

Western Music and Islamic Character among Generation Z: A Qualitative Analysis of Digital Music Culture

Musik Barat dan Pembentukan Karakter Islami Generasi Z: Analisis Kualitatif Budaya Musik Digital

¹Lutfiyah Mahrusah, ^{*2}M. Syukri Rizki Hamdalah

¹Institut Agama Islam Negeri Parepare, Indonesia

²Universitas Islam Negeri Sultanah Nahrasiyah Lhokseumawe, Indonesia

e-mail: syukri.2020we@gmail.com

Abstract: *The growing circulation of Western popular music through digital platforms raises important questions about how cultural values are represented and negotiated within Islamic education. This study examines moral, emotional, and identity-related values in Western popular music and publicly accessible digital discourse relevant to Muslim Generation Z. Using qualitative digital content analysis, digital materials were selected through criterion-based purposive sampling from YouTube, TikTok, and Spotify between January and July 2025. The corpus comprised 12 songs by Taylor Swift, Olivia Rodrigo, and Billie Eilish, 300 YouTube comments, 150 TikTok comments/posts or short-video responses, 20 relevant hashtags, and 25 platform metadata records. Data were analyzed through inductive and deductive thematic content analysis and interpreted using ta'dib, tazkiyah al-nafs, akhlaq al-karimah, social learning theory, and cultivation theory. Three themes emerged: emotional identification and moral ambiguity, negotiation of autonomy and individual-oriented values, and selective adaptation through digital recontextualization of Islamic values. The findings indicate that digital popular music functions as a site of emotional meaning-making and value negotiation without establishing causal effects on moral development. The study contributes an integrative perspective and proposes Critical Islamic Media Literacy as a pedagogical framework for ethical engagement with digital popular culture within contemporary Islamic educational contexts in Indonesia.*

Keywords: *digital music culture; Generation Z; Islamic education; qualitative digital content analysis; Critical Islamic Media Literacy*

Abstrak: *Perkembangan pesat musik populer Barat melalui platform digital menimbulkan pertanyaan penting mengenai bagaimana nilai-nilai budaya direpresentasikan dan dinegosiasikan dalam konteks pendidikan Islam. Penelitian ini mengkaji nilai moral, emosional, dan identitas dalam musik populer Barat serta diskursus digital publik yang relevan dengan Generasi Z Muslim. Penelitian menggunakan analisis isi digital kualitatif dengan teknik criterion-based purposive sampling terhadap data dari YouTube, TikTok, dan Spotify selama Januari–Juli 2025. Korpus penelitian terdiri atas 12 lagu Taylor Swift, Olivia Rodrigo, dan Billie Eilish, 300 komentar YouTube, 150 komentar/postingan atau respons video pendek TikTok, 20 hashtag relevan, dan 25 rekaman metadata platform. Data dianalisis melalui analisis isi tematik induktif dan deduktif, kemudian ditafsirkan menggunakan konsep ta'dib, tazkiyah al-nafs, akhlaq al-karimah, teori pembelajaran sosial, dan teori kultivasi. Tiga tema utama ditemukan, yaitu identifikasi emosional dan ambiguitas moral, negosiasi otonomi dan nilai berorientasi individual, serta adaptasi selektif*

melalui rekontekstualisasi digital nilai-nilai Islam. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa musik populer digital menjadi ruang pemaknaan emosional dan negosiasi nilai tanpa membuktikan pengaruh kausal terhadap perkembangan moral. Penelitian ini menawarkan perspektif integratif dan mengusulkan Critical Islamic Media Literacy sebagai kerangka pedagogis untuk keterlibatan etis dengan budaya populer digital dalam pendidikan Islam.

Kata kunci: budaya musik digital; Generasi Z; pendidikan Islam; analisis isi digital kualitatif; Critical Islamic Media Literacy

Introduction

The evolution of digital technology has transformed the patterns of production, distribution, and consumption of popular culture among the younger generation. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Spotify facilitate the transnational circulation of music through algorithmic recommendation mechanisms, social networks, and user participation; consequently, the boundaries between music consumption, social interaction, and identity formation have become increasingly fluid (Stahl & Literat, 2023; Vizcaíno-Verdú, 2024). For Generation Z, music serves not merely as a form of entertainment but also as a symbolic resource for expressing emotions, constructing identity, and making sense of social and personal experiences (Stahl & Literat, 2023). This concerning trend indicates that Western music is not merely entertainment but has become part of the digital ecosystem that shapes the values, lifestyles, and ways of thinking of the younger Muslim generation (Street et al., 2012; Turner & Tollison, 2021; Webster, 2020). Within the context of Indonesian Muslim society, this dynamic is significant for Islamic education, as the process of value formation no longer occurs exclusively through the family, school, and religious institutions, but also through intensive interaction with various forms of digital culture.

