

K-pop fans reading anti-K-pop: Religion, identity and subjectivity

Okta Nurul Hidayati^{1*} 



Received: November 16, 2024
Revised: August 5, 2025
Accepted: October 13, 2025
Published: October 17, 2025

*Corresponding Author:

Okta Nurul Hidayati,
UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta,
Indonesia
oktanurulhidayati@gmail.com

About Authors:

¹ Okta Nurul Hidayati,
UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta,
Indonesia

Abstract

The expansion of K-pop fandom in Indonesia has transformed popular culture into a contested space where pleasure, piety, identity, and religious authority converge. Although existing studies on the Korean Wave (Hallyu), Muslim youth, and digital *da'wah* have explored fandom, piety, and platform-based religious discourse, there has been limited focus on how anti-K-pop *da'wah* constructs moral boundaries and on how Muslim women fans engage with such discourse. This article investigates how anti-K-pop *da'wah* frames K-pop as a moral and spiritual risk and examines the strategies Muslim women K-pop fans employ to negotiate this framing in their daily lives. Employing a qualitative-interpretative exploratory case study, the research integrates Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), specifically the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), with audience reception analysis. Data sources include the book "*Pernah Tenggelam*", digital-performative *da'wah* materials, limited observation, and semi-structured interviews with three Muslim women K-pop fans. The findings indicate that anti-K-pop *da'wah* establishes a binary opposition between the ideal Muslim woman and the K-waver through nomination, predication, legitimation, and intensification. In response, Muslim women fans utilise filtering, self-limitation, aesthetic reading, and contextual reinterpretation. The article argues that the relationship between Islam and K-pop is best conceptualised as a process of moral negotiation rather than absolute opposition.

Keywords: anti-K-pop *da'wah*; Muslim women fans; K-pop fandom; politics of piety; audience reception

Introduction

Over the past decade, Korean pop (K-pop) has become a cultural infrastructure shaping the everyday practices of young Indonesians through media consumption, fan communities, participatory networks, and digital interaction (Y. Kim, 2021; Williams & Kamaludeen, 2017). Its fandom now extends into the public sphere, fostering digital solidarity, identity expression, and political communication among Indonesian youth (Lewis, 2003; Muhyi & Sinha, 2025). This expansion has paralleled the rise of digital

To cite this article (APA Style 7th Edition): Hidayati, O. N. (2025). K-pop fans reading anti-K-pop: Religion, identity and subjectivity. *Al'Adalah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 28(1), 91-106. <https://doi.org/10.35719/aladalah.v28i1.413>



Copyright © 2025 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY-NC) 4.0 international license. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>)

da'wah, which frames K-pop as a moral risk for young Muslims, particularly Muslim women. Such discourse frequently associates K-pop with idolatry, religious negligence, excessive lifestyles, and weakened identity. As a result, K-pop in Indonesia constitutes an arena for negotiating pleasure, identity, piety, and religious authority within the digital public sphere.

Existing studies have examined the relationship between the Korean Wave (*Hallyu*), fandom, and the identities of young Muslims in Indonesia. Research on K-pop demonstrates that Hallyu operates as a significant global cultural strategy, with a substantial fandom base in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia (J. Kim & Kwon, 2022; Oh, 2017). Further studies indicate that K-pop fandom not only drives entertainment consumption but also cultivates affective communities, digital solidarity, and participatory practices among youth (Yoon, 2019; Ranieses, 2024). Within the Indonesian Islamic context, research on post-Islamism, *hijrah*, and digital *da'wah* suggests that the contemporary Muslim public sphere is marked by the increasing visibility of Islam in media, lifestyle, and popular culture (Ansor, 2016; Hasan, 2009; Juliansyahzen, 2023). Few studies, however, simultaneously analyse anti-K-pop *da'wah* texts using Critical Discourse Analysis and the reception of Muslim women as K-pop fans. This article sharpens that gap by linking anti-K-pop *da'wah* discourse with the micro-level and contextual reception experiences of Muslim women readers.

This article examines how anti-K-pop *da'wah* frames K-pop as a moral and spiritual risk, and how Muslim women who are K-pop fans negotiate this framing in their everyday experiences. The research is guided by three questions: How do anti-K-pop *da'wah* texts and practices construct K-pop and the ideal Muslim woman? How do Muslim women who are K-pop fans receive, filter, limit, or reinterpret anti-K-pop *da'wah* messages? What forms of subjectivity emerge from the interaction between anti-K-pop *da'wah* discourse and Muslim women's fandom? These questions position Muslim women K-pop fans as interpretative subjects who actively assess, select, and regulate their relationship with popular culture, rather than as passive recipients of religious messages.

