



BETWEEN *HALLYU* AND THE QUR'AN: Everyday Life of Female Santri in Yogyakarta

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Abstract: The religious expressions of students at an Islamic boarding school, referred to as “*santri*,” encompassing worship, rituals, and the utilization of religious symbols or texts, unveil a captivating phenomenon showcasing the adeptness of youth in reconciling their Islamic identity with global popular culture. This paper delves into the daily lives of female *santris* at Pondok Pesantren Sunan Pandanaran in Sleman, Yogyakarta. It examines the creative tensions that confront these *santris*, who commit the Qur'an to memory while concurrently being avid enthusiasts of Korean popular culture, including K-Pop and K-Drama. For the *santris* who prioritize memorizing the Qur'an, they are compelled to steer clear of any elements that could impede their concentration. This holds especially true for *santris* who also indulge in Korean popular culture activities—actions that some deem incongruent with Islamic values. This study discerns that the *santris* are capable of engaging in both activities concurrently, without perceiving K-Pop as detrimental to their memorization endeavors. By assimilating practices from Korean popular culture and skillfully harmonizing them with their religious traditions, the *santris* occupy a distinctive position at the confluence of Islam, globalization, and youthfulness. Constituting a pivotal segment of the global populace, they strive to harmonize their religious principles with the influences of an ever-evolving world, all while preserving their youthful spirit.

Keywords: Korean Popular Culture, *Hallyu*, Female *Santri*, Memorizing the Qur'an, Everyday Life

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Introduction

KOREAN POPULAR culture, also known as the Korean Wave or *Hallyu*, began to spread and capture the attention of numerous

enthusiasts in East Asian countries in 1997.¹ This phenomenon was initiated by the popularity of “A Wish Upon a Star,” a drama aired on Phoenix TV in Hong Kong in 1999. Korean singers gained popularity in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan due to their remarkable success. Meanwhile, the rise of “Winter Sonata,” a drama broadcast on NHK TV in 2003, played a pivotal role in kickstarting the *Hallyu* movement in Japan.² The success of *Hallyu* in Japan subsequently resonated in other parts of the world, including the Middle East, North America, and Australia, largely due to the impact of the drama “Dae Jang Geum” (Jewel in the Palace). This achievement was closely followed by the global recognition of Korean pop music, famously known as K-Pop.³

In Indonesia, the burgeoning interest in East Asian pop culture was primarily ignited by the immense popularity of the Taiwanese drama “Meteor Garden” in 2002. Just a year later, similar to its impact in other countries, “Dae Jang Geum” captured the attention of Indonesian viewers and catalyzed the Korean Wave within the nation. Korean dramas, captivating a wide spectrum of audiences ranging from millennials to baby boomers, were broadcasted nearly daily until the late 2000s. However, a decline in viewership was subsequently observed. Following 2010, the fervor for *Hallyu* in Indonesia expanded to encompass not only K-pop but also various entertainment shows, giving rise to what is often termed as the New Korean Wave. While initially, Indonesian fans primarily listened to songs from drama soundtracks, the trend post-2010 witnessed a surge of enthusiasm for both male and female idol groups. Beyond this, fan fascination has extended to

¹ Beng Huat Chua and Kōichi Iwabuchi, eds., *East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing the Korean Wave* (Hong Kong: London: Hong Kong University Press; Eurospan [distributor], 2008), 2; Tae-Jin Yoon and Dal Yong Jin, eds., *The Korean Wave: Evolution, Fandom, and Transnationality* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2017), xi.

² Yasue Kuwahara, ed., *The Korean Wave* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2014), 2.

³ Korean Culture and Information Service, *The Korean Wave: A New Pop Culture Phenomenon*, Contemporary Korea No. 1 (Korea: Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011).

include Korean entertainment shows such as “Running Man” and aspects of lifestyle including cuisine, cosmetics, and tourism.⁴

The number of Indonesian enthusiasts of *Hallyu* is on the rise. As per the Korean Foundation for International Cultural Exchange (KOFICE), Indonesia secured the fourth position worldwide in terms of its interest in *Hallyu* in 2021. Notably, one in every two Indonesians takes pleasure in Korean films, dramas, music, and various other forms of entertainment.⁵ Moreover, Indonesia stands as the second highest-ranking country in the categories of both “countries displaying a strong inclination to invest in *Hallyu* content” and “countries displaying a strong inclination to pay for it,” with a *Hallyu* index ranging between 130-140%. This signifies substantial growth in comparison to other nations.⁶ In the realm of social media, Indonesia has also secured the top spot among countries with the highest number of K-Pop (Korean pop music) fans on Twitter during the period from July 2020 to June 2021.⁷

Based on a survey conducted by IDN Times on K-Pop fans in Indonesia between December 2018 and January 2019, the demographic profile of these fans is primarily characterized by females (92.1%), as opposed to males (7.9%). This group of enthusiasts spans across various age groups, encompassing 10-15 years (9.3%), 15-20 years (38.1%), 20-25 years (40.7%), and those aged over 25 (11.9%). Within this demographic, a significant portion, comprising 66.1% of fans, identifies as students, while the

⁴ Jae-Seon Jeong, Seul-Hi Lee, and Sang-Gil Lee, “When Indonesians Routinely Consume Korean Pop Culture: Revisiting Jakartan Fans of Korean Drama *Dae Jang Geum*,” *International Journal of Communication* 11, no. 0 (May 23, 2017): 2293–2294.

⁵ Henry, “Indonesia Tempati Urutan ke-4 Penggemar Korean Wave Terbesar di Dunia,” *liputan6.com*, last modified October 8, 2021, accessed January 20, 2022, <https://www.liputan6.com/lifestyle/read/4678671/indonesia-tempati-urutan-ke-4-penggemar-korean-wave-terbesar-di-dunia>.