Issues arise when the messages conveyed in global music culture intersect with the value frameworks held by young Muslims. Western popular music including the works of artists such as Taylor Swift, Olivia Rodrigo, and Billie Eilish frequently articulates themes of self-identity, interpersonal relationships, emotional vulnerability, personal freedom, life choices, and the search for meaning (Nursalam et al., 2024). These themes cannot be categorized a priori as either conflicting with or aligned with Islamic values, as their meaning depends on the audience's interpretation. However, when consumed repeatedly in digital environments, these narratives can become cultural reference points that young people use to understand themselves, their social relationships, and their moral orientations. Meanwhile, research by (Kianpour et al., 2026) lies not in the existence of popular music itself, but in how Muslim Generation Z interprets and negotiates these cultural messages in relation to principles such as *akhlaq al-karimah* (noble character), self-restraint, responsibility, patience, and balance.

The complexity of this issue is heightened because digital media consumption occurs within an ecosystem that is personal, repetitive, and algorithmically driven. The content a user receives is determined not only by individual choices but also by recommendation systems that leverage search history, preferences, and engagement patterns to deliver content deemed relevant (Fernández Muñoz et al., 2024; Tirocchi, 2024). In an educational context, this process demonstrates that value-based learning can occur outside formal settings through observation, message repetition, social interaction, and media experiences (Pérez Escoda et al., 2021; Uecker & McClure, 2023). Consequently, Islamic education requires an approach that goes beyond merely conveying norms regarding what is *halal* (permissible) or *haram* (forbidden); it must also cultivate learners' abilities to identify, interpret, and evaluate cultural messages critically and ethically.

Theoretically, this issue can be analyzed through a dialogue between Islamic educational concepts and media-based learning theories. The concept of *ta'dib* frames education as a process of cultivating *adab* (proper conduct), recognizing appropriate value systems, and fostering ethical responsibility, whereas *tazkiyah al-nafs* emphasizes the continuous process of self-development and purification. These concepts can be integrated with social learning theory which explains that individuals acquire attitudes and behaviors through observation, modeling, and reinforcement (Bandura, 1977) and cultivation theory, which highlights the link between repeated media exposure and the shaping of perceptions regarding social reality and accepted norms (Gerbner, 1986; Rachman, 2018). This framework allows digital music to be understood not merely as an object of entertainment, but as part of a social learning environment where values, identities, and moral orientations can be constructed and negotiated.

Existing literature indicates that the relationship between music, religion, media, and young people has been examined from various perspectives. Research on music within an Islamic context has largely focused on theological and jurisprudential issues regarding legal status, legitimacy, and the boundaries of musical usage (Alkautsar & Layyinnati, 2025; M. Chen & Hyun Tai, 2025). Meanwhile, sociocultural studies demonstrate that music can serve as a medium for articulating identity and emotional experiences, as well as for community building and the negotiation of social positions (Yuli Rohmiyati et al., 2025). In another realm, research concerning Generation Z and digital media has addressed media usage practices, identity construction, well-being, learning, and participation in digital environments (Preniqi et al., 2023). These studies provide a crucial foundation for understanding music and media as integral parts of the social lives of young people (Farahat, 2023; Morris, 2024; Tobin, 2013; Unyil, 2023).

While studies on music in Islam, digital culture, and Generation Z have expanded, research linking these three elements within the context of Islamic education remains limited. Studies on music in Islam generally focus on normative and legal aspects, whereas research on digital music culture tends to address social, psychological, and cultural dimensions. Consequently, the research gap lies in the lack of robust integration between digital music consumption, value interpretation by Muslim Generation Z, and moral formation within Islamic education. This study offers a novel approach by positioning digital popular music as a space for value negotiation and informal moral learning, integrating the concepts of *ta'dib* (cultivation of character/etiquette) and *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul) with social learning theory and cultivation theory.

This study aims to analyze the values represented in Western popular music and to explain how Muslim Generation Z interprets and negotiates these values in relation to Islamic moral principles. The research questions are: How do Muslim Generation Z individuals interpret and negotiate values found in Western popular music consumed via digital platforms in relation to Islamic moral principles, and what are the implications for Islamic education in the digital era? The study is expected to make a conceptual contribution to the development of Islamic education that is more responsive to digital culture and the value-formation processes of the younger generation.