This article argues that anti-K-pop *da'wah* constructs a moral opposition between the ideal Muslim woman and the K-waver through strategies such as nomination, predication, legitimation, and intensification. However, this opposition is not fully accepted by readers. Muslim women who are K-pop fans develop contextual moral reasoning through content filtering, limiting intensity, aesthetic reading, and reinterpretation of *da'wah* messages. In this context, Samaie and Malmir (2017) demonstrate that nomination and predication shape in-group and out-group boundaries,

while Yoon (2019) and Mulya (2021) show that Muslim male and female fans actively negotiate faith and fandom. This article contributes to scholarship on the politics of piety, popular culture, and Muslim women's subjectivity in Indonesia by showing how discourse production, moral circulation, and readerly meaning are connected through the Discourse-Historical Approach and audience reception analysis.

Literature Review

Existing research on K-pop, young Muslims, and digital *da'wah* demonstrates that Korean popular culture serves not only as transnational entertainment but also as a site for identity formation, affective engagement, community building, and moral negotiation. K-Wave (*Hallyu*) has shifted from the consumption of music and television dramas to a global cultural strategy, establishing K-pop as the primary driver of Korean cultural expansion, particularly in Southeast Asia (J. Kim & Kwon, 2022). In Indonesia, a substantial fan base has incorporated K-pop into the daily practices of young people, including Muslim women, through social media, fandom communities, and various forms of digital participation (Y. Kim, 2021; Williams & Kamaludeen, 2017). Scholarship on K-pop in Indonesia has developed along three principal trajectories: fandom as participatory culture, the transformation of young Muslim piety in digital spaces, and the moral regulation of popular pleasure.

The first trajectory conceptualises K-pop fandom as a participatory space that extends beyond entertainment consumption. Fandom facilitates connections between fans and idols and fosters solidarity, collective identity, and digital communication practices. Yoon (2019) demonstrates that K-pop is not merely perceived as a foreign cultural product by its fans but also serves as a space for reception, adaptation, and meaning-making. Ranieses (2024) highlights that fandom can serve as a site for producing social capital, enabling fans to build networks, form affective bonds, and orient themselves toward social action. In the political sphere, Muhyi and Sinha (2025) illustrate that K-pop fandom tactics can be adapted for electoral communication strategies targeting Gen-Z voters. Therefore, K-pop fandom operates as an active and dynamic cultural space that engages with broader socio-political domains.

The second trajectory investigates the transformation of young Muslim piety within the digital public sphere. In post-Reformasi Indonesia, Islam has become increasingly visible in popular culture, media, lifestyle, and digital environments (Hasan, 2009; Ansor, 2016). Post-Islamism does not indicate a decline in religiosity but rather the emergence of a pluralistic and competitive Islamic public arena characterised by contestation over

the meaning of piety (Bayat, 2013; Qodir, 2023). *Hijrah* communities and digital *da'wah* actors use social media to disseminate religious messages in ways that are adaptive, popular, and resonate with young audiences (Hidayat et al., 2020; Yusuf, 2025). Juliansyahzen (2023) finds that digital *da'wah* spaces can also reinforce the ideologization of *hijrah*, the commodification of religion, and the predominance of conservative discourse. In this context, K-pop becomes a focal point in debates regarding the regulation of popular pleasure.

The third trajectory foregrounds Muslim women's identity as a central site of moral regulation at the intersection of religion and popular culture. Discourses of piety frequently construct the ideal Muslim woman through references to the body, clothing, social relations, entertainment preferences, and self-discipline. Beta (2019) demonstrates that young Muslim women's groups are situated at the intersection of commercialisation, piety, and identity politics. Hasan (2009) contends that the Islamic public sphere functions not only as a site for the formation of religious authority but also as an arena for negotiating agency, commodification, and subjectivity. In the context of K-pop, Muslim women fans occupy a complex position, engaging with music, drama, performance, and fandom communities while also encountering *da'wah* discourses that frame K-pop as a moral risk. Consequently, popular pleasure becomes a domain of ethical and religious judgment.

Although previous research has advanced understanding of K-pop, young Muslims, and digital *da'wah*, several significant gaps remain. First, studies on Muslim K-pop fans primarily address the negotiation of faith and fandom but have not systematically examined how anti-K-pop *da'wah* texts construct moral opposition to fandom. Second, research on *hijrah* and digital *da'wah* has considered the rise of conservatism and platform-based religious authority but has not specifically explored how Muslim women K-pop fans receive, filter, or reinterpret these *da'wah* messages. Third, discourse studies often excel at analysing meaning production but pay less attention to connecting such analysis with audience reception data. As a result, the relationship among *da'wah* discourse production, moral circulation, and the subjective experiences of Muslim women fans remains insufficiently explained.

