

Reception of Islamic Broadcasts of the Javanese Islamic Community in Wukirsari Village, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta

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Abstract

This article examines the reception of Islamic broadcasts within the Javanese Muslim community of Wukirsari Village, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta. Drawing on Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory, the study seeks to understand how Islamic broadcasts are received and interpreted by individuals with a more flexible understanding of religion (abangan). The encoding process is carried out by media producers who convey Islamic messages through various programs, such as religious lectures and films. The decoding process within the Wukirsari community results in a range of interpretations of the encoded message, which align with the ideological positions of individuals, namely dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, or oppositional stances. This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining the reception theory proposed by Stuart Hall (1980) and the phenomenological approach articulated by Chris Barker (2000), to explore how the Javanese Muslim community in Wukirsari Village interprets and interacts with religious television content. Through in-depth interviews and observations, the findings reveal that most individuals decode Islamic messages from a negotiated position, adapting the message to a more practical and contextually relevant understanding of religion. In conclusion, Islamic broadcasts play a crucial role in shaping the expression of collective religiosity. However, variations in the way the message is received and interpreted are evident, influenced by the social and cultural backgrounds of the audience

Keywords: *Islamic Reception Shows, Expression of Collective Religiosity, Encoding-Decoding, Stuart Hall, Javanese Islamic Society, Wukirsari, Yogyakarta.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, with its majority Muslim population, is home to a rich diversity of religious perspectives and practices, often resulting in contestations between different Muslim groups. One of the most prominent divisions is between the puritan Islamic groups and Javanese Islam, also known as "abangan." These two groups not only differ in religious rituals but also in their economic, social, and political affiliations (Nakamura (2020).

Puritan Islamic groups generally advocate for sharia-based economies, the implementation of Islamic dress codes, and the support of political parties that align with Islamic values (Arifin et al., 2019; Hilmy, 2018). They argue for an integral relationship between state and religion, driven by the belief that Islam should be practiced in its purist form without blending with other cultural practices (Wahyono, 2003). On the other hand, Javanese Islamic groups tend to follow a more syncretic approach, blending Islamic teachings with local traditions. This includes Javanese religious practices like tirakatan (spiritual rituals), salvation ceremonies, and feasts, which are often seen as part of the local culture rather than solely religious obligations (Hudayana, 2021; Nawawi et al., 2016). They preserve familial bonds through the tradition of trah (Hudayana, 2022). Trah is a central element in the Javanese kinship tradition that binds families across generations by integrating both paternal and maternal lineages. This is done by tracing their ancestry both upwards (grandparents, great-grandparents, and so on), downwards (children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren), and sideways (in-laws), in a single forum or gathering held periodically.

The Kompas R&D survey in June 2024 reveals that this contestation is also evident in electoral politics in Central Java. The majority of respondents in the region consider Islamic religious values (77.2%) and Javanese leadership figures (72%) as the primary factors in choosing regional head candidates. This indicates that the people of Central Java remain closely connected to ancestral traditions preserved by cultural institutions such as Kasunanan Surakarta and Mangkunegaran Temple, in addition to maintaining strong Islamic religious roots (Kompas, July 18, 2024).

This contestation continues in parallel with the rise of the Islamization movement promoted by puritan Islamic groups. These groups not only utilize ritual practices and lectures to propagate their views but also increasingly rely on more flexible media platforms, such as television and the internet (Nisa, 2018; Sakai & Fauzia, 2014). Islamic television programs play a significant role in shaping the lifestyle of modern society. Trends in Islamic fashion, halal food, and halal-certified cosmetics demonstrate how these shows encourage the consumption of Islamic products (Meilinawati, 2016; Sari, A. F. K., & Junaidi, 2020; Umbarani, E. M., & Fakhruddin, 2021).

In a global context, this phenomenon of Islamic media consumption can be linked to Appadurai's concept of global media practices shaped by technological advancements. Appadurai (Appadurai, 1990) argues that media is no longer confined to territorial boundaries, leading to a cultural fusion that includes ethnoscape, technoscape, financescape, ideascapes, and mediascape. This shift is also driven by the growing consumption of online media, which now accounts for 61% of total media consumption, compared to conventional media like television and radio, which account for only 39% (Kunandar, A. Y., 2022).

Despite the increasing dominance of online media, conventional television still holds a significant position in Indonesia's media consumption patterns. Studies indicate that the average individual spends four hours per day watching television and engaging with social media (Changara, 2012; Morley, 1992). Furthermore, television advertising remains a key platform for advertisers, with total television ad spending reaching IDR 107.5 trillion in the first half of 2022 (Yunianto, 2022). This suggests that television remains a vital, cost-effective, easily accessible, and highly credible medium (Kunandar, A. Y., 2022; Rakhmani, 2014; Triwardani, 2011). Miller (Miller, 2010) contends that the rise of online media does not necessarily mean the decline of conventional media like television. Instead, traditional media will continue to evolve with new formats, including integration with internet platforms. The main challenges for television media today are related to improving broadcast content to align with changing societal preferences (Alvarado et al., 2015; Hasan, 2022).

Religious content on television continues to attract high ratings, especially during the month of Ramadan (Kunandar, A. Y., 2022). Religious-themed programs, including soap operas, religious lectures, and live broadcasts of religious holidays, dominate television schedules. The prominence of religious shows is particularly interesting because it highlights that the abangan group, traditionally known for its syncretic religious practices, is also the primary audience for religious television content ((Amirudin, 2018).