⁶ Korean Foundation for International Cultural Exchange, *2021 Global Hallyu Trend* (Seoul: Korean Foundation for International Cultural Exchange, 2021), 021.

⁷ Faisal Javier, “Ada 7,5 Miliar Twit K-Pop Pada Juli 2020-Juni 2021, Terbanyak Dari Indonesia,” *Tempo*, last modified August 5, 2021, accessed January 20, 2022, <https://data.tempo.co/data/1174/ada-75-miliar-twit-k-pop-pada-juli-2020-juni-2021-terbanyak-dari-indonesia>.

remaining individuals are employed in the private sector (21.2%) or engage in entrepreneurship (4.7%)⁸ These statistics underline that the majority of K-Pop fans in Indonesia are young females, which includes young women who are actively memorizing the Qur'an. Given the enthusiastic interest exhibited by this cohort of Indonesian youth, this research delves into the reception of Korean popular culture among students, particularly focusing on female *santris* who are engaged in memorizing the Qur'an.

There are several essential studies on young Muslim women and K-Pop to be taken into account, among which are talking about the negotiation of young Muslim female admirers in constructing their identity as followers of Islam on the one hand and K-Pop fans on the other; the reception of young pious Muslim fangirls to K-Pop; the influence of K-Pop on female students at *pesantren*; and the *Hallyu* culture in Muslim-majority countries, in this case Indonesia and Palestine, which was linked to issues of gender and state violence. From these studies, we find a common thread that the culture brought by *Hallyu* is initially seen as something unique for Islam in Indonesia. Nevertheless, it is gradually well received in line with the growing popularity of the culture, as illustrated in the phenomenon of a Muslim enjoying *Hallyu*.

There are several significant studies that focus on young Muslim women and their engagement with K-Pop, each of which provides valuable insights. Among these studies, topics include the exploration of how young Muslim female admirers negotiate their identity, aligning their commitment to Islam with their enthusiasm for K-Pop;⁹ the examination of how devout young

⁸ Nurul Triadanti et al., "Jadi Gaya Hidup, Benarkah Fans KPop Kaya Raya atau Cuma Modal Kuota?," *IDN Times*, last modified February 26, 2019, accessed January 20, 2022, <https://www.idntimes.com/hype/entertainment/danti/jadi-gaya-hidup-benarkah-fans-kpop-kaya-raya-atau-cuma-modal-kuota>.

⁹ Teguh Wijaya Mulya, "Faith and Fandom: Young Indonesian Muslims Negotiating K-Pop and Islam," *Contemporary Islam* 15, no. 3 (November 1, 2021): 337–355.

Muslim fangirls perceive and interact with K-Pop;¹⁰ the analysis of the impact of K-Pop on female students at *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools);¹¹ and the examination of the Hallyu culture within Muslim-majority countries, specifically Indonesia and Palestine, where it intersects with issues of gender and state violence.¹² From these studies, a common thread emerges, revealing that the cultural influence introduced by *Hallyu* was initially perceived as something unique for Islam in Indonesia.¹³ However, over time, this cultural phenomenon has gained traction and acceptance in parallel with its growing popularity. This is evident in the phenomenon of Muslims embracing *Hallyu*, showcasing a gradual shift from initial skepticism to a more positive reception.

Building upon existing research, this study aims to address a notable gap in understanding the experiences and interpretations of *hallyu* culture among santri who are engaged in the memorization of the Qur'an.¹⁴ *Hallyu* culture, often perceived by some as conflicting with Islamic values, raises the question of how devout individuals, such as those who memorize the Qur'an, perceive and engage with Korean popular culture. This study aims to delve into the perspectives of these individuals regarding both their commitment to Islam and their engagement with Korean pop culture, specifically exploring whether the latter has any impact on

¹⁰ Sunny Yoon, "K-Pop Fandom in Veil: Religious Reception and Adaptation to Popular Culture," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 13, no. 1 (June 2, 2019): 1–20.

¹¹ Ni'matus Solihah and Ajat Sudrajat, "Dampak Modernitas K-Pop pada Gaya Hidup Siswi di Sekolah Berbasis Pesantren: Studi MTs Ali Maksum Pondok Pesantren Krapyak Yogyakarta," *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif* 13, no. 1 (2018): 47–59.

¹² Ingyu Oh, "Islam and Local Culture: The Peril of State Violence and Hallyu Fandom in Indonesia (With Reference to Palestine)," *Kritika Kultura* 0, no. 29 (August 31, 2017): 232–257.

¹³ Ibid., 232–257; Solihah and Sudrajat, "Dampak Modernitas K-Pop pada Gaya Hidup Siswi di Sekolah Berbasis Pesantren: Studi MTs Ali Maksum Pondok Pesantren Krapyak Yogyakarta," 47–59; Mulya, "Faith and Fandom," 337–355; Yoon, "K-Pop Fandom in Veil: Religious Reception and Adaptation to Popular Culture," 1–20.

¹⁴ Ranny Rastati, "Korean Wave, Islamic Da'wah and 'Hallyucination,'" *Pusat Riset Masyarakat dan Budaya -BRIN*, December 13, 2021, accessed January 16, 2023, <https://pmb.brin.go.id/korean-wave-islamic-dawah-and-hallyucination/>.

their religiosity. *Santris*, who commit themselves to memorizing the Qur'an, participate in religious practices that distinguish them from typical *santris*. This rigorous endeavor requires unwavering dedication and a high level of effort. For those who simultaneously appreciate *hallyu* culture, an interesting convergence occurs—a merging of two seemingly contradictory elements within their lives. This paper seeks to explore the intricate interplay between these two aspects of their lives, shedding light on their viewpoints and investigating whether their engagement with Korean pop culture influences their religious commitment.