This article integrates discourse analysis of anti-K-pop *da'wah* with the reception practices of Muslim women fans within a unified analytical framework. Critical Discourse Analysis, specifically the Discourse-Historical Approach, is used to examine strategies of nomination, predication, legitimation, intensification, and mitigation that frame K-pop as a moral and spiritual risk (Samaie & Malmir, 2017). Audience reception analysis

investigates how Muslim women fans interpret these messages through their experiences, affects, communities, and religious understandings (Yoon, 2019; Mulya, 2021). By analysing both the production of discourse that constructs moral boundaries and the reception practices that negotiate these boundaries in everyday life, this article conceptualises the relationship between Islam and K-pop as an ongoing process of moral negotiation.

Method

This study employs a qualitative-interpretative approach, using an exploratory case study design, to examine the interaction between anti-K-pop *da'wah* and the reception of Muslim women as K-pop fans. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how meaning, identity, and subjectivity among Muslim women are shaped through *da'wah* texts, fandom experiences, and everyday moral negotiation. The research integrates Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to analyse the construction of anti-K-pop discourse, in conjunction with audience reception analysis to assess how Muslim women fans receive, filter, limit, or reinterpret *da'wah* messages. The units of analysis include anti-K-pop *da'wah* texts, digital-performative data related to *da'wah*, and reception narratives from Muslim women fans. The primary text analysed is the book “*Pernah Tenggelam*”, while digital-performative data comprises *da'wah* materials, social media posts, and anti-K-pop-themed events.

The research data consist of textual, digital-performative, and interview data. Textual data were obtained from “*Pernah Tenggelam*” and relevant anti-K-pop *da'wah* materials. Digital-performative data were collected from public *da'wah* posts, social media content, and limited observation of *da'wah* delivery that employed symbols, language, humour, Korean forms of address, and fan-cultural references. Reception data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with three Muslim women K-pop fans, who were purposively selected because they had experience of consuming K-pop or K-drama and of reading or responding to anti-K-pop *da'wah* narratives. The limited number of informants means this study prioritises narrative depth and variations in subjective positioning over statistical generalisation. The entire research process observed ethical principles, including informed consent, the use of pseudonyms, data anonymisation, and secure data storage.

Data analysis integrated CDA-DHA and audience reception analysis to address two primary issues: the construction of moral categories by anti-K-pop *da'wah* regarding K-pop and the ideal Muslim woman, and the reinterpretation of these categories by Muslim

women fans through their own experiences. The analytical process comprised several stages: archiving and normalising the data; segmenting data according to initial themes such as moral risk, idolatry, piety, entertainment, filtering, self-limitation, and reinterpretation; developing deductive codes from CDA-DHA, including nomination, predication, legitimation, intensification, and mitigation, alongside inductive codes derived from informants' narratives; comparing coding results across data sources; and interpreting the relationship between discourse construction and audience responses. The validity of the interpretation was ensured through source triangulation, repeated reading of the data, reflective memoing, and consistency checks between empirical evidence, analytical categories, and the study's conclusions.

Results

Constructing K-pop as a Moral and Spiritual Risk

Textual, performative, and digital platform data indicate that anti-K-pop *da'wah* not only critiques the consumption of entertainment but also frames K-pop as a moral and spiritual threat to the identity of Muslim women. In the book "*Pernah Tenggelam*", K-pop fandom is depicted as a source of pleasure that may distance young Muslim women from piety and is therefore portrayed as something that should be abandoned, corrected, or at least morally repositioned (Mulya, 2021). This perspective is reinforced by constructing an opposition between Muslim identity and Korean popular culture, positioning Korean culture as incompatible with religious discipline and the normative identity of Muslim women (Isa & Reissner-Roubicek, 2024). Observational data from the *Dehallyusinasi 2.0* event demonstrate that this critique was communicated through strategies familiar to fans, including Korean forms of address, singing, humour, and topical references to idols, which attracted the affective attention of fans and former fans. Simultaneously, the composition of the audience, the use of religious symbols, and community markers reinforced the formation of a moral community. These findings indicate that anti-K-pop *da'wah* transforms fandom from a matter of cultural preference into a question of religious identity.