This research, which explores the reception study, spans various topics, including the study conducted by Fakhruroji ((Fakhruroji, 2014) in relation to the practice of mediatisation of religion, which indicates the growing influence of media logic in religious activities. Several key findings of this study are: first, the adoption of media logic by the SMS Tauhid group, particularly in terms of the character limit, has resulted in the simplification of religious meaning into a self-help framework; second, the institutionalization of SMS Tauhid as a step towards the internalization of media logic has led to the banalization of religious teachings, which is reflected in the blending of religious and non-religious content; third, the dominance of media logic in SMS Tauhid has resulted in the commercialization and commodification of religion.

Fakhruroji's study adopts a case study approach with a qualitative method, which does not aim to develop theory. Although my study also addresses media reception with the assumption of an active audience, the key difference lies in the sociological basis of the community with its specific characteristics, which allows the audience to hold differing views toward the media content they consume. As a reception study, I emphasize how the potential of the audience is not only in the polysemy of the meaning-making process, but also in showing how the audience can deconstruct ideological messages.

Another study on media reception involving television was conducted by Yuwono (Yuwono, 2015). This research examines how Chinese Indonesians interpret Chinese-themed television shows broadcast by private television stations. The research is rooted in the policy issued by President Gus Dur's government in Presidential Decree No. 6 of 2000 concerning the Organization of Religious, Belief, and Cultural Activities of the Chinese Community. Through this regulation, the Chinese community was able to openly celebrate Chinese rituals that had been suppressed for almost 32 years. From that point onward, television broadcasts included Chinese-themed programming during the Chinese New Year celebrations, ranging from decorating for the New Year, comedy shows, singing, dancing, to even Chinese horoscope predictions.

This study utilizes a reception analysis, where the Chinese background of the audience results in varied practices of consuming Chinese-themed content. The ethnographic method used in this research also shows that the expression of Chinese identity is constructed based on space and time as a result of watching television. Moreover, there is both comfort and anxiety regarding their position as part of the Indonesian nation, given the ongoing legal uncertainty regarding their status as Indonesian citizens.

A reception study was also conducted by Persadha (Persadha, 2018) on the issue of black campaigns during the 2014 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Election, focusing on online media outlets such as okezone.com and detik.com. This study was initiated due to the emergence of new media, which has been driven by the increasing and significant use of the internet in Indonesia across various aspects of life. This reception-based research reveals the relationship between the consumption of new media and political choices, as well as the hardening of political ideologies, which contrasts sharply with the black campaigns occurring in both online media outlets. The research demonstrates that the audience's reception of black campaigns is not homogeneous; it varies depending on factors such as political ideology, cultural background, social status, past experiences, and family characteristics.

This article employs Stuart Hall's reception theory (1997) to examine how the Javanese Islamic community in Wukirsari, Imogiri, Bantul, Yogyakarta, receives and interprets Islamic television programs. Hall's reception theory posits that the audience does not passively absorb the message but actively processes and interprets it through the lens of their social, cultural, and value systems. This study focuses on how the Javanese Islamic community, whose religious practices are influenced by both Islamic and Javanese cultural traditions, constructs meaning from Islamic television shows. By adopting this framework, the research provides a nuanced analysis of the diverse ways in which the community interprets these programs—whether by accepting, negotiating, or rejecting the messages presented—based on their local cultural context.

The primary objective of this study is to address the question: How does the Javanese Islamic community in Wukirsari receive and interpret religious television shows? By exploring how this group consumes and processes religious content, the study aims to contribute to a broader understanding of the ongoing contestation between puritan Islam and abangan practices in contemporary Indonesia

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a mixed-method approach, combining the reception theory proposed by Stuart Hall (1980) and the phenomenological approach articulated by Chris Barker (2000), to explore how the Javanese Muslim community in Wukirsari Village, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta, interprets and interacts with religious television programs. Reception as a research method refers to an approach that examines how audiences (receivers) interpret, assign meaning to, and respond to media messages. According to Stuart Hall in his seminal essay "*Encoding/Decoding*" (Hall, 1980), which is referenced in many of his works, reception focuses on the dynamic relationship between media texts (such as films, advertisements, news) and the audiences who receive those texts. In the context of media research, reception considers how audiences "read" or actively interpret the media. This contrasts with earlier approaches that viewed audiences more as passive recipients of messages conveyed by the media. Hall suggests that the meaning received is not solely determined by the message "contained" within the media, but also by the social and cultural context of the audience. According to Hall, there are three main positions in the decoding process:

1. *Dominant-hegemonic position*: The audience accepts the media message in its entirety, aligning with the intended meaning of the sender (e.g., the media and its power structures). This is a more passive and conformist understanding of the message.
2. *Negotiated position*: The audience accepts part of the message, but adjusts or modifies it based on their own experiences, social context, and knowledge. In this case, they may agree with most of the message but do not fully adopt it.
3. *Oppositional position*: The audience rejects or interprets the message in a way that is substantially different from the sender's intended meaning, often due to ideological or social perspective conflicts.

This reception approach provides an opportunity for researchers to examine the varying interpretations that occur among different audiences, offering deeper insights into the relationship between texts, media producers, and consumers. In other words, the reception method seeks to explore how diverse audiences may construct different meanings from the same text, depending on their social, cultural, and experiential backgrounds. This allows for a richer understanding of mass communication and the active role played by audiences in the consumption of media.