The subjects of this study are female *santris* from Pondok Pesantren Sunan Pandanaran in Sleman, Yogyakarta. Established by KH. Muhammad Mufid Mas'ud (d. 2007), a disciple of KH. Muhammad Munawwir (d. 1941), a prominent Qur'anic scholar in Indonesia, in 1975 in Candi village, Sleman, the *pesantren* has evolved from a center solely dedicated to Qur'an memorization into a multifaceted institution. Among its various branches is the formal educational institution, *Madrasah Tsanawiyah* (MTs), and *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA) Sunan Pandanaran, situated in Complex 3 of 6, catering to male and female students. Despite following the teachings of a traditional (*salaf*) Islamic boarding school, this *pesantren* does not have any written restrictions against students engaging in hobbies such as Korean popular culture.¹⁵

This study employs a qualitative approach and focuses on 13 students who are in the process of memorizing the Qur'an and have been fans of Korean pop culture for at least one year.¹⁶ In addition to the interviews with these students, insights were gathered from a dormitory supervisor and a specific teacher to provide supplementary information. In the forthcoming subsection, we contend that the motive behind *santris* who are memorizing the Qur'an engaging in activities such as enjoying Korean pop culture is to find entertainment while concurrently

¹⁵ "Profil Pondok Pesantren Sunan Pandanaran Yogyakarta," *iqra.id*, October 22, 2021, accessed January 22, 2022, <https://iqra.id/profil-pondok-pesantren-sunan-pandanaran-yogyakarta-239481/>.

¹⁶ All the source people's names in this article are pseudonyms.

fulfilling their responsibility of Qur'an memorization. Additionally, these students perceive Korean artists as role models for enhancing their religiosity and personal development.

Indonesian Muslim Youth's Perception of the *Hallyu* Culture

Indonesian Muslim youth exhibit diverse responses to Hallyu culture. Mulya categorizes their positions into two overarching attitudes: "tension" and "no tension," with each containing sub-categories.¹⁷ Within the tension category, specifically concerning the interplay between Islam and K-Pop, two sub-positions emerge: (1) complete antagonism, often championed by conservative Islamic groups, who vehemently oppose both due to reasons like perceived clashes between K-Pop and Islamic sexual ethics, and the hedonistic influences that conflict with Islamic principles of modesty, and (2) partial opposition, where individuals believe that while K-Pop is not intrinsically wrong, any elements conflicting with Islamic values must be actively avoided.

Subsequently, within the "no tension" category, two additional sub-positions arise: (3) irrelevance, where fans consider K-Pop merely as a hobby devoid of any association with Islam, and engage with it without recognizing any connection between its culture and their faith, and (4) the integration of Muslim identity and fandom, wherein individuals strive to harmonize their experiences as fans and Muslims.¹⁸ This fourth sub-position focuses on how their devotion to being a fan can enrich their practice of Islam and, conversely, how their Muslim identity enhances their enjoyment of their hobby, without pitting K-Pop against their faith. It is important to recognize that these roles often lack rigid boundaries, as individual fans can simultaneously occupy multiple roles.

The surge of Muslim fans in Indonesia can be attributed to the intertwining of Indonesian Islam with local culture, a

¹⁷ Teguh Wijaya Mulya, "Faith and Fandom: Young Indonesian Muslims Negotiating K-Pop and Islam." *Contemporary Islam* 15, no. 3 (November 1, 2021): 343–352.

¹⁸ Ibid.

phenomenon not as prevalent in other Islamic nations.¹⁹ The manifestation of Islam in Indonesia epitomizes a popular form that resonates with urban youth, characterized by its pluralistic and less confrontational nature.²⁰ Within this context, young Muslim enthusiasts can actively partake in their preferred pursuits while steadfastly upholding their faith.

Yoon's study showcases how devoutness among her subjects is exhibited through practices such as early morning prayers, fasting during Ramadan, engaging in *sunna* prayers, and delving into the study of the Qur'an.²¹ Surprisingly, even being a fan of idol groups can have a profound influence on the spiritual values of those within the fandom community. It can act as a catalyst for greater diligence in performing prayers, reciting *du'ās*, and striving towards personal goals, all while acknowledging human imperfection and expressing gratitude to God.²²

It is noteworthy that many Indonesian fans who enthusiastically share their activities, like singing and dancing to Korean songs,²³ also adhere to wearing hijabs, a practice that carries a deeper significance in Indonesia beyond its outward representation of piety.²⁴ This distinctive phenomenon, where devout female fans wear the hijab, underscores what Heryanto labels as a fresh level of hybridity in Indonesia's complex politics

¹⁹ Oh, "Islam and Local Culture," 234.

²⁰ Andrew N. Weintraub, ed., *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia* (London: Routledge, 2011), i.

²¹ Yoon, "K-Pop Fandom in Veil: Religious Reception and Adaptation to Popular Culture," 8.

²² Auriza Safitri, "Pengaruh Korean Pop Terhadap Perubahan Nilai Spiritual pada ARMY Banda Aceh" (skripsi, UIN Ar-Raniry, 2021), 43–48.

²³ 180 *ㄤ* (180 Degree) - *ㅁ* (Ben) Vocal Cover, 2018, accessed January 23, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vboVPkWW1Ug>; Belift Lab Audition 2021 - I Land 2 (Indonesia/Vocal), 2021, accessed January 23, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4duUhGmFnk>; NCT 2020 "엔시/E/ 2020" - Resonance Dance Cover #short, 2021, accessed January 23, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZJMjk0r1Ac>.

²⁴ Yoon, "K-Pop Fandom in Veil: Religious Reception and Adaptation to Popular Culture," 14.

of identity.²⁵ This fusion of Islamic faith and the global cultural phenomenon of *Hallyu* attests to the unique way that Indonesian youth are navigating their religiosity within a globalized world.