Table 1 demonstrates that the construction of K-pop as a moral and spiritual risk operates through multiple discursive mechanisms. At the textual level, K-pop is framed as excessive pleasure, distraction, and a potential threat to piety. At the identity level, nomination strategies distinguish the morally approved in-group, represented by the ideal Muslim woman, from the out-group associated with the K-waver. This binary is further reinforced through legitimation, particularly via *da'wah* authority, *hijrah* discourse, and the symbolic presence of religious communities. The discourse does not

function solely through explicit rejection. The use of Korean cultural idioms, humour, and references to fan culture suggests a strategy of mitigation, specifically the appropriation of the affective language of fandom to redirect it toward religious self-regulation. Consequently, the discourse operates in two directions simultaneously: attracting while correcting, approaching while maintaining distance, and empathising while morally disciplining.

Table 1.

Discursive construction of K-pop as a moral and spiritual risk

Data locus	Empirical indication	CDA-DHA strategy	Constructed moral meaning
<i>Pernah Tenggelam</i> Book	K-pop is framed as a form of pleasure that may distance Muslim women from piety.	Predication and intensification	K-pop is positioned as a spiritual danger, not merely as entertainment.
Anti-K-pop narratives	Muslim identity and Korean popular culture are positioned as difficult to reconcile.	Nomination and predication	The ideal Muslim woman is separated from the figure of the K-waver.
<i>Dehallyusinasi</i> 2.0 event	Korean forms of address, songs, humour, and idol references are used in the opening performance.	Mitigation and affective appropriation	<i>Da'wah</i> enters the emotional language of fans before redirecting it.
Audience and event branding	The audience is dominated by Muslim women wearing religious dress/community markers; merchandise and slogans carry religious and environmental overtones.	Legitimation and in-group formation	The event constructs a recognisable community of moral correction.
Digital <i>da'wah</i> platforms	Persuasive taglines such as “embrace without hitting” and solution-oriented <i>da'wah</i> framing are used.	Mitigation and moral legitimation	Anti-K-pop <i>da'wah</i> is presented as empathetic guidance rather than mere condemnation.

Note. This table synthesises the textual analysis of the book “*Pernah Tenggelam*”, field observations from *Dehallyusinasi* 2.0, and related digital *da'wah* data. Source: author’s analysis and observation (2024).

This finding indicates that anti-K-pop *da'wah* serves as a mechanism for regulating popular pleasure within the context of piety politics. K-pop is not perceived solely as music, drama, choreography, or entertainment, but also as an indicator of potential vulnerability in Muslim women’s subjectivity. Through nomination, predication, legitimation, and intensification, this discourse delineates which forms of pleasure are deemed religiously acceptable and which are suspected of undermining moral commitment (Samaie & Malmir, 2017). This pattern aligns with the broader post-Islamist

public sphere, where Islamic identity is continually negotiated through media, lifestyle, gender norms, and popular culture (Bayat, 2013; Hasan, 2009). The data further demonstrates that anti-K-pop *da'wah* does not function solely as a doctrinal verdict; rather, it is a discursive practice that regulates the boundary between piety and popular pleasure. Framing K-pop as a moral and spiritual risk establishes the conditions for the repositioning of identity, which subsequently becomes central in readers' responses.

Reception of Anti-K-pop *Da'wah* among Muslim Women Fans: Processes of Filtering, Limiting, and Reinterpretation

Interview data with Muslim women K-pop fans indicate that anti-K-pop *da'wah* is not accepted as an absolute moral directive. Instead, fans engage in selective filtering, self-limitation, and contextual reinterpretation. Informant N explicitly rejected the characterisation of Korean drama viewers as religiously weak, stating, “watching Korean dramas does not determine whether or not a person is good” (Interview with N, 2024). After reading the book “*Pernah Tenggelam*”, she maintained a filtering approach: “*What I can take, I take, and what I cannot, I discard; it does not affect my faith*” (Interview with N, 2024). Informant IR demonstrated a more moderate response by reducing excessive involvement, noting that she previously engaged in frequent idol stalking but now does so only rarely. In contrast, informant R exhibited a more fluctuating form of reception, acknowledging the prohibition yet occasionally returning to fandom practices. These responses suggest that anti-K-pop discourse is negotiated through situational moral reasoning rather than passive compliance.

Table 2 identifies three distinct yet interconnected forms of reception. First, informant N exemplifies selective filtering. While recognising that certain Korean cultural products may conflict with Islamic norms, she rejects the notion that such incompatibility warrants a complete rejection of K-pop or Korean dramas. Her response distinguishes cultural appreciation from religious deviance. Second, informant IR demonstrates self-limitation. She continues to appreciate K-pop as music, performance, and entertainment, but reduces more intensive practices such as idol stalking. For IR, the anti-K-pop text serves as a reminder to avoid excess. Third, informant R illustrates fluctuating negotiation. She acknowledges the moral warning but continues to experience affective attachment to drama and fandom. The reception patterns among the three informants are shaped by doctrinal claims, habits, emotional attachments, friendship experiences, leisure activities, and individual capacities for self-regulation.

