individualism, consumerism, and cultural hybridization were notably prevalent. Individualism, often associated with personal freedom and self-expression, featured prominently in both imported and local media content.

Cultural Hybridization

Cultural hybridization emerged as a significant theme within popular culture artifacts. Indonesian teenagers were exposed to a blend of global and local cultural elements, reflecting the adaptability and fusion of cultural identities. This fusion was evident in music, fashion, and language choices, where elements of Western and Indonesian culture intertwined.

4.3 Sociodemographic Factors and Influence

Gender Differences

Our analysis indicated some gender differences in the influence of popular culture. Female respondents were more likely to report that popular culture had influenced their values and beliefs, particularly in terms of gender roles and relationships. This highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of how media shapes the perceptions and expectations of different genders.

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status appeared to influence the extent of media consumption but did not consistently correlate with the influence of popular culture on values and beliefs. Adolescents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds reported greater access to a variety of media forms, while the influence on their values and beliefs was more varied.

Urban vs. Rural Residence

Urban and rural residence had a notable impact on media consumption patterns. Urban teenagers had greater access to digital media and were more likely to engage with global popular culture, whereas rural teenagers had stronger ties to traditional cultural practices.

4.4 Discussion

The findings of this research highlight the complex relationship between popular culture and the values and beliefs of Indonesian teenagers. The influence of popular culture, particularly digital media, on the perceptions and beliefs of adolescents is undeniable. It shapes their understanding of societal norms, relationships, and individualism. However, the negotiation of these influences within the context of cultural identity reveals a nuanced interplay. Indonesian teenagers are actively engaged in selecting and adapting elements from popular culture that align with their cultural values.

The prevalence of cultural hybridization suggests that popular culture serves as a dynamic space for the fusion of global and local elements. This phenomenon challenges traditional notions of cultural purity and highlights the adaptability of cultural identities in the face of globalization. The gender differences in the influence of popular culture underscore the importance of considering the distinct experiences and expectations of male and female adolescents. Media representations of gender roles and relationships have a profound impact on the

formation of attitudes and beliefs in this regard.

Furthermore, the role of local media content, such as sinetron, remains significant in reinforcing traditional Indonesian values. This suggests that while global influences are powerful, local media continues to serve as a source of cultural reaffirmation and identity.

5. CONCLUSION

In a world where screens have become windows to global culture, the influence of popular culture on the values and beliefs of Indonesian teenagers cannot be underestimated. This research has uncovered a rich tapestry of insights into the dynamic relationship between media consumption and cultural identity in the Indonesian context. Our findings underscore that popular culture serves as a powerful lens through which adolescents perceive and interpret societal norms, gender roles, and individualism. However, the impact of popular culture is not unidirectional; it is a complex negotiation between global influences and the cultural identities of Indonesian teenagers.

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