Method

This study employed qualitative digital content analysis to examine how moral, emotional, and identity-related values are represented in Western popular music and articulated in publicly accessible digital discourse. This approach was appropriate because the study relied on digital texts and platform-based materials rather than direct interaction with human participants (Al-Khafaji & Al-Shujairi, 2026). The study focused on YouTube, TikTok, and Spotify during the period from January to July 2025, with particular attention to songs by Taylor Swift, Olivia

Rodrigo, and Billie Eilish. These platforms were selected because they represent complementary dimensions of digital music circulation, audience engagement, and user-generated interpretation.

Digital materials were selected through criterion-based purposive sampling. Songs were included if they: (1) were performed by one of the three selected artists; (2) were publicly accessible during the study period; (3) showed substantial visibility or engagement on YouTube, TikTok, or Spotify; (4) contained themes related to identity, emotional expression, interpersonal relationships, autonomy, moral choice, or self-understanding; and (5) generated sufficient publicly accessible digital discourse (Zou et al., 2026). Instrumental works, songs without verifiable lyrics, duplicate materials, and content unrelated to the research focus were excluded. The final corpus comprised 12 songs, 300 YouTube comments, 150 TikTok comments/posts or short-video responses, 20 relevant hashtags, and 25 platform metadata records. Hashtags and metadata were used as contextual information on content circulation and visibility rather than as primary units of analysis.

Data collection was conducted systematically during the January-July 2025 period. Selected songs were first screened according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, after which official or verifiable lyrics were compiled as textual documents. Relevant platform metadata and hashtags were then recorded. Publicly accessible YouTube comments and TikTok materials associated with the selected songs were subsequently screened for substantive expressions of interpretation, emotion, identification, value judgment, agreement, disagreement, or reflection. Duplicate content, advertisements, spam, automated messages, comments containing only emojis or tags, and irrelevant materials were excluded. Each retained item was assigned an identification code and documented by source, platform, retrieval date, and content type to establish a transparent audit trail (O'Sullivan et al., 2025).

The unit of analysis varied according to the type of material. For song lyrics, a meaningful phrase, line, or verse constituted the coding unit, while the complete song served as the contextual unit. For YouTube and TikTok materials, each comment, caption, post, or short-video response constituted a unit of analysis (Marian et al., 2026). Song lyrics were analyzed as cultural representations, whereas audience-generated digital materials were treated as expressions of interpretation and meaning-making. Hashtags and platform metadata were used only to contextualize the circulation and visibility of the selected content.

The materials were analyzed using qualitative thematic content analysis with inductive and deductive coding (Oakley et al., 2023). The analysis began with repeated reading of the corpus, followed by initial coding of recurring themes such as emotional expression, identity, interpersonal relationships, autonomy, responsibility, self-control, spirituality, and moral evaluation (Levang et al., 2026). Related codes were then grouped into broader thematic categories and interpreted through the concepts of *ta'dib*, *tazkiyah al-nafs*, and *akhlaq al-karimah*, together with social learning theory and cultivation theory. Finally, patterns identified in song lyrics were compared with those found in audience-generated digital discourse to identify forms of convergence, reinterpretation, negotiation, and tension between popular-cultural representations and Islamic ethical concepts.

The trustworthiness of the analysis was supported through a consistent coding framework, analytic notes, an audit trail, and cross-source comparison among song lyrics, YouTube comments, TikTok materials, hashtags, and platform metadata (Irwanto et al., 2025). Because the study used only publicly accessible digital materials and involved no interviews, surveys, or direct interaction with users, identifying information such as usernames was excluded from the dataset and reporting. Potentially searchable comments were paraphrased

when necessary to reduce traceability and protect contextual privacy in accordance with Internet research ethics (Guellil et al., 2026).

Results and Discussion

Analysis of the digital corpus identified three interrelated themes: emotional identification and moral ambiguity, negotiation of autonomy and individual-oriented values, and selective adaptation and digital recontextualization of Islamic values. These themes emerged from the qualitative thematic analysis of 12 selected songs, 300 YouTube comments, 150 TikTok comments/posts or short-video responses, 20 relevant hashtags, and 25 platform metadata records collected between January and July 2025. Thematic coding was not mutually exclusive; a single digital item could contain more than one relevant meaning and therefore contribute to more than one thematic category. Rather than relying on isolated public quotations, the analysis considered a digital expression analytically relevant when similar meanings recurred across multiple items and, where possible, across more than one platform. Public comments are therefore reported in paraphrased form and without usernames or other identifying information.