Table 2.*Patterns of Reception among Muslim Women K-pop Fans in Response to Anti-K-pop Da'wah*

Informant	Initial response to K-pop/K-drama	Response after reading the book " <i>Pernah Tenggelam</i> "	Pattern of reception	Meaning
N	Views Korean dramas as a means of learning about culture, character, language, and moral lessons.	Accepts useful elements and rejects inappropriate ones; emphasises that fandom does not weaken her faith.	Selective filtering	Religious identity is maintained through conscious selection rather than total withdrawal from popular culture.
IR	Enjoys songs, performances, humour, and entertainment value.	Reduces idolatry and understands the book as a warning against excess.	Self-limitation	<i>Da'wah</i> is received as an invitation to moderation, not as a command to abandon fandom entirely.
R	Enjoys dramas and acknowledges their emotional appeal, but also finds it difficult to reduce the desire to watch them.	Acknowledges the existence of prohibition, but continues to experience recurring attraction to fandom.	Fluctuating negotiation	Reception is marked by tension between moral awareness and affective attachment.

Note. This table synthesises semi-structured interview data with three informants before and after reading the book "*Pernah Tenggelam*". Pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of the informants. Source: author's interviews (2024).

These findings indicate that Muslim women K-pop fans employ contextual moral reasoning when responding to anti-K-pop *da'wah*. They neither categorically oppose religious discourse in favour of popular culture nor fully accept prohibitive narratives that portray K-pop as inherently dangerous. Instead, they interpret *da'wah* messages through personal filters, situational boundaries, and nuanced understandings of cultural consumption. This pattern aligns with reception studies that conceptualise audiences as active agents who construct meaning based on their experiences and social positions (Yoon, 2019). The findings also support Mulya's (2021) argument that young Muslims in Indonesia negotiate Islam and K-pop through adaptive practices rather than binary opposition. In this context, K-pop fandom serves as a site for ethical self-management, as Muslim women fans differentiate between enjoying music, learning about culture, admiring performance, avoiding excessive idolatry, and fulfilling religious obligations. Reception thus emerges as an active process of filtering, limiting, and reinterpreting moral discourse.

Negotiative Subjectivity between Piety and Popular Pleasure

The integration of discourse analysis and interview data demonstrates that Muslim women K-pop fans construct subjective positions that are neither entirely subordinate to anti-K-pop *da’wah* nor wholly immersed in fandom pleasures. Informant N exemplifies religious self-assurance through selective cultural consumption, adopting elements considered beneficial and rejecting those deemed religiously inappropriate. Informant IR continues to appreciate songs, performances, and entertainment, but moderates more intensive behaviours, such as idol stalking, after engaging with the book “*Pernah Tenggelam*”. Informant R occupies a less stable position, acknowledging religious admonitions while recognising the potential for renewed affective attraction to Korean dramas and fandom. Collectively, these responses illustrate that piety is maintained and popular pleasure persists. The data reveal the development of negotiative subjectivity, as Muslim women K-pop fans navigate tensions among religious commitment, aesthetic enjoyment, cultural curiosity, and self-regulation in daily life.

Table 3.
Negotiative Subjectivity between Piety and Popular Pleasure

Informant	Empirical marker	Form of subjectivity	Mechanism of negotiation	Analytical meaning
N	Accepts useful elements of Korean culture and rejects elements considered religiously inappropriate.	Reflective-selective subjectivity	Filtering content and separating cultural learning from religious deviance.	Piety is maintained through conscious selection, not total withdrawal from culture.
IR	Continues to enjoy K-pop and K-drama for entertainment, but reduces excessive involvement with idols.	Controlled coexistence	Limiting intensity and understanding <i>da’wah</i> as a warning against excess.	Popular pleasure is permitted within the limits of self-control.
R	Acknowledges moral warnings but experiences recurring attraction to fandom.	Fluctuating subjectivity	Moving between moral awareness and affective attachment.	Religious discipline and popular desire remain in unresolved tension.

Note. This table synthesises interview responses collected before and after reading the book “*Pernah Tenggelam*”. Pseudonyms are assigned to all informants. Source: author’s interviews and analysis (2024).