As Muslim teenagers actively engage with Korean dramas, a segment of the Islamic community expresses disapproval of these contents, citing concerns about values that appear inconsistent with Islam. However, these teenagers are proactive in interpreting the messages and visuals presented in Korean television dramas. They contend that these dramas showcase cultural nuances that differ from their own, such as the portrayal of alcohol consumption. Despite these differences, these youth are skilled at extracting positive values from television dramas that may not be present in their formal education. Additionally, they demonstrate the ability to reject negative values that clash with both Islam and their cultural heritage.²⁶

In terms of how their hobbies are perceived by others, as demonstrated by Oh's research, young enthusiasts of *Hallyu* harbor apprehensions about potential hostility from the government. This concern stems largely from historical experiences with authoritarian regimes and the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism.²⁷ This highlights the disposition of those who support *Hallyu* and actively participate in related activities to adopt a balanced approach toward their faith. They seek a middle ground, allowing for the harmonious coexistence of Islamic principles, local culture, and the influence of Korean popular culture. This illustrates their effort to navigate the complexities of their identity and interests within a socio-political context that bears historical and religious implications.

Memorizing the Qur'an on a Tight Schedule

To commit the Qur'an to memory, aspiring *santris* must fulfill several prerequisites. During the initial year, they receive guidance

²⁵ Ariel Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture* (NUS Press, 2014), 183.

²⁶ Imron Rosidi, "Consuming Representations of Korean TV Dramas among Indonesian Muslim Youth," *Jurnal The Messenger* 12, no. 2 (July 31, 2020): 111–121.

²⁷ Oh, "Islam and Local Culture," 251.

to memorize Juz ‘Amma, a foundational step towards participating in the Khatam an-Nizari ceremony, marking the completion of memorizing the 30th Juz of the Qur’an. In the subsequent year, students are encouraged to engage in the Khatam an-Nizari 30 Juz ceremony, demonstrating their accomplishment of not only reciting the entire Qur’an from the *muṣṣhaf* (physical copy) but also having memorized Yāsīn and al-Kahf.²⁸ As a result the challenges faced by those who commit the Qur’an to memory, who concurrently attend MTs (junior high school) and MA (senior high school), they must skillfully manage two demanding responsibilities, requiring unwavering focus.

Santris, who embark on the dual journey of formal education and Qur’an memorization, find themselves with a rigorous schedule. Within a day, their commitments extend from attending school between 07.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. to actively participating in all mandatory *pesantren* activities. These activities encompass congregational prayers, communal recitation of specific dhikr (supplications), afternoon recitations of Rātīb al-Ḥaddād (a compilation of dhikr by the eminent Hadrami scholar Abdullāh ibn ‘Alawī ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥaddād, d. 1720), *tahlīl* (prayers for the deceased), and *ṣalawāt* (invocations honoring Prophet Muhammad). Evening recitations and obligatory study hours persist even after the ‘Ishā’ prayer.²⁹ Particularly in the context of *tahfidh* (Qur’an memorization), distinct tasks come to the forefront: *talaqqī* (reciting verses from memory before an instructor) conducted during designated classes, and *murāja’a* (reviewing memorized passages) before specialized teachers, referred to as “badal,” after the *Ṣubḥ* (dawn) and *Maghrib* (evening) prayers.³⁰

Scholars argue that memorizing the Qur’an is something noble and has many virtues. The belief that memorizing the Qur’an will bring something good to the *santris* is seen in their thoughts about the Qur’an’s sanctity and the happiness surrounding a person memorizing the Qur’an. Tia (16 years old), for example, believes in

²⁸ Interview with Ima, January 2022.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Interview with Rayya, January 2022.

the blessings and extraordinariness of the Qur'an. Furthermore, Rere (16 years old) considers the pleasure of Allah, closeness to Him, and "supply" of rewards for the hereafter as motivation for her perseverance. In addition, most of them admit that the desire to make their parents happy and proud is why they start memorizing the Qur'an. The *santris* keep up their beliefs and motivations so they can persist in memorizing the Qur'an despite the tight daily schedules they have to undertake.

Scholars contend that the act of memorizing the Qur'an is imbued with nobility and numerous virtues.³¹ This conviction, which underscores the positive impact of Qur'an memorization on the *santris*, is evident in their perception of the Qur'an's sanctity and the joy that envelops an individual who commits it to memory. Tia (16 years old), for instance, holds a steadfast belief in the blessings and profound significance of the Qur'an.³² Moreover, Rere (16 years old) regards the pleasure of Allah, an enhanced closeness to Him, and the accumulation of rewards for the afterlife as compelling incentives that fuel her determination.³³ Additionally, a significant number of *santris* candidly acknowledge that their initial impetus for embarking on the journey of Qur'an memorization is rooted in the desire to bring happiness and pride to their parents. These deeply ingrained beliefs and motivations serve as the driving force behind the *santris'* unwavering commitment to Qur'an memorization, even in the face of demanding daily schedules they must diligently navigate.

³¹ Ahsin Sakho Muhammad, *Menghafalkan al-Qur'an: manfaat, keutamaan, keberkahan, dan metode praktisnya*, 2018, 27–32; Muhammad Shohib and M. Bunyamin Yusuf Surur, eds., *Para Penjaga Al-Qur'an: Biografi Huffaz al-Qur'an Di Nusantara*, Cet. 1. (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'an, Badan Litbang dan Diklat, Kementerian Agama RI, 2011), ix; Maria Ulfah, "Metode Menghafal Al-Qur'an di Pondok Pesantren Istana Al-Qur'an Sirrul Asror Buaran Jakarta Timur" (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2021), 20.

³² Interview with Tia, January 2022.

³³ Interview with Rere, January 2022.

Hallyu as Entertainment

Balancing their religious consciousness with a range of viewpoints, the *santris* exhibit diverse attitudes towards K-Pop, which continue to shape their interactions with this cultural phenomenon. The majority of them maintain that having an appreciation for K-Pop does not inherently contravene Islamic principles, aligning with the perspective of the “no tension” faction as categorized by Mulya as mentioned before. From their standpoint, indulging in K-Pop music is permissible, even in the absence of specific prohibitions, as long as it remains within reasonable bounds and does not impede their primary commitments, such as *nderes* (*murāja’a*).