On the other hand, the phenomenological method according to Chris Barker ((2000), employed in this study, helps the researcher to unravel the understanding of lived experiences and individual perceptions to uncover how they attribute meaning to specific phenomena in their lives. In his book *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* (2000), Chris Barker explains that phenomenology seeks to reveal the "essence" of human experience. This is achieved by exploring the subject's understanding of their world and how they interpret and assign meaning to the reality they experience. In cultural studies, this can involve examining how individuals or groups understand their culture, rituals, values, and how these elements shape their social interactions.

In this context, the study aims to investigate how Islamic television content influences religious beliefs and practices within the community. Barker emphasizes the importance of considering the cultural context and social interactions of research participants in phenomenological studies. This approach allows researchers to explore the subjective experiences of respondents, uncover the meanings they attribute to Islamic television programs, and understand how their perspectives are shaped by the interaction between Javanese culture and Islamic teachings. To collect detailed data on the community's perceptions of Islamic media

content, the researcher conducted direct observations and in-depth interviews with members of the Javanese Muslim community in Wukirsari Village, Imogiri, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta. The phenomenological approach is expected to offer a comprehensive understanding of the interaction between local cultural practices and religious beliefs in the consumption of religious media.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In Stuart Hall's reception theory, the communication process between the producer (sender) and the audience (receiver) consists of two key stages: encoding and decoding. During the encoding stage, producers (or message creators) encode their content by embedding specific meanings or messages within it. In the context of Islamic television shows, this means the producers intentionally design content with certain interpretations of Islam, culture, and values. The decoding stage, on the other hand, involves the audience interpreting the message based on their own social, cultural, and ideological backgrounds.

The way an audience decodes the message can vary, as individuals might interpret the same content in different ways, influenced by their personal experiences and societal context. According to Hall, the audience's interpretation can fall into three categories: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, or oppositional. In the dominant-hegemonic position, the audience accepts the intended message as it is. In the negotiated position, the audience accepts part of the message but modifies it based on their context. In the oppositional position, the audience rejects the message or interprets it in a completely different way (Hall, 1997).

This framework is particularly useful in understanding how television shows, such as Islamic media content, are received differently by audiences from various cultural and ideological backgrounds (Morley, 1992). The cultural and social context of the audience plays a critical role in shaping how messages are decoded and how they influence viewers' beliefs and behaviors.

In Stuart Hall's reception theory, encoding refers to the process by which producers imbue a message with meanings that reflect their ideological and cultural perspective. In the case of Islamic broadcasts, producers craft religious messages aligned with puritanical Islamic values, often focusing on themes like adherence to sharia law, the importance of worship, and the promotion of moral conduct in daily life. This encoding process is guided by the producers' desire to influence their audience, ideally inspiring them to integrate these values into their everyday practices.

To achieve this, producers utilize a range of strategies, including the selection of specific themes and narratives, the representation of characters (often portraying idealized versions of Muslim life), and the use of symbols and visual aesthetics that reinforce Islamic values. The time and location settings of these shows are also carefully chosen to align with Islamic traditions or modern interpretations of religious practices (Hall, 1997). For example, religious soap operas might feature characters who navigate moral dilemmas according to Islamic principles, while live broadcasts of religious celebrations help foster a sense of community and belonging.

This encoding process plays a critical role in shaping how audiences interpret the content. The aim is to create messages that are not only accepted but also absorbed into the daily lives of viewers, leading them to adopt and internalize the values presented. The use of familiar formats such as soap operas and lectures helps to ensure the message is accessible to a broad audience, reinforcing the producer's goal of moral and societal transformation (Nisa, 2018; Sakai & Fauzia, 2014). Ultimately, the producers' choices in encoding the message (whether in the choice of

format, content, or presentation) serve to communicate their intended worldview and values, shaping the audience's reception of the message.

a. Selection of Theme and Narrative

The selection of themes and narratives is a crucial component of the encoding process in Islamic television shows, as it reflects the religious messages that producers aim to convey. Producers typically choose themes that underscore religious values, such as the importance of worship, adherence to sharia law, and Islamic etiquette. These themes are structured to align with the principles of puritanical Islam, where religious teachings are considered central to guiding daily life.

As shared by a producer in an interview about religious events on TVOne, the selection of themes and narratives is carefully made in consultation with sharia experts to ensure accuracy. The emphasis is placed on promoting universal Islamic values like honesty and social care, while using non-judgmental and approachable language to appeal to a broad audience. Producers also adapt the themes to fit the social and cultural context of the community, ensuring that the message remains clear and accessible without compromising core Islamic principles:

"The selection of themes and narratives of Islamic shows that focus on straight Islamic teachings is carried out in consultation with sharia experts and scholars to ensure the correctness of the teachings. We emphasize universal Islamic values such as honesty and social care, and use friendly and non-judgmental language to be widely accepted. In addition, we adapted the theme to the social and cultural context of the community, choosing a deep yet simple educational approach, so that the message can be conveyed clearly without sacrificing the basic principles of Islam..." (Interview with Mr. Sofyan, October 22, 2024).

Narratives within these shows often focus on characters who face conflicts, which are resolved through adherence to religious teachings. For instance, a religious soap opera may portray a character overcoming life challenges by returning to Islam and practicing sharia. This narrative structure not only emphasizes the value of following Islamic teachings but also aims to establish an emotional connection with the audience. By identifying with the characters, viewers may internalize the message and apply it to their own lives. In terms of encoding, this narrative approach reflects the producer's intention to not just deliver religious values but also to forge a bond with the audience, fostering identification with characters and promoting the adoption of the values presented.

b. Character Representation

The representation of characters in Islamic television shows is a pivotal aspect of the encoding process, as these characters symbolize and embody the values that the producers seek to convey. In many Islamic shows, characters are depicted according to certain stereotypes that align with ideals of piety, simplicity, and sincerity. For instance, female characters are often portrayed wearing modest clothing that adheres to shari'ah guidelines, such as the hijab or long dresses, while male characters tend to wear simple, modest attire, reflecting Islamic teachings of humility and modesty. These portrayals are not only visual but also serve to reinforce the devout Muslim identity that the producers wish to highlight.