Table 3 demonstrates that the subjectivity of Muslim women K-pop fans emerges through distinct patterns of negotiation. Informant N exemplifies a reflective-selective approach, recognising potential moral risks in Korean popular culture while rejecting the notion that all fandom equates to religious decline. Her subjectivity is shaped by processes

of filtering and value differentiation. Informant IR illustrates controlled coexistence, interpreting *da'wah* messages as guidance to moderate excess without abandoning K-pop or K-drama as sources of entertainment and aesthetic pleasure. Informant R embodies fluctuating subjectivity, acknowledging the normative influence of religious warnings while maintaining emotional connections to fandom. These patterns indicate that Muslim women fans do not occupy static identity categories. Instead, their subjectivities are constructed through practical decisions regarding media consumption, engagement intensity, and the balance between religious understanding and participation in global popular culture.

This finding indicates that the interaction between anti-K-pop *da'wah* and Muslim women's fandom does not result in a binary opposition between the pious Muslim woman and the K-waver. Instead, it produces negotiative moral subjects. Within the framework of critical discourse analysis, polarising nomination and predication are addressed through reframing: idols are regarded as aesthetic objects, K-dramas are viewed as opportunities for cultural or linguistic exposure, and fandom is regulated through self-management rather than outright rejection. This supports the perspective that audiences are active meaning-makers, interpreting religious messages through lived experience, affective attachment, and social context (Yoon, 2019; Mulya, 2021). Theoretically, these subjective positions demonstrate that piety and popular pleasure are not intrinsically mutually exclusive. Both domains are subject to ongoing negotiation through personal filters, situational boundaries, and intensity management. Consequently, Muslim women fans emerge as ethical agents who navigate religious authority, cultural enjoyment, and self-discipline within Indonesia's digital public sphere.

Discussion

The findings identify three interrelated dynamics in the interaction between anti-K-pop *da'wah* and Muslim women's fandom. First, anti-K-pop *da'wah* frames K-pop as a moral and spiritual risk by establishing a binary opposition between the ideal Muslim woman and the K-waver. This framing employs strategies such as nomination, predication, legitimation, and intensification, transforming popular pleasure into an indicator of potential religious vulnerability. Second, Muslim women fans actively engage with this discourse by employing filtering, self-limitation, aesthetic reading, and contextual interpretation. Third, these responses foster a negotiative subjectivity, wherein piety and popular pleasure are not viewed as mutually exclusive, but as a moral domain continuously regulated through self-discipline, social awareness, and religious reflection.

In the social context, the findings reflect broader transformations in the culture of young Muslims within Indonesia's digital public sphere. K-pop fandom has become integrated into young people's sociability, affective communities, and participatory culture, while digital *da'wah* increasingly shapes moral boundaries among young Muslims. Debates about K-pop extend beyond discussions of music, drama, or celebrity admiration; they serve as arenas for contesting how Muslim women's identity is displayed, disciplined, and recognised in public life. This trend demonstrates the growing visibility of Islam in popular culture, media, and lifestyle practices (Hasan, 2009; Ansor, 2016). Muslim women fans thus occupy a complex position: they are simultaneously positioned as moral subjects within *da'wah* discourse and as active participants in global popular culture.

This study, theoretically, supports the view that religious authority in the digital age is not unidirectional. While anti-K-pop *da'wah* attempts to stabilise the meaning of piety by distinguishing acceptable from unacceptable forms of pleasure, its reception remains subject to negotiation. Critical Discourse Analysis and Discourse-Historical Approach (CDA-DHA) elucidate how discourse constructs moral categories through nomination and predication, whereas reception analysis demonstrates how audiences reinterpret these categories through lived experience (Samaie & Malmir, 2017; Yoon, 2019). From a post-Islamist perspective, the contemporary Muslim public sphere is characterised not by declining religiosity, but by ongoing contestation among piety, lifestyle, consumer culture, and identity (Bayat, 2013). The relationship between Islam and K-pop is thus best conceptualised as a dynamic negotiation between normative discourse and audience agency, rather than a fixed opposition.

Young Muslim women who are K-pop fans are neither passive recipients of popular culture nor objects requiring correction through *da'wah*. Their responses demonstrate a reflective moral capacity to differentiate between entertainment, cultural learning, aesthetic pleasure, excessive idolatry, and religious obligation. While not all forms of fandom are devoid of ethical challenges, the findings indicate that ethical negotiation frequently occurs in everyday, partial, and situational contexts. Practices such as filtering, limiting, and reinterpreting illustrate that religious subjectivity is shaped not only by formal religious instruction but also by daily decisions regarding media consumption, peer interaction, leisure activities, and self-discipline. Thus, Muslim women fans emerge as moral agents who strive to balance religious commitment with participation in global culture, without subordinating one to the other.