However, there exists another segment that finds themselves uncertain about the religious ruling, often leaning towards prioritizing the recitation of *ṣalawāt* (invocations praising Prophet Muhammad). Simultaneously, they initially approach K-Pop music with caution, opting to evaluate the lyrical content before determining its appropriateness for enjoyment. This behavior contrasts starkly with that of their peers who are dedicated to Qur’an memorization, refraining from engaging with non-Islamic music. A compelling illustration of this divergence emerged in a viral social media video from September 2021, where *santris*, while awaiting immunizations, shielded their ears when music played in the background.³⁴

The first category of *santris* perceives music as having negligible impact and permits its enjoyment within certain limits. On the other hand, the second group regards music as a potential distraction from their Qur’anic recitation and, thus, remain vigilant regarding its potential implications.

The *santris* share the perspective that committing the verses of the Qur’an to memory can be intricate and occasionally draining, prompting the need for intervals of rest and enjoyment. They

³⁴ Arman Dhani, “Penghafal Al-Quran Menutup Telinga saat Mendengar Musik Lebih Baik daripada Jadi Antivaksin,” *Mojok.co*, September 15, 2021, accessed January 26, 2022, <https://mojok.co/esai/penghafal-al-quran-menutup-telinga-lebih-baik-daripada-jadi-antivaksin/>.

perceive activities related to fangirling as a means to unwind and rejuvenate. For them, the prospect of exclusively dedicating themselves to Qur'an memorization devoid of these sources of amusement seems arduous. Instead, they view engaging in activities like listening to and dancing to Korean songs, immersing themselves in Korean dramas and movies, and actively exploring information about their Korean idols as outlets for their enthusiasm and gratification. These activities stand as mediums through which they reconnect with the delight of their younger years.

Contrary to any belief that their actions might transgress the principles of Islam or constitute a sin, the *santris* firmly reject such notions. They do not perceive their involvement with Korean popular culture as a breach of Islamic values, as they do not interpret it through that lens. While the *santris* are conscientious about the potential erosion of their memories through sinful conduct (*maksiat*), they hold the view that their appreciation of Korean cultural products does not jeopardize their recollection of the Qur'an.

When engaged in two distinct activities within a relatively close timeframe, maintaining focus becomes paramount, particularly during the memorization process. The *santris* conceptualize "focus" in this context in two distinct ways: firstly, it implies the necessity to avoid distractions from unrelated tasks while memorizing the Qur'an, and secondly, it acknowledges that each individual's capacity for concentration is unique, varying from person to person. Effective self-management is crucial when juggling tasks outside of the memorization endeavor, ensuring a balanced allocation of time.³⁵ However, at times, they require gentle reminders from the dormitory administrator due to the occasional disruptions in their daily routine.³⁶

³⁵ Wulan Saputri Anjani, Cucu Arumsari, and Aam Imaddudin, "Pelatihan Self Management Untuk Meningkatkan Disiplin Belajar Siswa," *Journal of Innovative Counseling: Theory, Practice, and Research* 4, no. 01 (January 15, 2020): 41–56.

³⁶ Interview with Ima, January 2022.

Given the array of mandatory activities they must participate in, the *santris* adopt a strategy of maximizing the opportunities at their disposal to harmonize their Qur'an memorization with their fangirling pursuits. Some have developed personalized schedules that encompass designated periods for learning new verses, engaging in *murāja'a* (reviewing previously memorized material), and taking time to unwind through discussions or leisurely conversations about Korean artists with their friends. Discipline emerges as a key facet in this time management endeavor. Rere succinctly encapsulated this approach, stating, "I can maintain balance through this routine. It is manageable, especially during my free time."³⁷

The *santris* confront restrictions that prevent them from directly watching or listening to music due to *pesantren* regulations that prohibit mobile phones, laptops, or music players. Consequently, they employ alternative methods to stay abreast of developments in the Korean entertainment landscape, utilizing school broadcasting facilities or occasionally borrowing cell phones to connect with their families back home.³⁸ Remarkably, despite these limitations, their fervor for Korean culture takes shape through diverse outlets.

Their ardor extends to collecting merchandise like printed clothing, light-sticks, and keychains. Intriguingly, one among them has even achieved proficiency in Hangeul, the Korean alphabet.³⁹ This enthusiasm further manifests in their adoption of Korean fashion, all while conscientiously adhering to Islamic values and ensuring that their attire respects the guidelines for maintaining their 'aurat (certain parts of the body that are required to be covered). Beyond clothing, their interests span beauty and skincare products, alongside a penchant for savoring Korean cuisine. Furthermore, their admiration for brands endorsed by

³⁷ Interview with Rere, January 2022.

³⁸ Interview with Ima, January 2022.

³⁹ Interview with Bian, January 2022.

idols is evident, influencing their preferences and choices.⁴⁰ These elements are far from mere pastimes; they have seamlessly woven themselves into the fabric of their daily lives, becoming integral components within their array of activities and passions.