These characters are often shown as role models, exhibiting good manners, ethical behavior, and adherence to Islamic values. They act as examples of ideal behavior that the audience is encouraged to emulate. This representation is commonly seen in various formats such as Islamic studies, morning religious lectures, or special religious events, where the theme of Islam and piety takes center stage. Through these depictions, the audience is invited to view these characters as symbols of virtuous living, reinforcing the idea that piety and modesty are central to Islamic practice.

As noted by scholars in media studies, the representation of characters in religious programming often serves as a method for conveying ideological and cultural messages, subtly encouraging viewers to reflect on their own behavior and values (Sari & Junaidi, 2020; Sakai & Fauzia, 2014). This form of media encoding is designed to engage the audience emotionally, allowing them to connect with the characters and internalize the values presented in the show.

Figure 1. Screen view of TRANSTV's Islamic program "Islam itu Indah"



Source: <https://www.transtv.co.id/program/episode/3877/boleh-bermaksiat-tapi-harus-dengan-syarat>, accessed 13/12/2024.

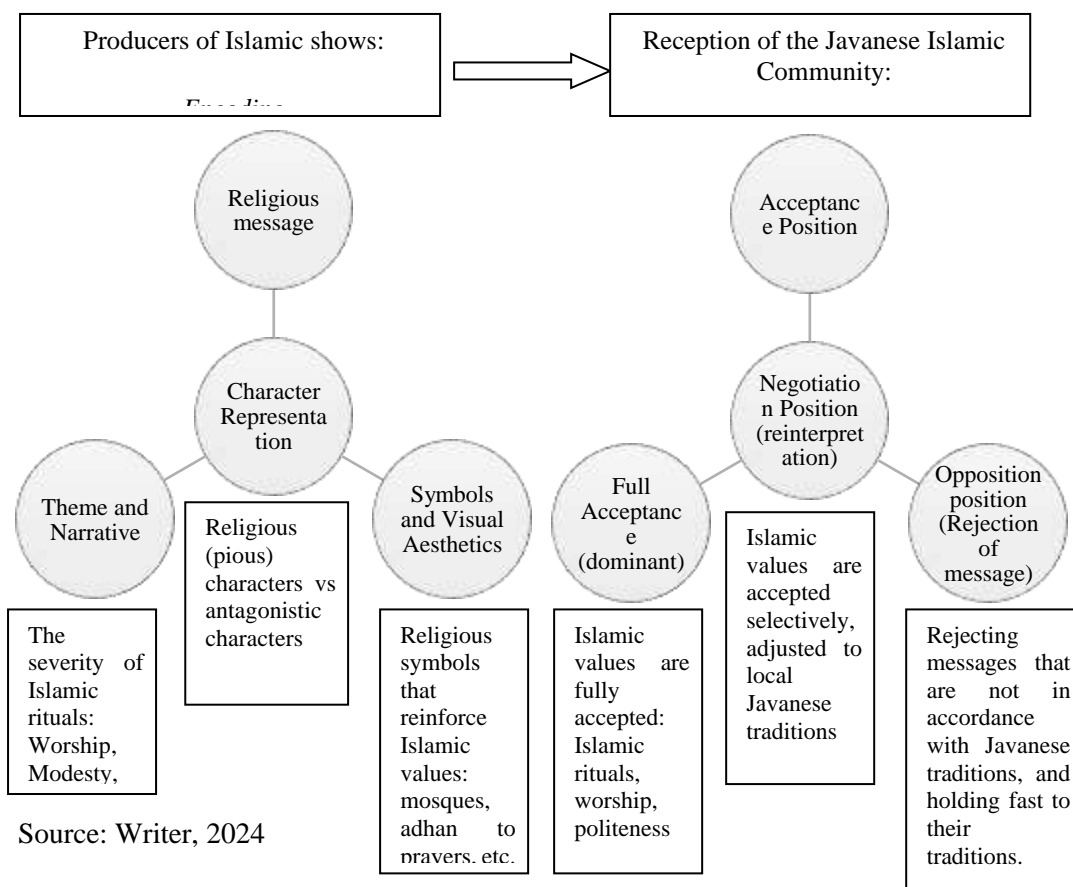
The representation of Islamic characters in Islamic shows plays a significant role in conveying the values producers wish to communicate. As shown in the screenshot (Picture 1), the female host is depicted wearing a sharia-compliant hijab and loose clothing that covers the awrah, aligning with Islamic modesty standards. Similarly, the male speakers are dressed in traditional Muslim attire that signifies piety. This visual representation extends to the audience, where mothers from the recitation group also wear loose veils to cover their awrah, demonstrating a cohesive portrayal of Islamic values.

The representation of Islamic fashion serves two key messages. First, it emphasizes the use of Islamic clothing as an expression of religiosity, signaling that adherence to modest dress is an important aspect of religious identity. Second, it acts as a tool in the political economy, specifically promoting the Islamic fashion industry, which has become a growing market segment in many Muslim-majority countries (Hatta, 2023). By featuring characters in this attire, producers both reflect and shape trends in Islamic fashion, simultaneously reinforcing religious values and contributing to the commercialization of these trends.