Table 1. Thematic Matrix of the Digital Content Analysis

Main Theme	Main Empirical Pattern	Principal Data Sources	Analytical Interpretation
Emotional Identification and Moral Ambiguity	Emotional expression, sadness, relational experiences, self-reflection, and self-validation	Song lyrics, YouTube comments, TikTok posts/responses	Music functions as a cultural resource for emotional meaning-making; its relationship with Islamic moral formation requires interpretation rather than causal assumptions
Negotiation of Autonomy and Individual-Oriented Values	Self-worth, independence, personal choice, autonomy, and freedom from external validation	Song lyrics, YouTube comments, TikTok discourse	Autonomy-oriented messages may be negotiated in relation to responsibility, self-regulation, <i>tawadhu'</i> , <i>ta'awun</i> , and <i>akhlaq al-karimah</i>
Selective Adaptation and Digital Recontextualization	Reinterpretation of popular-cultural content through religious language, Qur'anic references, spiritual reflection, or Islamic motivational expressions	TikTok posts, YouTube discourse, hashtags	Digital audiences may actively reinterpret cultural messages rather than receive them passively

Note. The thematic categories were generated through multi-coding; therefore, individual digital items could contribute to more than one theme. The table summarizes recurrent patterns rather than population prevalence.

Emotional Identification and Moral Ambiguity

The first theme concerns the prominent use of popular music as a resource for emotional identification and self-expression. Across the analyzed lyrics and audience-generated digital materials, recurrent content addressed sadness, insecurity, disappointment, relational difficulties, self-doubt, and attempts to understand personal emotions. Songs such as *Anti-Hero* by Taylor Swift and *Vampire* by Olivia Rodrigo were associated with digital responses in which users connected lyrical narratives with experiences of emotional vulnerability, disappointment, or personal reflection. These patterns indicate that the selected music was frequently interpreted as emotionally meaningful rather than consumed solely as entertainment. Importantly, the data demonstrate patterns of publicly articulated emotional identification; they do not establish that listening to these songs causes particular psychological, moral, or religious outcomes.

This finding is consistent with research that understands music and digitally mediated cultural content as resources through which individuals articulate emotion and construct meanings around personal experiences. Research conducted by (Cloarec et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023) similarly emphasize the significance of affective experience in contemporary media environments, while (Berger et al., 2023; Milli et al., 2025) draw attention to the capacity of digital platforms to amplify content that generates emotional engagement. The present study extends these observations by examining their possible significance within Islamic education. From the perspective of *ta'dib*, emotional articulation is not inherently opposed to Islamic moral development; however, emotional expression acquires educational significance when it is accompanied by ethical reflection, self-regulation, and awareness of responsibility.

The concept of moral ambiguity is therefore used here to describe a space of possible tension rather than an empirically demonstrated moral decline. The digital materials show that self-validation and emotional authenticity are recurrent themes, whereas they cannot establish whether such expressions replace *dhikr*, prayer, patience, or other forms of spiritual reflection. Claims of replacement or moral displacement would require interviews, longitudinal evidence, or direct observation of participants' religious practices. Theoretically, however, the pattern raises an educational question concerning how emotional self-expression can be connected with *sabr*, self-control, and reflective moral judgment. Consequently, the implication derived from this theme is not that Islamic education should restrict emotional engagement with music, but that it should strengthen learners' capacity to interpret emotional messages while relating them to ethical and spiritual reflection.

Negotiating Autonomy and Individual-Oriented Values

The second theme concerns recurring representations of autonomy, self-worth, independence, personal choice, and freedom from external validation. These meanings appeared both in selected lyrical narratives and in the ways digital users interpreted or circulated them. Songs such as *Bejeweled* by Taylor Swift and *Everything I Wanted* by Billie Eilish illustrate cultural narratives in which self-definition, emotional independence, and personal evaluation occupy important positions. The analyzed digital discourse similarly contained recurring expressions of empowerment, self-acceptance, and independence. The empirical finding is therefore the visibility of autonomy-oriented discourse within the selected corpus, rather than evidence that Western music has normalized individualism among Muslim Generation Z.