Improving Self-Character and Becoming More Pious

The *santris* firmly hold the belief that engaging in immoral activities such as adultery, using rude language, and consuming explicit content⁴¹ hampers their ability to memorize the Qur'an. Conversely, they are convinced that matters associated with piety and the purification of the soul enhance their capacity to commit the Qur'an to memory. Aini (16 years old) emphasized, *"I regularly fast every Monday and Thursday, offer Duha prayer before heading to school, recite al-Wāqī'a and al-Rahmān in the afternoon, and conclude my day by reciting al-Mulk before sleep."* The *santris* equally emphasize the significance of seeking prayers from both parents. Moreover, they place significant faith in selecting the right moments, such as dawn or night, which they believe facilitate a more receptive state of mind for absorbing Qur'anic verses. This dedication underscores their strong commitment to their religious practice. Tia succinctly expressed this commitment, saying, *"Maintaining morality is an obligation. Never forget to pray! And always avoid evil!"*

The *santris* firmly adhere to the conviction that involvement in immoral activities, such as adultery, using offensive language, and consuming explicit content, impedes their ability to memorize the Qur'an.⁴² Conversely, they hold the firm belief that engaging in matters associated with piety and spiritual purification enhances their aptitude for committing the Qur'an to memory. Aini (16 years old) highlights this by noting, *"I observe regular fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, perform the Duha prayer before school,*

⁴⁰ Solihah and Sudrajat, "Dampak Modernitas K-Pop pada Gaya Hidup Siswi di Sekolah Berbasis Pesantren: Studi MTs Ali Maksum Pondok Pesantren Krapyak Yogyakarta," 44.

⁴¹ Interview with Mila, January 2022.

⁴² Interview with Vinny, January 2022.

recite al-Wāqī'a and al-Raḥmān in the afternoon, and conclude my day with the recitation of al-Mulk before sleep."⁴³

Furthermore, the *santris* place great emphasis on seeking prayers from both of their parents, recognizing the immense spiritual support that familial blessings provide. Additionally, they invest profound faith in selecting specific moments, such as dawn or the night, which they believe fosters a heightened state of mind conducive to absorbing Qur'anic verses. This dedication underscores the depth of their commitment to their religious practice. Tia eloquently captures this dedication, succinctly stating, "Upholding morality is an obligation. Prayer should never be forgotten! And evading all forms of evil is paramount!"⁴⁴

The burgeoning captivation of the *santris* with Korean popular culture, catalyzed by familial influences, the exceptional quality of the music, the captivating narratives woven into dramas and films, and the allure of artists' visual appeal, has woven its influence into their daily existence. This impact extends beyond mere idolization; it delves deeper, encompassing these idols not just as entertainers, but as figures of inspiration due to their exceptional attitudes. This perspective illuminates the profound connection that fans share with idols, bridging the realms of entertainment and social values within the context of social interaction. Their pursuit of knowledge about these idols, in part, aligns with social norms while also offering a form of 'escape' from the confines of reality.⁴⁵ This transformative shift in motivation subsequently propels the *santris* to emulate the admirable qualities exhibited by their idols.⁴⁶

Furthermore, the conspicuous dedication and unwavering discipline demonstrated by these idols act as amplifiers for the *santris'* aspirations, especially in the realm of Qur'an memorization. This aspiration materializes through their

⁴³ Interview with Aini, January 2022.

⁴⁴ Interview with Tia, January 2022.

⁴⁵ Dita Darfiyanti and M.G. Bagus Ani Putra, "Pemujaan terhadap Idola Pop sebagai Dasar Intimate Relationship pada Dewasa Awal: sebuah Studi Kasus," *Jurnal Psikologi Kepribadian dan Sosial* 1, no. 02 (June 2012): 8.

⁴⁶ Risa Almada, Sandy Agum Gumelar, and Adinda Azmi Laksmiwati, "Dinamika psikologis fangirl k-pop," *Cognicia* 9, no. 1 (March 31, 2021): 17–24.

persistent pursuit of not only broadening their repertoire of memorized verses but also engaging in rigorous *murāja'a*.

It is obvious that their fascination with Korean culture has spurred them to reach greater heights. It is not just about being enamored; it is about drawing inspiration from these idols to mold their own characters. Furthermore, it nurtures their discipline: The unwavering commitment shown by their idols has become a beacon guiding their own ambitions. They are not just fans; they are motivated by the exemplary qualities they admire. Their affinity for Korean pop culture is not superficial; it is catalyzed a shift in their pursuits. From idle indulgence, they have transitioned to a pursuit of excellence, mirrored in their Qur'an memorization journey. Beyond the surface, their fascination with idols is driven by more than aesthetics. It is about internalizing virtues, which they mirror in their dedication to the Qur'an. No doubt, what started as a fascination has evolved into a source of inspiration. These idols represent more than entertainment; they embody qualities that now fuel their quest for Qur'an memorization.⁴⁷

In essence, the influence of Korean popular culture has acted as a catalyst, fusing entertainment and personal growth, and nurturing a symbiotic relationship between their admirations and their pursuit of excellence in memorizing the Qur'an.

For the *santris*, being fans of Korean idols serves as a form of escape from the demanding routines of their daily lives. They perceive this role as a coping strategy, a way to manage the stresses they face. This strategy involves engaging in behaviors, whether openly or discreetly, aimed at alleviating the psychological toll of pressure.⁴⁸ One santri insightfully shared her personal experience, revealing that her admiration for K-Pop celebrities has yielded positive psychological outcomes, including increased optimism, enhanced sociability, and an overall sense of

⁴⁷ Interviews with Ani, Ridha, and Lani, January 17, 2022.

⁴⁸ Almaida, Gumelar, and Laksmiwati, "Dinamika psikologis fangirl k-pop," 21–22.

happiness.⁴⁹ In my conversations, Ike, one of the *santris* we interviewed, openly acknowledges that being a fangirl has positively impacted her public speaking confidence and led to more rational thinking. Moreover, her collaborative work with peers on assignments has made her less self-centered, drawing inspiration from the cooperative dynamics commonly found within K-Pop groups.⁵⁰

Rere echoes Ike's sentiments, testifying to the positive effects of K-Pop on her life. For her, the world of K-Pop has injected vibrancy and reduced stress levels.⁵¹ This transformation is attributed to the shared interests she enjoys with fellow fangirls, facilitating the expansion of her social circle. Within this enlarged circle, she finds the liberty to express her authentic self, leading to more fulfilling and genuine interpersonal connections.