Additionally, some Islamic shows feature antagonistic characters, who represent behavior that is contrary to Islamic values. These characters are often shown facing negative consequences for their actions, underscoring the moral and religious lessons of the show. For example, the Malaysian Islamic series *Hidayah* portrays characters whose deviant behavior leads to punishment, reinforcing the ideological contrast between sharia-compliant behavior and deviance (Nazaruddin, 2007). In terms of encoding, these antagonistic characters serve to highlight the moral lessons of the show, encouraging viewers to follow the positive characters who embody Islamic teachings. This contrasts the ideal and the deviant, making it clear which behaviors are deemed appropriate within the context of the show's message. Through these character representations, producers aim to shape the audience's moral and religious decisions

by providing clear examples of desirable behavior (Islamic adherence) and undesirable behavior (deviation from sharia).

Table 1.
Encoding and Decoding Framework of Islamic Broadcasts in Javanese Islamic Society



c. Visual Symbols and Aesthetics

In Islamic television shows, religious symbols and visual aesthetics are integral to the encoding process, reinforcing the message of the program. Symbols such as mosques, prayer mats, Arabic calligraphy, and the call to prayer are frequently used as visual representations that directly associate the content with Islamic values (Putra, 2021). These symbols not only serve as visual cues for the audience but also provide a spiritual context that aligns with the show's religious message.

Additionally, the settings in which these shows take place play a crucial role in encoding the intended message. Locations such as prayer rooms or serene natural landscapes create an atmosphere of religious and spiritual tranquility. This serene backdrop encourages the audience to connect with the peaceful, calm aspects of Islam (Putra, 2021). For example, scenes set in tranquil environments or near mosques often evoke feelings of spiritual peace, making the audience more receptive to the religious content presented.

The visual aesthetics in Islamic shows are also deliberately designed to reinforce the intended messages. Techniques such as soft lighting, neutral colors, and a calm atmosphere contribute to creating an atmosphere of simplicity and spiritual calm. This aesthetic approach not only enhances the visual appeal but also evokes emotional responses from the audience, aiming to inspire them to live according to Islamic principles. The calming visuals suggest that a simple, spiritually fulfilling life is central to Islamic teachings, thus supporting the moral and religious messages the producers wish to convey (Meilinawati, 2016; Sari & Junaidi, 2020). By blending

these visual elements with the religious content, the show's producers enhance the emotional and spiritual engagement of the audience, encouraging them to reflect on their own values and practices.

Figure 2. Display of Islamic Soap Opera During Ramadan RCTI



Source: <https://www.genmuslim.id/nasional/634417398/meriahnya-bulan-suci-berikut-sederet-program-sinetron-religi-yang-tayang-di-tv-selama-bulan-ramadhan-2024-mulai-sctv-rcti-hingga-net-tv>, accessed on 13/11/2024

d. Time and Location Context Setting

The timing and location of Islamic shows are key components in the encoding process, used strategically to reinforce religious messages. For instance, many Islamic shows are aired or reproduced during the month of Ramadan, when the consumption of religious content is at its peak. This timing is not coincidental; it is a deliberate encoding strategy by producers to optimize the audience's receptiveness to religious messages. During Ramadan, audiences are generally more spiritually engaged and open to content that emphasizes religious values, making it an ideal period for promoting Islamic teachings through media (Sakai & Fauzia, 2014).

Moreover, the context of location in Islamic shows is carefully chosen to enhance the message of piety and simplicity. Common locations such as mosques, Islamic boarding schools, and modest rural homes are frequently used to convey a life that is in close alignment with Islamic values, simple, modest, and detached from the materialistic influences of urban life. These settings contrast with the complexities and distractions of modern city living, thus promoting the message that a simple, religious life is more ideal and spiritually fulfilling. By choosing such locations, producers effectively encode a message about the importance of living in accordance with Islamic principles, suggesting that a life away from the distractions of modernity is more aligned with Islamic teachings (Nawawi et al., 2017; Hatta, 2023). In sum, the timing of airing and the choice of location both work together to enhance the religious messages encoded in Islamic shows, making them more impactful and easier for the audience to relate to their own lives.

e. Use of Language and Dialogue

The language and dialogue used in Islamic shows are crucial elements in the encoding process, playing a strategic role in reinforcing religious messages. Producers often incorporate religious terms and expressions such as "Insha Allah" (God willing), "Alhamdulillah" (Praise be

to God), and "Subhanallah" (Glory be to God) in the dialogue. These expressions are not only used as communication tools between characters but also serve as explicit reminders of Islamic values for the audience (Kiptiyah, 2017). This strategic use of language creates a distinctly Islamic atmosphere within the show and acts as a subtle yet powerful method of encoding religious messages into everyday communication.

In addition to religious expressions, the language employed is often characterized by politeness and adherence to Islamic norms of respect and humility. This reflects the puritanical Islamic values that producers seek to instill. The dialogues are structured to reflect a model of speech that is not only spiritually oriented but also culturally appropriate, reinforcing the audience's expectations of what constitutes pious behavior.