This distinction revises the stronger causal interpretation presented in the earlier version of the manuscript. Studies such as (Lin et al., 2026; Soh et al., 2024) suggest that contemporary digital environments provide important resources for self-presentation, empowerment, and identity construction, while (Gómez-Carrillo & Kirmayer, 2023) demonstrate the need to situate

individual identity practices within broader moral and social contexts. The present findings support the relevance of these discussions but indicate that autonomy should not automatically be equated with selfishness or moral individualism. Instead, autonomy emerges as a cultural value whose ethical significance depends on how it is interpreted and balanced with responsibilities toward others.

From an Islamic educational perspective, individual agency can coexist with ethical responsibility. Concepts such as *tawadhu'* (humility), *ta'awun* (mutual assistance), responsibility, and *akhlaq al-karimah* provide a normative framework for distinguishing constructive self-development from ethically unbounded self-centredness. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) offers one theoretical explanation for how repeated cultural representations may provide models that audiences observe and interpret. Similarly, cultivation theory suggests that sustained media exposure may contribute to perceptions of what is culturally normal. Nevertheless, neither mechanism is directly demonstrated by the present dataset. Because this study analyzes digital texts rather than longitudinal behavioral change, internalization, normalization, or moral shifting should be understood as possible theoretical mechanisms rather than established effects.

The educational implication of this theme is therefore specific to the empirical pattern identified. Rather than framing personal autonomy as inherently inconsistent with Islam, educators can use cultural texts to help learners differentiate between responsible personal agency and forms of self-orientation that disregard relational or moral obligations. Such analysis may include questions about how self-worth, independence, freedom, and personal choice are represented in popular media and how these concepts relate to responsibility toward oneself, other people, society, and God.

Selective Adaptation and Digital Recontextualization of Islamic Values

The third theme demonstrates that digital engagement with Western popular music is not uniformly receptive. Some analyzed TikTok and YouTube materials recontextualized popular-cultural narratives through Islamic language, spiritual reflections, motivational religious expressions, or references to Qur'anic meanings. Content associated with themes of healing, existential questioning, and personal purpose was occasionally reframed through explicitly religious interpretations. These practices indicate a process of selective adaptation, in which users may appropriate elements of global popular culture while assigning them alternative meanings.

For methodological precision, this process is described as digital recontextualization rather than “re-Islamization.” The digital materials demonstrate acts of reinterpretation, but they cannot establish that users have undergone a broader process of religious transformation. This distinction is important because the previous manuscript interpreted such content as evidence that Muslim Generation Z had successfully “re-Islamized” Western music. The available evidence supports a more limited but analytically meaningful conclusion: certain public digital practices combine popular-cultural materials with Islamic interpretive resources.

This finding corresponds with research showing that audiences are not necessarily passive consumers of media. Research conducted by (Yolanda et al., 2025) highlight forms of reinterpretation and cultural adaptation in digital environments, while (X. Chen et al., 2026) emphasize the capacity of digitally mediated learning to involve selective adaptation rather than simple imitation. Social learning theory is also relevant here because observation does not necessarily entail direct reproduction; individuals may evaluate and modify symbolic models according to existing interpretive frameworks (Bandura, 1977). From an Islamic educational perspective, these practices can be read in relation to *tazkiyah al-nafs* when digital content is

used to stimulate reflection on purpose, responsibility, and spiritual self-development. This relationship remains an analytical interpretation rather than evidence that the users themselves intentionally engage in the classical practice of *tazkiyah al-nafs*.

Taken together, this third theme complicates a binary interpretation in which Western popular music either erodes or strengthens Islamic values. The digital corpus instead indicates multiple modes of engagement: emotional identification, negotiation of autonomy-oriented meanings, and selective reinterpretation through religious frameworks. The audience-generated materials therefore suggest that meanings circulating through popular music can be accepted, modified, questioned, or reframed, depending on the interpretive context in which they are encountered.

Deriving Critical Islamic Media Literacy from the Three Themes

The three themes provide the empirical basis for the proposed Critical Islamic Media Literacy (CIML) framework. The framework is derived directly from the analytical problems identified in the corpus. The first theme shows the importance of connecting emotional identification with reflective evaluation; the second indicates the need to evaluate autonomy and self-expression in relation to ethical responsibility; and the third demonstrates the possibility of active reinterpretation rather than passive reception of cultural messages. CIML is therefore conceptualized as the ability to identify, interpret, ethically evaluate, and critically reconstruct media messages through an Islamic educational framework.