Among the *santris*, there are those who assert that the influence of Korean popular culture does not possess a direct religious implication. However, a contrasting perspective exists within the group as well. Individuals who subscribe to this viewpoint acknowledge the non-Muslim status of the idols but choose not to be troubled by this aspect. Instead, they adopt a stance of evaluating and embracing the positive elements promoted by these idols.⁵² These elements revolve around an intensified commitment to worshipping God and actively engaging in acts of assistance towards others. This perspective underscores their capacity to discern virtues from various sources and integrate them into their religious convictions, demonstrating a holistic approach to their values and beliefs.

Ridha, one of our interlocutors, openly acknowledges that her affinity for K-Pop has led her to increase her reading of *dalā'il* (*Dalā'il al-Khayrāt wa-Shawāriq al-Anwār fī Dhikr al-Ṣalāt 'alā al-Nabī al-Mukhtār*), a book of prayers dedicated to the Prophet

⁴⁹ Dyana Putri Kristina Sintya Dewi and Komang Rahayu Indrawati, "Gambaran Celebrity Worship Pada Penggemar K-Pop Usia Dewasa Awal Di Bali," *Jurnal Psikologi Udayana* 6, no. 02 (October 31, 2019): 291–300.

⁵⁰ Interview with Ike, January 2022.

⁵¹ Interview with Rere, January 2022.

⁵² Interviews with Vinny, Ani, Laksmi, Ida, and Ridha, January 2022.

Muhammad, authored by the Moroccan scholar Muḥammad ibn Sulaimān al-Jazūlī (d. 1465).⁵³ Additionally, she has incorporated *ṣalawāt* (invocations of blessings upon the Prophet) into her routine more frequently since developing an interest in K-Pop. She has transformed her dream of visiting Korea into a tangible goal, utilizing *ṣalawāt* as a means to reach this destination.⁵⁴

The *ṣalawāt* that she devoutly recites serves as a tangible expression of her belief in an Islamic doctrine that views reciting these invocations as a means to have one's wishes fulfilled, as supported by relevant hadith (sayings of the Prophet). This connection illustrates how her newfound enthusiasm for K-Pop has intertwined with her faith, manifesting in her religious practices and aspirations.

The idol figures that hold a special place in the hearts of the *santris* exert a profound impact on their spiritual consciousness and religious journey. This influence is rooted in the manner through which the *santris* draw inspiration from these idols, thereby shaping the cognitive dimensions of their religious pursuits. The sentiment of "admiration" elevates their deeds to a heightened plane, characterized by a discernible awareness of morality and piety. This elevation, often referred to as the religious aspect of an individual, emerges as a consequence of their connection to these idols. The *santris'* piety due to their closeness to the recitation of the Qur'an, which has been deemed a fundamental expression of devotion within Islam since its arrival,⁵⁵ evolves in accordance with the enthusiasm they possess for memorizing the Qur'an. However, it is important to acknowledge that the religiosity observed among the *santris* remains subjective. The variance in individual beliefs and approaches renders the

⁵³ Interview with Ridha, January 2022.

⁵⁴ Moh Juriyanto, "Ini Bacaan Shalawat Agar Semua Hajat Tercapai," *BincangSyariah*, last modified April 15, 2019, accessed February 7, 2022, <https://bincangsyariah.com/zikir-dan-doa/ini-bacaan-shalawat-agar-semua-hajat-tercapai/>; Ningrum Lestari, "Salawat Nabi Antara Teks dan Praktek," 2019, 45–50.

⁵⁵ Anna M. Gade, *Perfection Makes Practice: Learning, Emotion, and the Recited Quran in Indonesia* (University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 25.

religiosity of each *santri* distinct and personal, preventing any sweeping generalizations across the group.

The idol figures who occupy a special place in the hearts of the *santris* wield a profound influence over their spiritual consciousness and religious journey.⁵⁶ This impact is deeply rooted in the manner through which the *santris* derive inspiration from these idols, thereby molding the cognitive dimensions of their religious pursuits. The emotion of “admiration” elevates their actions to a higher realm, characterized by a discernible consciousness of morality and piety. This elevation, often referred to as the spiritual dimension of an individual, emerges as a result of their connection to these idols.⁵⁷

The piety exhibited by the *santris*, arising from their proximity to the recitation of the Qur’an—an essential expression of devotion within Islam since its inception—evolves in harmony with their enthusiasm for memorizing the Qur’an. Nonetheless, it is crucial to recognize that the religiosity observed among the *santris* is subjective. The diversity in individual beliefs and approaches underscores the unique and personal nature of each *santri*’s religiosity, preventing any broad generalizations across the entire group.

Between Islam, Globalization and Youthfulness

The everyday lives of the female *santris* in Yogyakarta illustrate that, as Muslim youth, they occupy a unique position at the intersection of Islam, globalization, and youthfulness. As a vital segment of the global population, they endeavor to reconcile their religious values with the influences of a rapidly changing world while maintaining their youthfulness. In an era marked by rapid globalization, the confluence of tradition and modernity has redefined the experience of being young and Muslim. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, young Muslims find

⁵⁶ Annisa Fitriani, “Peran Religiusitas Dalam Meningkatkan Psychological Well Being,” *Al-Adyan: Jurnal Studi Lintas Agama* 11, no. 1 (2016): 57–80.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

themselves navigating the intricate balance between their religious identity and the influences of a globalized world.