Through these religiously charged dialogues, producers aim to educate and remind the audience of Islamic teachings. The hope is that the audience will internalize these phrases and adopt them in their daily conversations, thereby creating a more Islamic-oriented atmosphere in their lives. This use of religious language thus serves as a form of social and cultural reinforcement, encouraging the audience to integrate religious expressions into their routines and, ideally, to live a life more aligned with Islamic principles (Meilinawati, 2016; Sakai & Fauzia, 2014)

f. Music and Sound Effects

The music and sound effects used in Islamic shows are key components in the encoding process, shaping the emotional and spiritual atmosphere of the program. Music in these shows typically employs soft and simple instruments, avoiding those considered incompatible with sharia, such as wind instruments or heavy percussion (Susanto, 2018). These gentle soundscapes create a peaceful ambiance that enhances the religious messages conveyed in the show.

In some cases, the recitation of the Qur'an or the adhan (call to prayer) is used as background sound. The adhan, in particular, serves both as a religious symbol and as a way to establish an emotional connection with the audience, evoking feelings of holiness and reminding viewers of the obligation to pray. This subtle integration of religious sound elements helps to deepen the emotional engagement of the audience with the program, reinforcing the spiritual content.

Ultimately, the encoding process in Islamic shows is designed to craft a cohesive message that reflects puritan Islamic values. Through the use of aesthetic, symbolic, and narrative elements, producers aim to create an environment that is not only religiously resonant but also emotionally impactful, encouraging the audience to embrace the messages being communicated (Mandjusri, Sunuantari, & Ibrahim, 2023). The goal is for the audience to not only view the show as entertainment but also to absorb and internalize the Islamic values embedded in the program. This approach reflects the ideological intent of producers, who aim to promote da'wah (Islamic propagation), Islamization, and the moral transformation of society. Through these strategies, producers hope to shape the beliefs and practices of their audience in a way that aligns with puritan Islamic ideals, while also fostering a spiritual and moral transformation in society.

Decoding by Javanese Muslims in Wukirsari, Imogiri

The decoding process undertaken by Javanese Muslims in Wukirsari, Imogiri, Bantul, Yogyakarta, may differ significantly from the intentions of the producers. Javanese Muslims possess cultural characteristics that are inherently syncretic, blending Islamic religious elements with traditional Javanese practices. As a result, their interpretation of Islamic shows is profoundly influenced by the deeply ingrained Javanese cultural traditions, where religion does not wholly replace or transform local culture, but rather integrates with it.

According to Stuart Hall's reception theory (Storey, 2007), the audience decodes messages in three primary positions:

1. **Dominant-Hegemonic Position:** In this position, the audience fully accepts the message as it was intended by the producer, without altering or reinterpreting it. A small segment of the abangan community may decode the message in this way, particularly individuals motivated to deepen their understanding of Islam in a purer form, without integrating it into local cultural practices.
2. **Negotiated Position:** Here, the audience accepts parts of the message but adapts or modifies it to align with their own local values and cultural context. The majority of the abangan community in Wukirsari likely falls into this position. They may embrace the moral teachings or Islamic principles presented in the show while integrating them with traditional Javanese practices, such as salvation rituals or tirakatan. For instance, they might support the value of modesty as conveyed in Islamic shows but continue to uphold local customs that they consider integral to their cultural identity.
3. **Oppositional Position:** In this position, the audience either rejects the message or interprets it in a manner contrary to the original intent of the producer. Some members of the abangan community, particularly those strongly attached to local Javanese traditions, may find Islamic shows that present rigid or puritanical perspectives to be irrelevant or even dismissive of the Javanese cultural values they uphold. They may either reject the message outright or consume the show merely as entertainment, without being influenced by its religious values.

Through this reception approach, research conducted in Wukirsari demonstrates that Javanese Islamic society is not merely a passive recipient of Islamic shows; rather, it actively engages in interpreting messages in relation to its own cultural identity and values. This finding underscores the idea that, despite the media's efforts to convey a specific message, the audience retains the autonomy to interpret that message according to its unique cultural and social context. In the process of *decoding* In the context of Islamic shows, the Javanese Islamic community in Wukirsari, Imogiri, Bantul, Yogyakarta, actively engages in interpreting and assigning meaning to the messages conveyed by the producers. According to Stuart Hall's reception theory, the audience does not always accept the message as intended by the producer. Instead, they interpret it through the lens of their own experiences, cultural values, and social contexts. For Javanese Muslims, who practice a syncretic blend of Islam and local Javanese traditions, the decoding process frequently diverges from the producer's original intent. This process involves several critical components, including the interpretation of religious values and traditions, the use of religious symbols within local contexts, the adjustment of social norms, and emotional responses shaped by cultural identities. An in-depth analysis of these components in the decoding process within Javanese Islamic society follows.

a. Interpretation of Religious Values and Traditions

In the decoding process, Javanese Muslim communities integrate their local Javanese traditions with Islamic teachings, creating a unique interpretation of religious values conveyed through Islamic shows. This integration shows how Javanese cultural identity shapes the reception of Islamic media, where teachings are not always accepted in their pure, literal form but rather adapted to fit the cultural context. For instance, Islamic calls to worship may not only be seen as obligations for religious practice, but also as invitations to uphold Javanese values like gotong royong (mutual cooperation), selamatan (communal thanksgiving rituals), and tirakatan (a traditional Javanese ritual involving fasting and prayer). As one interviewee, Mr. Suryani from Wukirsari, explained, the concepts of mutual cooperation and gratitude in Islam are closely aligned with Javanese practices like selamatan. He stated:

"Islamic shows on TV are teaching goodness. The Javanese tradition is the same. If Islam teaches about one Muslim helping another, we have mutual cooperation. Islam calls for

gratitude, and in our tradition, we have selamatan, a way of giving thanks to the Creator. There's no difference between the two." (Interview with Mr. Suryani, Wukirsari, September 12, 2023).