In relation to previous research, this article occupies an intermediate position between studies that emphasise the creative agency of Muslim fans and those that highlight conservative tendencies in digital *da'wah*. Research on Muslim K-pop fandom demonstrates that young Indonesian Muslims negotiate faith and fandom through adaptive and creative practices (Yoon, 2019; Mulya, 2021). Conversely, studies on *hijrah*, digital piety, and conservative *da'wah* indicate that digital platforms can reinforce moral regulation and the construction of religious boundaries (Hidayat et al., 2020; Juliansyahzen, 2023; Yusuf, 2025). This study integrates these perspectives by showing that, while anti-K-pop *da'wah* constructs strong moral boundaries, Muslim women fans do not always internalise these boundaries in absolute terms. Instead, they adapt them into more flexible practices, including moderation, selective consumption, and personal ethical judgment.

Da'wah communication that relies predominantly on moral panic, absolute prohibition, or binary opposition risks overlooking the interpretative agency of young audiences. A more effective approach involves dialogical and empathetic *da'wah*, which acknowledges the cultural realities of young people, recognises their capacity for moral reasoning, and provides measured guidance rather than outright condemnation. Religious educators and *da'wah* communities can enhance media literacy by assisting young Muslims in evaluating content, recognising excessive attachment, understanding platform algorithms, and distinguishing aesthetic appreciation from uncritical idolatry. At the community level, it is essential to develop safe dialogical spaces where Muslim women fans can discuss popular culture, religious concerns, and self-regulation without immediate stigmatisation. In this way, *da'wah* can serve not only as a prohibition, but also as an ethical accompaniment in the digital lives of young Muslims.

Conclusion

Anti-K-pop *da'wah* functions not only as a critique of popular culture but also as a discursive practice that establishes moral boundaries around Muslim women's identities. Employing strategies such as nomination, predication, legitimation, and intensification, K-pop is framed as a moral and spiritual risk that may undermine the piety, self-discipline, and religious identity of young Muslim women. The findings indicate that Muslim women fans do not accept this construction passively. Instead, they actively negotiate *da'wah* messages through content filtering, regulating the intensity of their engagement, adopting aesthetic interpretations of music or drama, and reinterpreting the boundaries between entertainment, culture, and religious obligation. Thus, the

relationship between anti-K-pop *da'wah* and Muslim women's fandom is more accurately characterised as a process of moral negotiation rather than a strict opposition between Islam and K-pop.

This article advances studies on the politics of piety, popular culture, and Muslim women's subjectivity by demonstrating that piety and popular pleasure are not inherently mutually exclusive. Instead, both are negotiated through everyday practices involving choices, boundaries, and self-reflection. Additionally, this study contributes to research on Muslim youth and post-Islamism by illustrating that digital *da'wah* authority is not unidirectional, as young audiences can accept and reinterpret moral messages. The integration of the Discourse-Historical Approach with audience reception analysis proves valuable for examining the relationship among discourse production, moral circulation, and readers' meaning-making. This methodological approach allows for an analysis of both how *da'wah* frames K-pop and how Muslim women fans respond to such framing within their subjective experiences.

This study has several limitations. The small number of informants precludes statistical generalisation to all Muslim women K-pop fans in Indonesia. The data are also limited to one primary *da'wah* text, selected digital artefacts, and micro-level reception experiences. Variations in reception based on social class, religiosity, educational background, region, or digital platform have not yet been examined. Future research could increase the number of informants, compare reception across different cities and fandom communities, and systematically analyse platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and X. Further studies might also compare anti-K-pop discourse with *da'wah* discourses that are more accommodating of popular culture, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the negotiation between Islam, piety, and fandom.

References

- Ansor, M. (2016). Post-Islamism and the remaking of Islamic public sphere in post-reform Indonesia. *Studia Islamika*, 23(3), 471–515. <https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v23i3.2412>
- Bayat, A. (2013). *Post-Islamism: The Many Faces of Political Islam*. Oxford University Press.
- Beta, A. R. (2019). Commerce, piety and politics: Indonesian young Muslim women's groups as religious influencers. *New Media & Society*, 21(10), 2140–2159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819838774>