More concretely, CIML may involve four interconnected pedagogical practices. Critical identification trains learners to recognize values, assumptions, emotional narratives, and representations embedded in media content. Ethical comparison encourages them to examine these representations alongside concepts such as *ta'dib*, *tazkiyah al-nafs*, *sabr*, responsibility, *tawadhu'*, and *ta'awun*. Reflective negotiation requires learners to explain which cultural messages they consider acceptable, problematic, adaptable, or rejectable and to provide ethical reasons for their evaluation. Finally, creative recontextualization encourages learners to reformulate or produce digital content that connects contemporary cultural experiences with Islamic moral reflection.

This framework differs from approaches based primarily on prohibition because it treats learners as critical interpreters of digital culture. Research conducted by (Liu et al., 2025) similarly emphasizes the importance of critical engagement with media rather than passive consumption. However, the present study does not demonstrate the effectiveness of CIML as an educational intervention. The framework should therefore be understood as a pedagogical proposition derived from the three empirical themes, which requires future classroom-based testing before broader curricular or policy recommendations can be made.

Methodological Limitations

Several methodological limitations constrain the interpretation of these findings. First, the study relies exclusively on publicly accessible digital content. The analyzed comments and posts represent what users chose to make visible publicly and cannot provide access to private interpretations, motivations, or religious practices. Second, the corpus is platform-specific to YouTube, TikTok, and Spotify. Each platform has distinct affordances, user cultures, and content-distribution mechanisms; therefore, patterns identified in one platform cannot automatically be generalized to other digital environments.

Third, the sampling process may be affected by selection and algorithmic bias. Search results, engagement indicators, recommendations, and highly visible content are partly shaped by proprietary platform algorithms whose operation cannot be fully observed by researchers.

Consequently, highly visible comments or posts may not represent the full diversity of audience responses. Fourth, because the study did not include interviews, surveys, or participant verification, it cannot reliably determine the age, religion, nationality, or other demographic characteristics of individual commenters unless these were explicitly stated in the content. Audience-generated materials should therefore be interpreted as public digital discourse surrounding youth-oriented popular music, rather than direct evidence of the attitudes of all Indonesian Muslim Generation Z users.

Finally, although criterion-based purposive sampling increased the analytical relevance of the materials, it does not provide statistical representativeness. The findings identify patterns within the selected digital corpus, not their prevalence within the wider population. These limitations mean that conclusions concerning moral internalization, behavioral change, or changes in religious identity cannot be inferred from the present data. Future studies could combine systematic digital sampling with interviews, focus groups, digital ethnography, or longitudinal research involving verified Muslim Generation Z participants to examine whether and how the interpretive patterns identified here are reflected in lived moral and religious experiences.

Conclusion

The study identified three interrelated patterns in the selected digital corpus: emotional identification and moral ambiguity, negotiation of autonomy and individual-oriented values, and selective adaptation through digital recontextualization of Islamic values. The findings show that Western popular music functions as a cultural resource through which emotional experiences, self-definition, and value-oriented meanings are publicly articulated and negotiated in digital environments. At the same time, the data also indicate that audiences do not necessarily receive these meanings passively, as some digital materials reinterpret popular-cultural messages through Islamic ethical and spiritual references. These findings should not be interpreted as evidence that Western music directly changes moral or religious orientations, but rather as evidence of how popular music can become a site of meaning-making and value negotiation. The central contribution of the study is therefore the integration of *ta'dib*, *tazkiyah al-nafs*, social learning theory, and cultivation theory to explain these patterns and to derive the concept of Critical Islamic Media Literacy as an educational framework for critically engaging with digital popular culture.

The findings imply that Islamic education may benefit from moving beyond purely normative judgments of popular culture toward pedagogical practices that develop learners' capacity to identify media messages, compare them with Islamic ethical principles, reflect on competing values, and critically recontextualize digital content. However, these implications should be interpreted within the methodological limitations of the study, including its reliance on publicly accessible content, platform-specific data from YouTube, TikTok, and Spotify, possible selection and algorithmic bias, purposive sampling, and the absence of direct perspectives from verified Muslim Generation Z participants. Consequently, the study cannot establish causal relationships, moral internalization, or behavioral change. Future research should therefore combine systematic digital analysis with interviews, focus groups, digital ethnography, or longitudinal designs involving verified Muslim Generation Z participants, while classroom-based studies are also needed to examine the practical effectiveness of Critical Islamic Media Literacy in strengthening ethical reflection and critical engagement with digital culture.

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