This illustrates how the Javanese Muslim community adapts Islamic messages to resonate with local customs. For example, tirakatan, which involves both prayer and meditation, may be interpreted as akin to the Islamic practices of dhikr (remembrance of Allah) or prayer in the shows. In this way, Javanese Islamic society tends to "Javanese" the message, adapting the Islamic values so that they fit within their established cultural framework. This process of cultural adaptation shows the active role of the audience in decoding messages, highlighting their agency in integrating religious media into their everyday life while maintaining the integrity of local cultural traditions. As such, the Javanese community demonstrates a form of syncretism, where Islam and local customs coexist and support each other.

b. The Use of Religious Symbols in Local Contexts

The Javanese Islamic community in Wukirsari tends to decode religious symbols in Islamic shows with a context-sensitive approach that integrates both Islamic values and local traditions. While mosques, prayer mats, and Shari'ah-compliant clothing are used in Islamic media to emphasize religious identity and values, the Javanese community adapts these symbols within the framework of their own cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

For example, mosques are recognized as central places for worship in Islam, yet in Javanese practice, there are also sacred sites such as punden (ancestral shrines) or tombs that hold cultural and spiritual significance. These sacred locations are associated with rituals that involve honoring ancestors or seeking blessings, practices which are deeply ingrained in Javanese cultural and religious life (de Grave, 2018). While these sites may not be explicitly mentioned in Islamic shows, the community may incorporate them into their understanding of spiritual practices, reflecting a syncretic relationship between Islamic teachings and Javanese traditions (Geertz, 1960).

This form of contextual decoding suggests that religious symbols in Islamic media are not passively received by the audience but are actively reinterpreted based on the local beliefs and practices. For instance, while Islamic shows promote the use of specific symbols like prayer mats, these symbols might also be viewed through the lens of Javanese practices, such as meditation or ritual prayers performed in ancestral sites. This dynamic highlights the flexibility of religious interpretation in a culturally diverse setting, where Islam and local traditions coexist and inform each other (Ricklefs, 2012). By recognizing these symbols in ways that resonate with their own cultural practices, Javanese Muslims in Wukirsari demonstrate a form of active participation in interpreting the media's religious message, one that maintains their cultural identity while embracing the broader religious framework presented by Islamic shows.

Figure 3. Pilgrimage to the Sacred Tomb of Panembahan Giriloyo/Sultan Cirebon, Wukirsari.



Source: <https://www.mtsn3bantul.sch.id/berita-terkini-rangkaian-hab-ke56-mtsn-3-bantul-kunjungi-makam-para-aulia-giriloyo-612>, accessed on 11/13/2024.

The symbol of sharia clothing in Islamic shows, often used to portray religious modesty and piety, may be recognized by the abangan community in Wukirsari but is not always adhered to as a strict rule. For many abangan, this symbol may be viewed more as inspiration or an ideal, rather than an obligation. They may see sharia clothing as an added value that promotes modesty, but it is not necessarily an enforced practice. This interpretation reflects a contextual decoding where the abangan take elements of Islamic symbols and adapt them in ways that align with their Javanese cultural identity (Geertz, 1960).

Instead of adopting these symbols as replacements for their traditional cultural practices, the abangan in Wukirsari often see Islamic teachings and symbols as enriching their local customs rather than substituting them. For example, while Islamic shows may promote the idea of wearing modest clothing to reflect piety, the abangan may prioritize their own cultural practices of modesty, such as wearing traditional Javanese garments during cultural ceremonies or rituals. These local symbols and traditions, such as batik clothing or keris (traditional daggers), hold deep cultural significance, and they are not simply replaced by Islamic dress codes. Instead, there is an assimilation of Islamic ideals, where sharia clothing is embraced in a way that complements rather than displaces traditional Javanese attire (Hefner, 1997).

This process reflects a syncretic approach where Islamic symbols are integrated into the local cultural framework, allowing the abangan to maintain their cultural integrity while also incorporating aspects of Islam that resonate with their values. This selective acceptance illustrates how the abangan community does not passively accept Islamic teachings but interprets them through their own cultural lens (Ricklefs, 2012). Therefore, the decoding process shows how Islamic symbols are not seen as rigid impositions but as inspirational additions to an already rich tapestry of local customs and practices.

c. Adjustment of Social Norms

The decoding of Islamic shows by Javanese Islamic society also involves adjusting social norms to align with Javanese cultural values. Islamic shows that emphasize politeness, sharia compliance, and ethical behavior are interpreted through the lens of Javanese ethics, which place a strong emphasis on social harmony and mutual respect. For instance, an invitation in Islamic shows to maintain good manners and moral conduct may be decoded as a call to uphold *tepa*

salira (tolerance and understanding between individuals), a value that is deeply ingrained in Javanese culture.

Javanese Muslims are known to integrate these messages into their existing social frameworks, interpreting Islamic politeness norms not as a direct imposition but as additional values that can complement their cultural norms. For example, the emphasis on respecting elders in Islamic teachings might be interpreted not just as following a religious rule but as a reinforcement of the Javanese tradition of *sepuh* (respect for elders). Similarly, sharia norms around behavior and modesty may be accepted as long as they do not conflict with core Javanese values, such as *gotong royong* (community cooperation) and *selamatan* (communal rituals). These social norms from Islamic shows thus become a supplement to the existing practices of Javanese Muslims, rather than a replacement of their established cultural behavior.