Globalization, characterized by the exchange of ideas, goods, and cultures across international boundaries, has significantly altered the landscape within which Muslim youth grow, interact, and develop. While it offers new avenues for growth, learning, and global interaction, it also presents challenges in terms of identity, cultural influences, and navigating complex socio-political landscapes. Moreover, the digital age has brought new forms of connectivity, exposing them to diverse perspectives, cultures, and values. This exposure has led to the blending of cultures, prompting Muslim youth to engage with a wide array of worldviews, enriching their understanding of different beliefs, facilitating interfaith dialogue, and fostering tolerance.⁵⁸ The situation confronting Muslim youth becomes more complex in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. This tragic event has shaped the lives of Muslim youth, both in terms of their religious identity and their interactions with the broader society.⁵⁹

The fervor of the female *santris* to explore *hallyu* while maintaining their tradition of memorizing the Quran demonstrates their unique strategy for navigating the intersection of being young and Muslim. This strategy is neither an inherent disposition nor a spontaneous reaction of Muslim youth. For Muslim youth today, religion is more a matter of negotiation than an immutable normative code. Youthfulness is a period characterized by curiosity, energy, and exploration, marked by the pursuit of knowledge, personal growth, and the desire to bring about positive change. Asef Bayat refers to youthfulness as the subtle, everyday ways in which young individuals navigate and challenge societal norms and constraints, engaging in practices

⁵⁸ Noorhaidi Hasan, "Funky Teenagers Love God: Islam and Youth Activism in Post-Suharto Indonesia," in *Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation*, ed. Adeline Masquelier and Benjamin F. Soares (University of New Mexico Press, 2016), 151–152.

⁵⁹ Adeline Masquelier and Benjamin F. Soares, *Muslim Youth and the 9/11 Generation* (University of New Mexico Press, 2016), 15–16.

that may not be explicitly confrontational but are transformative nonetheless.⁶⁰

In Islam, youthfulness is not merely a fleeting phase; it is a period of immense potential and responsibility. Guided by the teachings of the Quran and the examples set by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), young Muslims are empowered to embark on a journey of personal growth, community engagement, and spiritual development. By balancing faith with action, seeking knowledge, demonstrating ethical conduct, and embracing social responsibility, they can become catalysts for positive change within their communities and beyond. Muslim youth are polyphonic selves who are attached to multiple identities, not just one identity, however. As Samuli Schielke has shown in his study of Muslim youth in contemporary Egypt, young people always engage simultaneously in a plurality of partly overlapping self-narratives or aspirational “registers,” none of which corresponds entirely with only one society, territory, or (least of all) a political program.⁶¹

Being young, Muslim, and globalized is a transformative journey for the female *santris*, offering a range of challenges and opportunities. The convergence of tradition and modernity presents them as young Muslims with the chance to shape a more inclusive, interconnected world that values diversity and mutual respect. By navigating this intersection with an open heart, a quest for knowledge, and an unwavering commitment to their faith, they can become catalysts for positive change, building bridges of understanding and harmony between cultures while embracing their rich religious heritage. To realize this potential, it is essential to provide them with the necessary tools, guidance, and platforms

⁶⁰ Asef Bayat, “Muslim Youth and the Claim of Youthfulness,” in *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North*, ed. Asef Bayat and Linda Herrera (Oxford University Press, 2010), 6–8.

⁶¹ Samuli Schielke, “Being Good in Ramadan: Ambivalence, Fragmentation, and the Moral Self in the Lives of Young Egyptians,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15 (2009): 24–40; Samuli Schielke, *Egypt in the Future Tense: Hope, Frustration, and Ambivalence before and after 2011*, Public Cultures of the Middle East and North Africa (Indiana University Press, 2015), 30–35.

to navigate the challenges and seize the opportunities presented by globalization while remaining grounded in their cultural and religious identity.

Conclusion

The viewpoints of the *santris* regarding K-Pop can be categorized into two distinct classifications. Firstly, they believe that expressing admiration for and engaging with K-Pop music can align with Islamic principles, as long as these activities remain moderate and free from excess, adhering to what Mulya terms a state of “no tension.” Secondly, while definitive regulations regarding the legality of K-Pop are lacking, the consensus among the *santris* leans toward favoring *ṣalawāt* (blessings) over K-Pop music. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of understanding the meaning of a song before deriving enjoyment from it. However, the prevailing sentiment among the *santris* is that K-Pop primarily functions as a form of entertainment that coexists with their rigorous routine of Qur'an memorization within the Islamic boarding school.

This perspective refrains from perceiving K-Pop as inherently sinful or detrimental to their memorization efforts. They adeptly manage their time and are acutely aware of their self-discipline, ensuring that their mandatory Qur'an memorization tasks are not overshadowed by entertainment. Occasionally, the *pesantren* administrator may intervene with a gentle reminder if a *santri* appears slightly lax in fulfilling their obligations. Furthermore, the *santris* actively embrace and enthusiastically engage with various other facets of Korean popular culture, including fashion, beauty, and cuisine. Their affinity for these elements is rooted in genuine fondness. Notably, Korean popular culture has seamlessly woven itself into their way of life, particularly within the dimensions of their activities and interests.

Initially, the *santris* are drawn to their idols due to factors such as familial influences, exceptional talents, or striking visuals. However, as time progresses, their appreciation deepens to encompass not only these aspects but also the admirable attitudes exhibited by their Korean favorites. Renowned for their discipline and strong work ethic, these idols serve as sources of inspiration

for the *santris*, particularly in the context of Qur'an memorization. Consequently, their lives undergo a vivid transformation. While not all *santris* sense a distinct impact on their religiosity due to their affinity for *hallyu* idols, some acknowledge feeling driven to intensify their worship and benevolent endeavors, showcasing that the two seemingly opposing entities can coexist and be practiced hand in hand.

Furthermore, the motivations that stimulate the *santris* to elevate their devotion underscore the influence of Korean popular culture on their religious consciousness and experiences. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that personal piety remains a subjective matter. The findings of this study contribute significantly to the available literature by shedding light on the multifaceted and dynamic experiences of Qur'an-memorizing *santris*. These individuals adeptly balance their commitments while navigating potential distractions, demonstrating the harmonization between two seemingly different aspects of their lives.

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