- Farias, C., Seremani, T., & Fernández, P. D. (2021). Popular Culture, Moral Narratives and Organizational Portrayals: A Multimodal Reflexive Analysis of a Reality Television Show. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 171(2), 211–226. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04460-1>
- Handayani, D. (2021). Political Identity, Popular Culture, and Ideological Coercion: The Discourses of Feminist Movement in the Report of Ummi Magazine. *Jurnal Pemberdayaan Masyarakat: Media Pemikiran Dan Dakwah Pembangunan*, 5(1), 185–210. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpm.2021.051-08>
- Hasan, N. (2009). The making of public Islam: Piety, agency, and commodification on the landscape of the Indonesian public sphere. *Contemporary Islam*, 3(3), 229–250. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-009-0096-9>
- Hidayat, R., Sholihin, M., & Wanto, D. (2020). The *Hijrah* Communities and Religious Superficiality: Ideology and Religiosity of the Islamic *Hijrah* Communities on Social Media. *Journal of Population and Social Studies (JPSS)*, 29. <https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jpss/article/view/242424>
- Isa, N. M., & Reissner-Roubicek, S. (2024). Identity construction and negotiation of a hijab-wearing Malay-Muslim Korean Pop Fan. *International Journal of Language, Literacy and Translation*, 7(1), 83–95. <https://doi.org/10.36777/ijoltt2024.7.1.100>
- Juliansyahzen, M. I. (2023). Ideologization of *Hijrah* in social media: Digital activism, religious commodification, and conservative domination. *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, 22(1), 155–180. <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol22.iss1.art6>
- Kim, J., & Kwon, S.-H. (2022). K-Pop's Global Success and Its Innovative Production System. *Sustainability*, 14(17), 11101. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141711101>
- Kim, Y. (2021). *The Soft Power of the Korean Wave: Parasite, BTS and Drama* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003102489>
- Lee, Y. L., Jung, M., Nathan, R. J., & Chung, J.-E. (2020). Cross-National Study on the Perception of the Korean Wave and Cultural Hybridity in Indonesia and Malaysia Using Discourse on Social Media. *Sustainability*, 12(15), 6072. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12156072>
- Lewis, L. A. (Ed.). (2003). *The adoring audience: Fan culture and popular media* (Transferred to digital printing). Routledge.
- Lim, S. (2022). *South Korean Popular Culture in the Global Context: Beyond the Fandom*. Taylor & Francis.
- Muhyi, M. H., & Sinha, A. (2025). Harmonizing Hallyu: An analysis of Korean fandom tactics in Anies Baswedan X (Twitter) campaign content for the 2024 Indonesia presidential election. In B. Alareeni (Ed.), *Big Data in Finance: Transforming the*

- Financial Landscape* (Vol. 164, pp. 249–256). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-75095-3_20
- Mulya, T. W. (2021). Faith and fandom: Young Indonesian Muslims negotiating K-pop and Islam. *Contemporary Islam*, 15(3), 337–355. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-021-00475-1>
- Oh, I. (2017). Islam and local culture: The peril of state violence and Hallyu fandom in Indonesia (with reference to Palestine). *Kritika Kultura*, 29. <https://doi.org/10.13185/KK2017.02911>
- Qodir, Z. (2023). Post-Islamism and Reform Islamic Law: The Challenges and Future of Political Islam in Indonesia. *AHKAM: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah*, 23(2). <https://doi.org/10.15408/ajis.v23i2.31484>
- Ranieses, J. J. (2024). From Fan to Founder: Exploring the Relationship between K-pop Fandom, Social Capital, and Entrepreneurial Intention. *Review of Integrative Business and Economics Research*, 13(2). https://buscompress.com/uploads/3/4/9/8/34980536/riber_13-2_16_s23-047_251-267.pdf
- Samaie, M., & Malmir, B. (2017). US news media portrayal of Islam and Muslims: A corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 49(14), 1351–1366. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2017.1281789>
- Sun, Q., Paje, D., & Lee, H. (2023). “Female empowerment is being commercialized”: Online reception of girl crush trend among feminist K-pop fans. *Feminist Media Studies*, 23(8), 4156–4169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2022.2154820>
- Törnberg, A., & Törnberg, P. (2016). Muslims in social media discourse: Combining topic modeling and critical discourse analysis. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 13, 132–142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2016.04.003>
- Williams, J. P., & Kamaludeen, M. N. (2017). Muslim girl culture and social control in Southeast Asia: Exploring the hijabista and hijabster phenomena. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 13(2), 199–216. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659016687346>
- Yoon, S. (2019). K-Pop fandom in veil: Religious reception and adaptation to popular culture. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 13(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2019.13.1.1-20>
- Yusuf, Y. M. (2025). *Da’wah* communication and the *hijrah* youth movement: Islamic identity and social change in Bandung. *MUHARRIK: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Sosial*, 8(1), 67–79. <https://doi.org/10.37680/muharrik.v8i1.7072>