This dynamic suggests that Javanese society in Wukirsari, like other regions with a syncretic approach to Islam, actively negotiates between Islamic teachings and local traditions, merging them in ways that preserve the integrity of both systems. The adaptation of Islamic messages into the Javanese social fabric shows the flexibility of the community in maintaining their identity while also incorporating religious values that fit within their cultural and social practices.

d. Emotional Response and Cultural Identity

The emotional response to Islamic shows in the Javanese Islamic community is an essential component of the decoding process. These shows, which often feature themes of piety, repentance, and moral struggles, evoke strong emotions in the audience. For Javanese Muslims in Wukirsari, their reactions are shaped by a blend of Islamic teachings and local cultural identity. Emotional elements, such as the portrayal of a character's spiritual journey, may resonate with them, but they interpret these emotions through their syncretic cultural framework, which combines Islamic values with Javanese traditions.

For instance, a story of repentance in an Islamic show may evoke feelings of reflection and remorse, but Javanese viewers are likely to relate this with their own cultural practices of introspection and self-purification, which are often expressed in local rituals like *tirakatan* or other forms of spiritual reflection. This allows the Javanese community to respond to the emotional appeal of Islamic shows while ensuring that the Islamic teachings do not conflict with their cultural values, but instead complement them.

The desire to maintain Javanese cultural identity plays a significant role in their emotional response. For example, themes of moral struggle might inspire viewers to strive for personal improvement, but this process is intertwined with a commitment to preserving ancestral wisdom and inclusive spirituality, which includes elements like community rituals (e.g., *selamatan*). This dual response allows the community to absorb the emotional impact of the religious messages without completely abandoning their traditional worldview.

Thus, Javanese Muslims are able to reconcile the emotional content of Islamic shows with their cultural identity, integrating these feelings into their everyday lives. The emotional appeal of the show is interpreted not only through the lens of Islamic values but also through the need to harmonize religious teachings with Javanese culture, reinforcing the notion that cultural identity and religion can coexist and mutually enhance each other.

e. Selective Actions and Cultural Resistance

The decoding process in Javanese Islamic society, particularly in Wukirsari, reflects a selective approach where viewers actively interpret Islamic shows based on their cultural and social context. While they do not reject Islamic teachings outright, Javanese Muslims often adapt or resist elements they perceive as too rigid or incompatible with their local customs. This reflects a complex negotiation between Islamic norms and Javanese cultural values, where certain Islamic messages are internalized, while others are modified or disregarded.

For example, values such as honesty, hard work, and modesty are easily accepted, as they resonate with both Islamic teachings and Javanese ideals. However, elements of Islam that are seen as too strict or counter to Javanese traditions, such as specific practices or rigid interpretations of religious norms, may face resistance. This selectivity is a form of cultural resistance, where the audience maintains their cultural identity while engaging with Islamic content. They might reject specific practices or interpretations that conflict with the more syncretic approach that blends Islam with Javanese customs.

This process is not simply passive consumption of media. Instead, Javanese Muslims engage actively with the content, negotiating meanings that align with their existing beliefs. For instance, practices like *selamatan* (a Javanese communal meal to express gratitude) or *tirakatan* (a form of spiritual practice) are often seen as compatible with Islamic values such as thankfulness or spiritual reflection, allowing these traditions to persist alongside religious teachings. The cultural resilience is evident as they assimilate Islamic values into their local cultural framework, creating a unique hybrid form of Islam.

In the context of Stuart Hall's reception theory, this active engagement highlights the autonomy of the audience. They do not simply accept or reject religious messages but instead reinterpret them through their social experiences and cultural backgrounds. The audience's ability to selectively decode the messages based on their local traditions reinforces the idea that decoding is an active process influenced by sociocultural factors.

This understanding underscores the importance of recognizing audiences as active participants in the media consumption process, capable of reshaping the messages they receive based on their own cultural frameworks. By doing so, they contribute to the creation of a version of Islam that is both faithful to religious principles and rooted in local cultural identity.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the analysis on the reception of Islamic shows by the Javanese Islamic community in Wukirsari reveals a dynamic and active process of decoding media messages. Rather than passively accepting the puritan Islamic values encoded by producers, Javanese Muslims engage in a selective and adaptive interpretation that aligns Islamic teachings with their own syncretic traditions. This demonstrates that they do not fully adopt the religious values presented in these shows but instead reinterpret them to maintain harmony with their local cultural identity.

Based on Stuart Hall's reception theory, the decoding process can occur in three positions: the dominant-hegemonic position, where the audience fully accepts the producer's message; the negotiation position, where the audience accepts parts of the message but adapts it to fit their context; and the opposition position, where the audience outright rejects or reinterprets the message in opposition to the producer's intent. In this study, the Javanese Islamic community in Wukirsari primarily occupies the negotiation position, integrating some of the Islamic values while adapting others to align with their cultural practices, such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and *selamatan* (communal rituals).

The findings illustrate that the Javanese Islamic community is not a passive recipient of the media's message but rather an active participant in its decoding. They modify and negotiate the content they consume to suit their sociocultural needs. This process of cultural adaptation and negotiation suggests that while the media plays a role in conveying values, it is the audience that holds the autonomy to shape and internalize those messages in ways that reflect their broader cultural identity.

In conclusion, this analysis underscores that the Javanese Islamic society in Wukirsari uses Islamic media to reinforce its cultural identity while navigating the tension between local traditions and puritanical Islamic values. It highlights the importance of understanding audiences as active agents who reinterpret and reshape media messages based on their unique sociocultural contexts, as emphasized in Hall's reception theory.

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